

AN EVALUATION OF TWO APPROACHES TO THE TEACHING OF SPELLING

BY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not there was a difference in achievement when spelling is taught with the Spalding phonics method of reading as compared with the study-test approach.

The Spalding phonics method of reading is a complete method for teaching the basic techniques of the language arts--accurate speaking, spelling, writing and reading--as one integrated subject.

The major hypothesis held was that higher scores would be shown on the Morrison-McCall spelling test by students being taught by the Spalding method of reading.

The procedures used in this study (1) a review of literature to ascertain what others have discovered about the value of spelling in the phonics method of reading and (2) a comparison of spelling achievement test results over a three year period of a group from a class using the Spalding method of reading and a group from a class using the study-test method.

This study was limited to children attending the Denali Elementary School in Fairbanks, Alaska.

In 1961 the Denali School introduced the Spalding Method of reading to one first grade. When the program had reached its third year and had grown considerably, the Morrison-McCall spelling test was administered to all second and third graders October, 1962 to April, 1964. Grade placement scores of all the children in the two groups were recorded and the difference between the first test taken and the last test was computed. A test of significance of difference between the changes in the two groups was computed and there was no significant difference. Also, there was no significance of difference between the I.Q.'s of the two groups.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The problem of teaching children to spell correctly is an age old one. For some reason the same words are being misspelled today that were missed fifty to one hundred years ago. One contention is that a teacher may improve a child's spelling by teaching this subject in conjunction with a phonics method of reading. A reading method which is found to be as good as other reading methods but also improves the ability to spell might well be adopted universally.

There have been many studies made over the years concerning the phonics method of reading versus the "look-say" method. After many years of research, Smith, in the Journal of Educational Research, has this to say regarding the controversy:

1. One study has shown that 98% of elementary school people are teaching phonics at the present time.
2. The great preponderance of research offers evidence to the effect that phonics instruction is effective.
3. Research indicates that formal phonics instruction does not have much value in the first grade, and that the point at which it becomes of great value is at the beginning of the second grade.
4. Studies which have involved different methods of phonics point to the superiority of procedures in which phonics instruction is closely tied up with children's needs and directly applied in their daily reading.¹

¹Nilá B. Smith, "What Research Says About Phonics Instruction," Journal of Educational Research, 51: p. 1, September, 1959.

Since there is abundant evidence that phonics is valuable, instruction in this facet of reading should continue without interruption in the future if it is provided in such ways and at such times as research reveals are most helpful to children in meeting their reading needs.²

Since the experts have come to the conclusion that reading methods using phonics are effective, why not use a phonics method that teaches children correct and accurate speech, writing, spelling and reading?

THE PROBLEM

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not there was a difference in achievement when spelling is taught with the Spalding phonics method of reading as compared with the study-test approach.

The Spalding phonics method of reading is a complete method for teaching the basic techniques of the language arts--accurate speaking, spelling, writing and reading--as one integrated subject.³

The major hypothesis held was that higher scores would be shown on the Morrison-McCall test by students being taught by the Spalding method of reading.

²Ibid, p. 3.

³Romalda Bishop Spalding, The Writing Road To Reading, Whiteside Inc., 1957, p. 8.

THE PROCEDURES

The procedures used in this study (1) a review of literature to ascertain what others have discovered about the value of spelling in the phonics method of reading and (2) a comparison of spelling achievement test results over a three year period of a group from a class using the Spalding method of reading and a group from a class using the study-test approach method.

LIMITATIONS

There were three limitations placed on this study: (1) only students that had attended the school for three years were used, (2) selection of students depended upon the availability of spelling achievement test scores, intelligence quotient, and background information for each child, and (3) dependence upon school records. This study concerned children living and attending Denali School in Fairbanks, Alaska.

DEFINITIONS

List approach to spelling: This approach is described in detail page 28 in a quotation by Dolch.⁴

⁴Edward W. Dolch, Phd., Modern Teaching of Spelling, University Press, Champaign, Ill., 1950, p. 36.

Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale: A test with eight lists of fifty words each, all of equal difficulty. Accompanying tables assist the teacher in finding brightness in spelling, spelling age, grade status and the child's spelling classification.⁵

Phonetics: The science of speech sounds, or the scientific study of speech sounds from the standpoint of their production, reception, and symbolization.⁶

Phonics: The study and application of elementary phonetics as a method of teaching beginners to read or enunciate.⁷

Spelling-list method: Graded lists compiled by experts and published either in manual or textbook form for elementary schools.⁸

Work method: This method is sometimes called the sight method or the look-and-say method. The children learn words as units even before they are deliberately taught the names and the sounds of the letters making up the words. The aim of instruction is to have the child learn a number of sight words before attention is paid to the analysis of words.⁹

⁵J.C. Morrison and William McCall, Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1951, p. 1.

⁶Ralph Leutenegger, The Sounds of American English, Scott-Foresman and Co., 1963, p. 1.

⁷Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. and C. Merriam Co., 1961, p. 633.

⁸Marshall Jameson and William Hicks, Elementary School Curriculum, American Book Co., 1960, p. 280.

⁹Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading, Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1964, p. 104.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of phonics in reading.¹ Since Colonial times the pendulum on reading instruction has swung from one position to another. During the early part of our history, the New England Primer, which stressed learning to read by the alphabet or ABC method, was used almost universally. Later the phonic approach as a means of unifying and purifying spoken English in America was introduced by Webster's Blue-Black Speller.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, Horace Mann, convinced of the disadvantages of the phonic method, was advocating the teaching of beginning reading through the whole-word approach. While Mann was advocating this change, McGuffey's Eclectic Readers, the prototype of the modern basal reader, were gaining favor in reading programs. By 1912 Gestalt psychology² was felt in educational circles. This theory lent credence to the introduction of whole words or complete sentences as the initial unit of instruction. During the thirties and up until the mid-forties, the phonic approach was in a state of decline.

After a decade of minimal emphasis on phonics as an aid in unlocking words that the child did not know or had not seen before, teachers

¹Donald Cleveland and Harry B. Miller, "Instruction in Phonics and Success in Beginning Reading", Elementary School Journal, February, 1965, University of Chicago Press, pp. 278-282.

²Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, G. and C. Merriam Co., 1961, p. 348. "Psychology based on the theory that physical, psychological, and biological events do not occur through the summation of separate elements, as sensation or reflexes, but through formed patterns of these, integral units which function singly or in interrelation.

were including more and more phonics in their instructional program. This renewed emphasis on phonetic analysis as an aid to word recognition, has not satisfied the demands of our severest critics, however. It looks as if the pendulum might still be swinging.

History of spelling reform.³ The ideal alphabet would have only one letter for each meaningful speech sound. No language currently in use completely achieves this goal, although some approach it more nearly than does current American-English. The objectives of spelling reform would be to restructure our alphabet so that a one-to-one relationship between sound and symbol would be more nearly accomplished.

Bringing order to written English has been a concern for many hundreds of years. Advocates of spelling reform proclaim many advantages. They point out savings in time and expense which would accrue to the teaching of spelling. They note the improvement and standardization of American-English pronunciation which would result. They claim that a reformed spelling would more readily introduce immigrants to American culture. And they underscore the point that simpler rules of spelling would tend to encourage the use of English internationally.

Yet spelling, like language in general, has its roots buried in the soil of culture, and strongly resists conscious efforts at digging and replanting. Those opposed to spelling reform argue that changes would cause homonyms to become indistinguishable, that the etymology of words would become impossible to trace, and that words related in meaning would

³Richard E. Hodges, "A Short History of Spelling Reform in the U.S.", Phi Delta Kappan, April, 1964, Phi Delta Kappan Inc., pp. 330-332.

become obscured. But in spite of such criticisms, some individuals and groups earnestly continue the attempt.

Ormian, a thirteenth century monk, sought to simplify the Middle English spelling of his time. But his scheme engendered little enthusiasm, and so it lay forgotten until six centuries later.

When colonists arrive in the New World, they brought with them their social traditions, including, of course, their spoken and written language. Contemporary Americans still abide by many of the spelling rules to which seventeenth century New England conformed.

English grammar rules were largely set by Samuel Johnson (1709-1783) who forced English grammar and spelling within the framework of Greek and Latin.

The first concerted effort to standardize the orthography of American-English began with Benjamin Franklin in 1768. He felt, however, that his advancing years would prevent him from following through, so he abandoned it.

Noah Webster flailed away at the rules of grammar and spelling which had been formulated by Samuel Johnson. In 1928 he published his American Dictionary of the English Language. This dictionary and his spelling books influenced the spelling habits of future generations of America's students. An estimated fifty million spellers alone are said to have been used in the nation's schools.

An initial attack came in 1848 by Alexander J. Ellis, who joined forces with Sir Isaac Pitman to undertake an experiment in the teaching of a phonetic alphabet.

The successes caused the St. Louis school system to adopt a modified form of a phonetic alphabet which lasted for twenty years.

In 1876 two organizations merged and formed the Spelling Reform Association. In 1879 the Spelling Reform Association was invited to the National Education Association convention.

Politics influenced the decline of the Spelling Reform Association, but as it perished a new group came into being. The Simplified Spelling Board was aided by Carnegie but upon his death it also declined.

Spelling reform movements have always been hampered by being equated with eccentricity and by the cultural belief that the ability to spell is a good indication of intelligence.

Today, spelling is probably more rigid than any other aspect of language. Any success in altering the present system will most likely be achieved from a linguistic analysis of spelling, in which phonemic principles are applied to the graphic characterizations of speech.

The need for a better spelling approach. The need for a better spelling approach or at least some reform in the teaching of spelling is summed up in the introduction of a curriculum guide made up by a committee for the Missoula, Montana schools.

Spelling is a subject which functions throughout the life of the individual. It is a necessity in school for all written work, and in everyday life it functions in all business and friendly correspondence. The chief aim of spelling is to teach the child to spell correctly the words commonly used in writing. In all written work there is a social necessity for correctness. The penalties attached to misspelling in business letters and in letters of application are certain and severe. Errors in spelling are generally regarded as an indication of inefficiency, crudeness, and lack of general culture.

There is a personal need for correct spelling as well as a social demand. The ability to spell correctly can be developed in most children if they are wisely guided.⁴

In recent years, spelling has been subjected to much scientific study. There is now an abundance of reliable information regarding the content and method of teaching it. Of all the school subjects, spelling has the least excuse for being poorly taught. Many students are poor spellers simply because they have not acquired effective methods of learning to spell. Attention, then, must be given to development of proper techniques of studying.

The goals and aims of a spelling program. Children are no more ready to spell at the same age than they are ready to read or to gather mathematical concepts. Spelling should begin at about the second grade. If a child is to have success in this new endeavor, the teacher must do everything possible to develop a desirable attitude toward spelling among the children. And an important attitude should be a certain pride in success.

The ability to learn to spell depends on many factors, five of which are:

1. Knowing what the word means.
2. Perception of word forms.
3. Knowledge of phonics.
4. Verbal intelligence.
5. A desire to learn how to spell.

⁴S. J. Knudsen, Curriculum Coordinator, Missoula Public School Spelling Guide, Introduction, 1959.

The author goes on to list four general objectives around which she believes all spelling programs should be developed:

1. To master the words most frequently used in every day writing.
2. To acquire the skills needed to learn additional words.
3. To know where to find the correct spelling of certain words.
4. To develop an awareness of the need for correct spelling.⁵

In the same article the author states the reasons for spelling errors. She thinks they are all too frequent even among educated people. Among the most common reasons for spelling errors, in and out of school, are carelessness, laziness, poor study habits, mispronunciations, substitutions of a homonym, errors in double consonants, omission of silent letters, unphonetic words, poor hand writing and lack of concern or indifference on the part of the teacher.

The teacher who becomes aware of the reasons for the errors children are making in their spelling is in a far better position to alleviate the causes for these errors and make better spellers of the pupils.

There are certain words which are more commonly misspelled than others. The teacher who is aware of this list of words can put more concentrated effort behind them.

⁵Laura M. Bohrer, "The Case For Ungraded Spelling", Grade Teacher, pp. 84-86, March, 1965.

Spelling is not easy. The sooner we, as teachers, realize this, and do something to make spelling more interesting and easier for our children, the sooner we can see more good spellers emerging from amongst the children in our classrooms.

The aims for the proper development of spelling of one school system were listed as follows:

General: To build a readiness for spelling and to promote growth in the use of a spelling vocabulary as soon as the pupil has a need to use written communication.

Specific: 1. Develop auditory and visual discrimination, in identifying similarities and differences, rhyming, initial consonants, final consonants, consonant blends, long and short vowel sound, and vowel digraphs 2. Develop a consciousness of the need of spelling; recognize the value of being able to spell correctly 3. Associate sound with the letter it represents 4. Write the letters of the alphabet 5. Master the spelling of the commonly used words in independent written work 6. Establish some independence in spelling through the use of picture dictionaries and personal lists 7. Begin proof-reading skills 8. Begin to generalize about words through activities in word building, using root words, plurals, compounds, contractions, prefixes and suffixes 9. Master a technique for studying a new word 10. Use simple word-analyses techniques 11. Listen to hear syllables in words.⁶

Another expert in his field sets the aims of spelling as:

1. To make automatic the accepted sequence of letters in words most commonly needed for expression of thought in writing.
2. To develop the meaning and use of words to be spelled.
3. To develop what is termed, "a spelling consciousness."

⁶Prince George's County Board of Education, Learn To Spell, Chapter IV, Goals in Spelling, Upper Marboro, Md., 1957.

4. To develop a "spelling conscience."
5. To develop a technique for the study of spelling.⁷

Methods of teaching spelling: One of the most interesting studies that the writer found was concerning a study made with 116 children in Vancouver, Canada. A table was prepared listing verbal, visual, and auditory abilities of 61 "phonics group" pupils and 55 "little phonics group" pupils in four high first grades of Greater Vancouver, Canada.⁸

This study seemed to indicate that a group of children having a planned program of phonics in their curriculum made great strides in spelling in a six month's period. Of course there was improvement in language and reading abilities, also. Too, it is known that any new or experimental program may receive more attention from the instructors. This tends to bring achievement grades up.

In a 1960 curriculum text the authors discuss four ways to handle subject matter in the curriculum. These are treated as separate-subjects organization, correlated subject matter, core program, and broad fields organization.⁹

Three of the categories do not concern this paper but correlated-subjects matter does. People who are not familiar with modern educational

⁷James A. Fitzgerald, Teaching of Spelling, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, 1951, p. 24.

⁸David N. Russell, Adapted and abridged from, A Diagnostic Study of Spelling", Journal of Educational Research, 1943, 37:276-283.

⁹Robert Beck and others, Curriculum in the Modern Elementary School, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960, pp. 192-194.

practices often complain that our schools today are geared to the average and that the very slow fail because they cannot keep up while the more intelligent pupils become bored, wasteful of their time, and often unruly and impolite. The point to remember is that these things were much more common in the old-fashioned separate-subjects organization than in a more modern experience program. The determining condition, however, is not so much the content of the curriculum as it is the methods of presentation. Many critics are scolding about the schools with their "new progressive education" while actually their schools have changed very little and the results they resent will only be changed as the schools adopt some of the better modern methods.

In an effort to overcome the confusion, inefficiency, and unwieldiness of the separate-subjects organization, some educators, early in the nineteen hundreds, developed the idea of correlations. This then is what a phonetic approach to reading does to the language arts. The child learns to write and spell every word he learns to read. This, it is argued, slows the reader down. Perhaps it does but he tends to move faster after the sounds and rules are learned and at the same time becomes a better speller.

One author lists groups of questions asked of pupils to provide for phonetic, structural, and meaning analysis as well as usage practice in independent study of spelling words. As many of these rules are included in the phonetic method of reading, some of them are listed here:¹⁰

¹⁰Howard E. Blake, "Studying Spelling Independently", Elementary English, January, 1960, pp. 29-32.

For phonetic analysis:

What other words can I write that sound like this word?

What other words can I write that begin (end) like this word?

What silent letters are contained in this word?

For structural analysis:

Is this a root word for formation of other words?

If so, write the new words.

What is the prefix, if any, in this word? Can other prefixes be added?

Can this word be made plural?

Can I write the syllables for this word?

For meaning:

What is the dictionary definition of this word?

Does the word have more than one meaning?

What are some good synonyms for this word? Antonyms?

Does the word have a homonym?

Is this an action word?

In research and writings concerning the linguistic approach to reading much is being said in patterns in reading. Though the idea is not new, this idea was brought out in a recent Grade Teacher.¹¹

The authors claim that spelling patterning teaches children to recognize the relationships between sounds and the letters of the alphabet. Thus, it helps them in word attack and in their spelling and read-

¹¹Dr. Gloria Cammarots, and Dr. Morton Botel, "Pattern Your Spelling For Better Reading and Writing", Grade Teacher, Educational Press Association, April, 1964, p. 136.

ing. In addition, it greatly extends written vocabulary beyond that of normal primary learning; children are able to write for themselves words which they have never studied. Finally, because spelling patterning is work which children enjoy doing, it helps them to develop the attitude that language learning can be and is interesting and fun.

In researching for this paper it was discovered that the poor spelling that is done in our schools is a problem that confronts many of our teachers. Many systems are suggested and articles by teachers as well as professional educators are numerous.

One elementary teacher¹² stated that the children in the school where she taught were misspelling too many words, a great number of which could have been spelled by rule. To remedy the situation, she and fellow teachers worked out a program using the words from the speller, but handling them differently.

All the main rules were made available to the children, and the necessary practice was included. The plan not only enabled the youngsters to memorize the basic list from the speller, but also taught one method for attacking new words--word analysis.

The writer went on into the exact steps and rules used for the above plan. The teachers found this system of teaching worked splendidly, but encountered two problems. One was finding time for discussion. This was managed by "borrowing" from the English period.

¹²Eleanor Weeks, "A Program For Improving Daily Spelling", Grade Teacher, May/June, 1965, p. 55.

The second problem (involving Checking) turned into an opportunity. The difficulty began with the children's complaining that the words they built or used to explain some of the rules were not in the speller. This led to good dictionary drill.

The teaching of spelling can be one of the most challenging demands on a creative teacher. The development of positive attitudes, the encouragement of self-study and high motivation may be accomplished by any number of methods. Learning to spell is an individual matter. Though the teacher gives guidance, the major responsibility for learning to spell a word or a group of words lies with the individual child.

What makes spelling growth slack off. As found in the comparative study in this paper, spelling growth seems to slack off as the child progresses in school. An elementary teacher has attempted to answer the question as to why this occurs.

Godfrey says that the difficulties of teaching spelling rules or phonics seem to focus on the irregular pattern of the English language, with lists of exceptions. Spelling, of necessity, must be an individual pursuit for the learner. It must allow for different rates not only in what words should be studied but also in how many. The bright learner must be challenged; the slow learner must not be overpowered by his difficulty.¹³

The approach needed to systematize a method of spelling attack for the learner would require an overview of the entire language. In

¹³Margaret Godfrey, "What Makes Spelling Growth Slack Off?", Grade Teacher, November, 1964, Educational Press Association, pp. 46-47 and 70-80.

English, each vowel has several sound values in pronunciation; many consonants have more than one sound. Then there are diphthongs and other types of letter combinations. It would appear logical to teach, initially, an awareness of this phonetic phenomenon.

The teaching of spelling to elementary school pupils can utilize past phonics training. The initial step would be to discuss the proper pronunciations of words in our language. This will hopefully lead to several observations by the children; first, that not all letters sound alike; second, that a single phonetical sound can be represented in a word by different letters or combinations of letters; and, third that some letters in a word are silent.

After correctness of pronunciation is established, the previously established assumption of a (basic) dominant sound for each letter must be reexamined. The individualized approach to this method must coincide and not interfere with previously established individual learning habits. Pressure to use this method would seem outrageously unjust to the students who learn spelling with ease.

Having decided upon a dominant phonetical sound for each letter, the student can then be instructed to examine each word carefully for elements which do not conform to this dominant pattern. These are referred to as "hard spots" - a term already used in spelling. A generalization must be that each word should be scrutinized for non-phonetical elements and marked for further study. Word configuration is a helpful aid in spelling.

Spelling lists are compiled typically from reading words learned in a previous year. Any definitions not known should be checked by the student of course. Previously learned skills in reading are used to an advantage in spelling, e.g. phonograms, syllabification, word structure, likenesses and differences in words.

Spelling goals are, seemingly, independence in learning new words, and ability to spell correctly words used in functional or creative writing situations. The teacher's concept of a goal for his students will be viewed as self-mastery and an interest in expanding the breadth of language used in all writing.

Causes and correction of spelling errors. In a publication by Charles Merrill Books is a summary of the causes and correction of spelling errors.¹⁴ If this is at all accurate, the corrective procedures are well-covered by a direct phonetic approach to spelling. Some of the typical errors are listed as follows: Inaccurate pronunciation and inaccurate auditory memory, insertion and omission of silent letters, confusion of letters for consonant sounds, confusion of letters for vowel sounds, confusion of double vowels, inaccurate formation of derivatives, reversal or transposition of letters, incorrect meaning, phonetic spelling applied to non-phonetic words, confusion of words that are similar in sound, lack of acquaintance with phonetic elements, and over-emphasis on rules.

The corrective procedures suggested are those procedures used in

¹⁴"Cause and Correction of Spelling Errors", Trends in Teaching, Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1964-1965, pp. 3-4.

teaching spelling along with phonetic reading. These are: Pronounce each word accurately on initial presentation, check individual doubtful enunciations, repeat several times part of word that is difficult to enunciate, stress visual image for silent letters, practice writing part likely to cause trouble, break words into syllables and look at its parts, practice writing word for kinesthetic impression, help pupils realize that double vowels often take the sound of single letter or another vowel combination, work for vivid visual image of word endings, stress closer understanding of method of adding suffixes, have pupils listen for sequence of each sound, illustrate use of word in commonest meaning in sentences, pupil should be taught to expect numerous exceptions make rules unsafe as a complete guide to spelling, and stimulate pride in work well done and praise all improvement.

Spelling taught as a part of a coordinated language arts program.

If the teaching of spelling were as controversial as the teaching of reading, better ways of teaching it might be found. We are much too complacent about teaching this very important subject. This condition has brought about mediocre and often times, poor results in spelling achievement. In an age when we should be spelling more efficiently, we find ourselves at lower levels than we were several decades ago. The writer believes that better results in spelling can be achieved if the teaching is approached from a coordinated language arts point of view rather than from a single point of view.

In one article¹⁵ the author states that English spelling is not easy and that learning to spell is a complex mental process involving perception and imagery.

Each child will surely need to learn to spell the basic vocabulary of the English language and also to learn to spell other words which are of particular interest to him in his writing. This accounts for about five per cent of the child's written vocabulary.

Readiness for spelling is as necessary as readiness for reading. Children need mental maturity and linguistic development before they can learn to spell effectively.

Teachers using certain textbooks will in all probability follow the lessons as set up by the authors. Invariably the lessons will include, (1) a basic vocabulary of words, (2) study exercise, (3) a grading of words, (4) a plan for presenting the words, and (5) tests.

One of the most encouraging trends in the teaching of spelling is linking it to other subjects, particularly the other language arts.

Phonetic clues which aid readers to pronounce unknown words in reading can also serve as aids to correct pronunciation in connection with spelling.

An understanding of structural word analysis can bring about dramatic improvement in spelling. The ability to figure out the meaning and pronunciation of a word through the use of contextual clues can also be an aid in spelling. Creative writing gives children practice in

¹⁵Allen J. Figurel, "A Coordinated Language Arts Approach to Spelling", Education, February, 1964, Vol. 84, #6, Bobbs-Merrill Co., pp. 352-256.

spelling words already studied and also some new ones. Occasions for coordinating spelling and other language study are limitless. Handwriting and spelling develop together where the emphasis is on writing whole words. Insisting on legibility, especially in cursive writing, often brings about better spelling. Spelling is a process that lends itself well to programed instruction. The author concluded that "a coordinated approach should bring about better spelling in an age when it is needed".

In the primary grades the child not only begins to read but ordinarily also acquires some abilities in handwriting and spelling. Reading is one of a tightly-knit group of activities often called the language arts. The closeness of this association is evidenced by the relationships between methods employed in beginning reading and methods in the early development of handwriting and spelling abilities.

In terms of chronological development the child's use of oral language is the first activity to appear. Language abilities develop rapidly, and are quite complex by the time the child enters school. In most cases reading is the third major language ability to be acquired after speaking and listening, usually at about six or seven years of age. Before the child can read, he must be able to associate words with the things they represent. In turn, as he develops ability to recognize words somewhere in the first grade he often wants to write them too. This he first does by copying. Accordingly, handwriting is usually well started before the necessity for spelling appears. Spelling ability enters the picture when the child needs to write words which are not in

sight for copying. Spelling ordinarily should not be attempted as a regular "subject", then, until the child has well-developed abilities in oral language, reading, and handwriting.

There is considerable research that suggests that abilities in language, reading, handwriting, and spelling are closely related and contribute to one another, especially in the primary grades. A general picture of the usual sequence in language development suggests that reading and spelling are correlative growths. Children seem to go through stages in developing language abilities, as follows: experience, hearing comprehension, speech production, reading, writing, and refinement of language control.

This suggests that language abilities grow together and tend to contribute to one another. Specific research studies give further details of relatedness. Gates¹⁶ showed that reading and spelling abilities are based on such common factors as visual perception, phonetic abilities, and habits of writing. Russell¹⁷ found that, in the first and second grades, readiness for spelling activities depends upon other language abilities usually regarded as speaking or reading abilities. For example, abilities in word recognition, recognition of capital and lowercase letters, visual discrimination, such as recognizing small differences in words, and auditory perception abilities apply to both reading and spelling. The children who were studied had had some practice in seeing word

¹⁶Arthur I. Gates, "Reading in Relation to Spelling", Teachers' Service Bulletin in Reading, Vol. 6, No. 2, Macmillan, October, 1944.

¹⁷David D. Russell, "A Diagnostic Study of Spelling Readiness", Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 37, December, 1943, pp. 276-283.

parts and had developed habits of close attention to words in their reading; they seemed likely to be more successful than others in their subsequent work in spelling. There is some evidence, accordingly, that phonetic analysis of words may be useful in developing spelling competence as well as ability in attacking words.

In another reference¹⁸ the authors state that,

Spelling ability is part of the constellation of language arts, related to word recognition, grasp of meaning, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students tend to be either good or poor in both reading and spelling. Correlations between spelling and reading are almost as high as between reading and group-intelligence-test scores. Improvement in reading often leads to better spelling. This does not mean, however, that poor spelling is necessarily caused by deficiencies in reading or vocabulary.

As pupils go through the high school, they tend either to improve or deteriorate in both abilities. There is some evidence that students in grades from the seventh through the twelfth spell better the words they have read. Pupils in the sixth grade learned to spell more words from wide reading and varied learning activities in informal social studies than from spending the same amount of time in the traditional type of history and geography classes. In both groups, improvement in spelling was a by-product of reading, not the result of special instruction in spelling.

Under the editorship of Dr. Thomas D. Horn, the National Council of Teachers of English published eight articles dealing with spelling and handwriting. The following remarks were taken from the first of these.¹⁹

¹⁸Ruth Strang and Constance M. McCullough, and Arthur E. Traxler, The Improvement of Reading, McGraw-Hill Company, 1961, pp. 296-297.

¹⁹John M. Veto, "Understanding and Meeting Individual Needs in Spelling", Elementary English, November, 1964, pp. 753-754.

Teachers must recognize that the spread of individual differences is at least as great in spelling as in reading. Unlike the reading situation, however, the good speller does not require a great deal of individual attention. The aim of the spelling program is to develop in each pupil a technique which will facilitate his learning to spell new words. In his dealing with the slower spellers, the teacher should create an awareness and an understanding of all those skills which the superior spellers are using implicitly.

The following month a second article followed, Petty had this to say.²⁰

Since the impact of Sputnik, a greater emphasis has been placed on the 3R's. Thus, both spelling and handwriting are again receiving greater attention than was the case only a few years ago...Actual procedures followed in the teaching of spelling throughout the country are considerably influenced by the commercial materials used. Recent surveys of the status of handwriting instruction indicates that handwriting programs are also largely tied to commercial handwriting systems.

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 but not as high as might be expected. Pupils certainly do learn to spell many words as a result of reading and other activities.

Recognition of the interrelationships of the language arts, should not be interpreted as support for an individual 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.

²⁰Walter T. Petty, "Handwriting and Spelling", Elementary English, December, 1964, p. 839.

A great deal of study has gone into spelling and reading research. Some of the questions educators have attempted to answer are:²¹ "Just what is the relationship between spelling and reading performances among students? Is teaching spelling through reading a helpful practice in learning to read? Should spelling be eliminated for corrective readers? Should word meanings be taught as part of spelling instruction?"

These important questions should concern classroom teachers who are responsible for teaching both spelling and reading in an integrated language arts program. One article by Russell²² presented a summary of pertinent research relating to these questions. Only that having to do with the primary level was chosen for this paper.

His investigation explored spelling readiness in the primary grades. His observations were: (a) spelling readiness can be incidentally acquired in the first grade; (b) a first-grade program of direct instruction in reading including handwriting, phonetic analysis of appearance and sound of words, syllables, and letters, results in better achievement than more incidental "phonics", (c) habits of attention directed to parts of words, recognizing "word families", are conducive to initial success in English spelling; (d) spelling ability in second grade is related to abilities in word recognition, and paragraph reading, abilities

²¹Gus P. Plessas, and Dortha M. Ladley, "Some Implications of Spelling and Reading Research", Elementary English, February, 1965, p. 142.

²²David H. Russell, "A Diagnostic Study of Spelling Readiness", Journal of Educational Research, December, 1940, pp. 192-193.

in recognition of capital and lowercase letters, visual perception abilities such as giving the names of letters sounded or spelling nonsense syllables; (e) in a primary group where "little phonics" was presented, spelling readiness test for spelling is not indicated as necessary; and (g) skills can be taught that are basic to success in language arts of the primary grades. Systematic instruction, therefore, seems to have a favorable influence in the general language development of children.

The NEA Research Association summarizes well the spelling research done for this chapter.²³

When dependable evidence is available, it is entirely possible that teaching sound-letter relationships will be regarded as an essential part of the spelling program.

Even though the evidence is meager on some important matters, it seems to justify considerable emphasis upon phonics. As already pointed out, one important step in learning to spell a word is to pronounce it correctly, noting how each sound is spelled. This in itself should gradually increase the pupil's knowledge of sound-to-letter relationships, but it is not the same as direct instruction on phonetic generalizations. Instruction in phonics should be regarded, however, as an aid to spelling rather than as a substitute for the systematic study of the words in the spelling list. If sound-letter relationships are competently taught according to the evidence, it is reasonable to expect that this teaching will contribute to the effectiveness of the corrected test and of the study of words missed on the test, sharpening attention to the way sounds in a given word are spelled.

²³ Ernest Horn, "Teaching Spelling", Department of Classroom Teachers, American Education Research Association of the NEA, 1962, p. 24.

CHAPTER III

THE SPALDING METHOD OF TEACHING READING

One of the methods of reading used in the Denali School is the Spalding Plan. It is explained completely in the book, The Writing Road To Reading. This Unified Phonics Method was designed especially for use in the elementary schools beginning with the first grade. However, it has proved to be successful in high school classrooms and in private instruction from pre-school age through college age, and even older. It is a fully developed and a complete method for teaching the basic technique of language arts-accurate speaking, spelling, writing and reading--as one integrated subject.¹

The core of the method is a technique by which the child learns how to write down the sounds used in spoken English as they are combined into words. Thus, conversely he can pronounce any printed word. Meaning is thoroughly taught hand-in-hand with the writing and by using new words in original sentences. It begins with correct pronunciation of words and the writing of their component sounds in accordance with the rules of English spelling. By this means the saying, writing, reading and meaning of words are well learned and understood.

This method differs basically from other phonic methods in that it does not start with reading, which is, in phonics, the translating of printed letters or words into the sounds of spoken words. It first teaches the child the writing of the sounds by using the letters which say the sounds. This direct approach from the sounds of the words the child knows and uses in speaking into the written characters which represent the sounds is a direct simple, logical explanation to him of the whole writing and reading system.²

¹Romalda Bishop Spalding, Writing Road To Reading, Whiteside, Inc., and Wm. Morrow and Co., N.Y., 1957, p. 8.

²Ibid. p. 27.

The fact that this method teaches spelling first, by actually writing the sounds of words on paper, is believed to be a complete departure from other phonics teaching methods.

The teaching procedure is given below:³

1. Teach the phonograms by having the pupils say in unison the one or more sounds of each phonogram, showing them one phonogram card after another in varying sequences. Correct handwriting is taught from the very start, practicing only with the phonograms. Have them write on paper each phonogram just after they pronounce it. This unites the visual, aural, and kinesthetic, functions of the brain.
2. Avoid naming the letters. Use their phonetic sounds instead. The child should come to think of the letters as being sounds.
3. Always call the phonogram containing two or more letters by its sound; that is to say, never spell it out. For example, "eigh" has one sound.
4. Teach and require accurate pronunciation and correct legible handwriting from the very beginning.
5. As soon as the phonograms are fairly well learned, dictate words from the Ayres list for the children to write, making sure that they say aloud each phonogram of a one-syllable word and each syllable of longer words just before they start to write it.
6. Teach the basic laws (and exceptions) for spelling as they come up in writing words.
7. Where no rule governs the choice of which phonogram to use to represent a certain sound in a word, it can only be learned by memory, and the dictionary is referred to as the only authority.

³Ibid. p. 40.

8. Remember that the real study of the language is in the spelling period. Spelling is the basic key to a grasp of the written language and, for that matter, of the spoken one.
9. Reading from a book is not begun until the pupils have completely learned enough common words to comprehend instantly the meaning of a sentence.

The teaching of writing should precede reading. This is fundamental. Writing brings into play the kinesthetic controls, that is, the use of the hand muscles, which are coordinated with those of the mouth when the child pronounces the sound of each phonogram before he writes it.

Each child above the second grade has his own notebook. It is his own reference book for the phonograms and for the rules of spelling and pronunciation.

This Spalding Unified Phonics method was introduced in the Denali School in the fall of 1960. Thirty-two first graders were chosen on the basis of permanent residence only. At the end of the school year, a written report was made to the Superintendent of Schools, by the principal of Denali School. From the report are taken the following facts that pertain to spelling.⁴

The thirty-two children were divided into three groups of reading ability. Twenty-seven do excellent printing and can spell one-syllable phonetic words from dictation. They have studied the 145 spelling words in the Ayre's list for first grade, and about one-third of the second grade words. They write original "stories". Of the remaining five children, four are reading primer material and can spell many words. Three of the children of this group are from culturally underprivileged and bilingual homes. One child in this group who achieved very little in the reading will be retained in the first grade.

⁴Martha M. Haggard, Report to Dr. J. C. Ryan, Superintendent of Schools, Subject: Experimental Reading Program, 1961.

In the school year 1962-63 the program had expanded to the following groups:

	<u>Spalding</u>	<u>Non-Spalding</u>
First grade	2	3
Second grade	2	2
Third grade	1	3

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISON OF SPELLING TEST SCORES IN GRADES USING A LIST APPROACH AND GRADES USING SPALDING METHOD OF SPELLING

Although there are other approaches to spelling only two are considered in this paper. They might best be explained by Dolch.¹

There are two approaches to spelling. One approach seeks to teach certain lists of words and therefore may be called the "list approach". These lists are of four kinds; First, there are the lists of common words which make up such a large part of all writing that every person, child or adult, should know their spelling automatically. Second, there are lists of words commonly misspelled. Third, each school subject may have its own spelling list. Fourth, there are combination lists made up of words which are in common usage, which are important for certain subjects, and which are often misspelled.

There is a second approach to spelling which we may call the "learners approach". That is, this approach tries not merely to teach certain words, but to make the student an efficient learner of spelling so that no matter what may be the situation in which he finds himself, in school or out, he may spell efficiently. This approach to spelling begins with the premise that no list or combination of lists can entirely take care of anyone's life spelling needs. Lists can take care of the more common words, but it is not those words that really cause the trouble for most people. We do write the common words every day, but we also write an ever-increasing and ever changing list of words that no one can foresee. The life spelling needs of each individual are different from those of any other. These life needs are tremendous. The learner must have the "habits of the good speller". The good speller succeeds in spelling at any and at all times.

This study was conducted with a control group using a list-approach to spelling and the experimental group being taught spelling in a com-

¹Edward W. Dolch, Modern Teaching of Spelling, University Press, Champaign, Ill., 1950, p. 36.

bination reading, writing and spelling program advocated by the Spalding Unified Method.

Methods of spelling used for this study. The control used Webster's Spelling Goals, grade two and three.² This consisted of thirty-six units per grade, the first six of which comprised a readiness section. Every sixth unit thereafter was a review unit. Each lesson was divided into five days' work, each day being indicated by a letter, "a" through "e". The week's work followed this pattern in general:

- a. A study of the word list and the generalization it embodies.
- b & Activities which use each of the words in varied and
- c. interesting ways to emphasize both spelling and meaning.
- d. Word-building activities which extend the generalizations of the lesson to other words of similar pattern and structures to develop a power vocabulary.
- e. The weekly spelling test.
- f. Starting with Unit 13, supplementary enrichment activities for each unit, except review units, are provided.

The experimental group were taught spelling in the combination Spalding method as described in detail in Chapter III.

Selection of children participating in the study.

Control Group

All first grade pupils not in the Spalding groups enrolled in the Denali School for the school year 1961-62 were studied as a control group. However, by April, 1964 only twenty-seven had attended continu-

²Spelling Goals, Grade Two and Grade Three, Webster Publishing Company, St. Louis, Missouri, 1959.

ously for the three school years 1961-62, 1962-63, 1963-64. Therefore, these twenty-seven pupils were considered as the control group.

Experimental Group

All children placed in this group were chosen on the basis of being permanent in the community. The principal made these decisions as contact was made with the parents.

Mental Ability Tests. All children entering second grade in Denali School are given the California Mental Maturity Test.³ This test was administered in September of 1962. The scores were studied to determine the degree of similarity of abilities between the children in the two groups. The results of this test is presented in Table 1, p. 35.

The control group of twenty-seven children had a mean I.Q. of 106. The experimental group of twenty-nine children had a mean I.Q. of 107. In a test of significance of difference⁴ it was found that there was no significant difference other than that of chance at the one per cent level.

Morrison-McCall Test.⁵ Starting in the Fall of October, 1962 through the Spring of April, 1964, the Morrison-McCall test was given to all students attending Denali school grades two through six. Scores from grades two and three were used for this study. The Morrison-McCall Spelling

³Elizabeth T. Sullivan, and others, California Short Form Test of Mental Maturity, 1957, S Form.

⁴N. M. Downie and R. W. Heath, Basic Statistical Methods, Harper and Row, New York, 1959, p. 124.

⁵J. Cayce Morrison and William McCall, Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1951.

Scale is a test containing eight lists of words of equal difficulty. Each list contains fifty words advancing from easy words to the more difficult. Table 2, p. 36 is a sample copy of list #2 taken from the Morrison-McCall test. A class record was kept with the name, grade, number of test, number of words correct, and grade placement for all children in this study.

Table 1. Comparison of Medians and Means of I.Q. Scores (Grade 2) of Control Group and Experimental Group.

<u>Control Group</u>		<u>Experimental Group</u>	
<u>Child No.</u>	<u>I.Q.</u>	<u>Child No.</u>	<u>I.Q.</u>
1	106	1	107
2	101	2	113
3	106	3	111
4	104	4	100
5	71	5	112
6	113	6	110
7	94	7	117
8	102	8	99
9	89	9	101
10	114	10	120
11	119	11	126
12	126	12	101
13	122	13	111
14	106	14	94
15	102	15	92
16	113	16	89
17	100	17	120
18	115	18	119
19	108	19	126
20	85	20	103
21	130	21	124
22	128	22	77
23	100	23	106
24	120	24	107
25	99	25	91
26	101	26	109
27	78	27	75
		28	132
		29	111
TOTAL	2852		3103

Mean I.Q. = 106
Median = 105

Mean I.Q. = 107
Median = 108

Table 2. Sample Page From the Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale. List Number 2. Page 9.⁵

1. can	I <u>can</u> go with you.	can
2. ten	I have <u>ten</u> cents.	ten
3. old	How <u>old</u> are you?	old
4. six	I am <u>six</u> years old.	six
5. ice	He slipped on the <u>ice</u> .	ice
6. child	The <u>child</u> is ill.	child
7. his	<u>His</u> arm was broken	his
8. that	<u>That</u> is my dog.	that
9. far	How <u>far</u> are you going?	far
10. form	<u>Form</u> a circle.	form
11. glad	I am <u>glad</u> to see you.	glad
12. same	Her name is the <u>same</u> as mine.	same
13. night	Owls come out at <u>night</u> .	night
14. cent	I have one <u>cent</u> .	cent
15. within	Keep <u>within</u> the law.	within
16. point	<u>Point</u> toward the north.	point
17. money	How much <u>money</u> have you?	money
18. picture	Whose <u>picture</u> is this?	picture
19. change	Do not <u>change</u> your position.	change
20. number	<u>Number</u> your papers.	number
21. struck	He was <u>struck</u> by lightning.	struck
22. personal	It is a <u>personal</u> matter.	personal
23. address	Do you know her <u>address</u> ?	address
24. several	I have <u>several</u> hats.	several
25. known	I have <u>known</u> her a week.	known
26. their	<u>Their</u> homes were flooded.	their
27. perhaps	<u>Perhaps</u> you are right.	perhaps
28. popular	Gold is a <u>popular</u> game.	popular
29. against	He fell <u>against</u> the wall.	against
30. treasure	The hidden <u>treasure</u> was found.	treasure
31. investigate	I will <u>investigate</u> for you.	investigate
32. certain	I am <u>certain</u> of the date.	certain
33. really	Are you <u>really</u> going?	really
34. conference	The teachers had a <u>conference</u> .	conference
35. business	His <u>business</u> is important.	business

⁵J. Cayce Morrison, and William A. McCall, Morrison-McCall Spelling Scale, 1951, List #2, p. 9.

36. citizen	Mr. Smith is a good <u>citizen</u> .	citizen
37. elaborate	The decorations were <u>elaborate</u> .	elaborate
38. association	They formed a large <u>association</u> .	association
39. evidence	We have plenty of <u>evidence</u> .	evidence
40. secretary	My secretary is <u>accurate</u> .	accurate
41. character	He has a good <u>character</u> .	character
42. cordially	He welcomed us <u>cordially</u> .	cordially
43. especially	I am <u>especially</u> happy today.	especially
44. disappoint	I will not <u>disappoint</u> you.	disappoint
45. decision	The boy made an excellent <u>decision</u> .	decision
46. parliament	We attended <u>parliament</u> .	parliament
47. recommend	Can you <u>recommend</u> that book?	recommend
48. endeavor	<u>Endeavor</u> to do your best.	endeavor
49. privilege	It is your <u>privilege</u> to go.	privilege
50. villain	The burglar was a <u>villain</u> .	villain

In Table 3, p. 39 are the grade placement scores of the children in the Control Group for tests given in October, 1962 and April, 1963. In Table 4, p. 40, are the grade placement scores of the children in the Experimental Group for tests given in October, 1962 and April, 1963.

An evaluation of the net change was accomplished by testing the significance of the difference between the two changes or the changes in the two groups.⁶ These differences were found to be essentially the same; that is there was no significant difference between the two groups.

A summary, conclusion, and recommendation for further research are contained in Chapter IV.

⁶N. M. Downie and R. W. Heath, Basic Statistical Methods, Harper and Row, New York, 1959, p. 124.

Table 3. The Control Group Grade Placement Scores for October, 1962 and April, 1963 and the Difference Between the Two Scores.

Child No.	October 1962	April 1963	Difference
1	2.3	5.8	3.5
2	2.0	4.1	2.1
3	2.0	3.9	1.9
4	2.2	3.4	1.2
5	1.5	3.4	1.9
6	2.5	3.4	.9
7	1.0	3.3	2.3
8	1.8	2.9	1.1
9	1.7	2.9	1.2
10	2.0	5.6	3.6
11	2.3	5.6	3.3
12	2.2	5.2	3.0
13	2.3	4.9	2.6
14	1.7	4.7	3.0
15	2.4	4.7	2.3
16	2.2	4.5	2.3
17	1.5	4.3	2.8
18	2.1	3.9	1.8
19	3.1	5.2	2.1
20	3.3	5.1	1.8
21	2.7	4.2	1.5
22	5.4	8.0	2.6
23	3.3	4.5	1.2
24	2.7	4.2	1.5
25	3.3	4.1	.8
26	2.4	4.1	1.7
27	<u>1.9</u>	<u>2.3</u>	<u>.4</u>
TOTAL	63.8	118.2	54.4

Table 4. The Experimental Group Grade Placement Scores for October, 1962 and April, 1963 and the Differences Between the Two Scores.

Child No.	October 1962	April 1963	Differences
1	3.3	6.2	2.9
2	3.4	6.2	2.8
3	3.4	5.8	2.4
4	2.6	5.6	3.0
5	3.1	5.6	2.5
6	3.5	5.6	2.1
7	3.3	5.6	2.3
8	1.5	5.6	4.1
9	3.9	5.6	1.7
10	2.9	5.4	2.5
11	2.9	5.4	2.5
12	3.1	5.4	2.3
13	3.1	5.2	2.1
14	2.3	5.1	2.8
15	3.7	5.1	1.4
16	3.5	4.9	1.4
17	3.4	4.5	1.1
18	2.2	4.5	2.3
19	2.2	4.5	2.3
20	2.6	4.5	1.9
21	2.0	4.5	2.5
22	2.3	4.2	1.9
23	2.5	3.9	1.4
24	2.1	3.5	1.4
25	1.5	3.4	1.9
26	1.7	3.3	1.6
27	1.7	2.9	1.2
28	3.4	7.0	3.6
29	<u>3.7</u>	<u>5.6</u>	<u>1.9</u>
TOTAL	80.8	144.6	63.8

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether or not there was a difference in spelling achievement when it is taught with the Spalding phonics method of reading as compared with the list approach.

The major hypothesis held was that higher grade placement scores would be shown on a Morrison-McCall test by students being taught by the Spalding method of reading.

This study was limited to children attending the Denali Elementary School in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The writer first reviewed much of the recent literature available in the field of spelling.

Summary.

In 1961 the Denali School introduced the Spalding Method of reading to one first grade. When the program had reached its third year and had grown considerably, the Morrison McCall spelling test was administered to all second and third graders October, 1963 to April, 1964. Grade placement scores of all the children in the two groups were recorded and the difference between the first test taken and the last test was determined. A test of significance of difference between the changes in the two groups was computed and there was no significant difference. Also, there was no significance of difference in the I.Q.'s of both groups.

The actual grade placement scores of the experimental group were higher, but as the children came into second grade having had more spelling training this was to be expected.

Conclusion.

The experiment offers the evidence that the children in the experimental group did not have any higher achievement than the children in the control group. There were many variables, which makes it difficult to come to a definite conclusion. An experimental program is influenced by the teacher's enthusiasm, and when it is known that a monthly test is being given, the teacher has a tendency to work harder on that subject. Also home room teachers gave the Morrison-McCall test, and the presentation may have been different.

Recommendation.

It is recommended by the writer: 1. That if a similar study were to be conducted the first grade children in both groups have formal spelling, perhaps both using the Ayres list as used by the Spalding group. 2. That the spelling achievement of both groups be followed on up through the grades. Further comparisons could then be made.

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