

**ANALYSIS OF SPELLING ERRORS  
IN NINTH AND TENTH GRADE CLASSES**

**BY**

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ANALYSIS OF SPELLING ERRORS IN NINTH  
AND TENTH GRADE CLASSES

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
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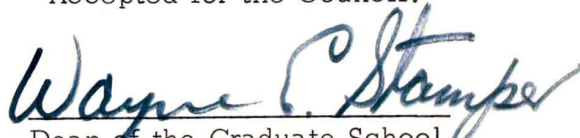


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Helen Murphy Crutcher entitled "Analysis of Spelling Errors in Ninth and Tenth Grade Classes at Todd County Central High School." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, with a major in Supervision.

  
Major Professor

Accepted for the Council:

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Chapter 1

### THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

Spelling has been recognized as an instructional problem in public schools for the past century. Earlier, spelling was a part of the social scene in rural America, as "Spelling Bees" were frequently held as "contests of strength," or the proven ability to perform well in school. Often "Spelling Bees" were used as examples of school achievement when school officials visited the classroom.

During the era of progressive education in America, spelling as a subject in the school curriculum declined and was taught when "there was a felt need" or not at all. This incidental approach to instruction has been blamed by the structuralists as the reason for spelling "failures" in our school.

### THE PROBLEM

#### Statement of the Problem

The statement of the problem was stated as a question: Will instruction in dictionary skills decrease spelling errors on English themes written by students in ninth and tenth grade classes?

The population of the study was 128 freshman and sophomore students at Todd County Central High School at Elkton, Kentucky. The students were distributed in five classes of nineteen, thirty, twenty-eight, and twenty-one. Frequencies of most often misspelled words on the English themes written in class were graphed to demonstrate the direction of loss or gain in frequencies of errors.

Before beginning the study, spelling was not emphasized by the writer as a classroom activity in English. English grammar and literature with some speech activities comprised the major portion of the instructional activities in these classes.

A pilot study was undertaken during a problems' course to obtain the words most often misspelled. The list is included in Appendix A, pages 34-36. Five hundred and twelve English themes were checked for spelling errors. A program was planned to teach twenty lessons on dictionary skills. Lesson plans were constructed for twenty days of dictionary instruction. The lesson plans are included in Appendix B, pages 38-39.

### Importance of the Study

The writer chose to compile a list of misspelled words from English themes written by ninth and tenth grade students because Thomas Horne recommended that the selection and gradation of spelling words for instruction should be chosen from the words which were most important

in the writing done by children in that grade and which were also important in the writing of adults.<sup>1</sup>

The grading of English themes gave the author the opportunity to examine misspelled words since they were usually circled with a red pencil. Many misspelled words seemed to occur again and again. Horne also recommended "dictionary use as basic to any spelling program and crucial for accommodating individual differences."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, this study was conducted to compile a list of misspelled words and to teach a series of dictionary skills to the students to see if the number of misspelled words could be reduced.

It was felt that spelling should be taught more in high school English classes and that a way to do it more efficiently should be devised. This study was an effort to implement an approach recommended by Horne in the field of spelling in order to improve an instructional area for which the writer felt personally responsible.

#### DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

##### Spelling

Spelling is the art or technique of forming words by letters composing a word.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas D. Horne, "Spelling," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Robert L. Ebel (4th.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 1285.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1289.

<sup>3</sup>Philip Babcock Grove, Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. C. Merriam Co., 1963), p. 2370.



### Theme

The word theme is defined as a subject or topic on which one speaks or writes; a proposition for discussion or argument; a subject of fictional artistic representation; an idea, ideal, or orienting principle; a written exercise required for a student commonly at frequent or regular intervals in a composition course.<sup>4</sup>

### Language

Language is used when one is referring to words, their pronunciation and the methods of combining them used and understood by a considerable community and established by long usage; a systematic means of communication ideals or feelings by use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings.<sup>5</sup>

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A limitation of the study was that factors such as intelligence, social class, and amount of study time were not controlled as in experimental design. The author used the same group of subjects for a pre and post treatment. Therefore, other factors may have contributed to the result of the study that were not measured.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 2190.

<sup>5</sup>C. T. Onions, G. W. Friedrichsen and R. W. Burchfield, The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology (Oxford University: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 514.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Spelling reform has been part of the general reform movement in education, particularly by the progressives during 1925-38 and by the Council of Basic Education that was begun in 1952 which charged that the progressives had diluted the education of children since the youth of the nation could not spell.

Research of literature in the field was categorized into four broad areas. These areas were as follows:

1. History of the reform movement in spelling
2. Causes of inability to spell
3. Methods of teaching spelling
4. Miscellaneous

### HISTORY OF THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN SPELLING

G. R. Turner stated in his article, "But My Spelling Is Terrible," that one must understand quite clearly that there are no absolute authorities or arbiters on spelling anywhere in this country or in any other country that uses the spoken English language. This article stated that no teachers, scholars, lexicographers, editors, or government officials can arbitrarily indicate the "correct" spelling of a word. Mr. Turner's

reason for making a statement like this was that the spelling of a word is determined by popular usage alone. He meant that if a word is spelled in one or even ten different ways by a significant number of educated people, each of these spellings should be accepted universally as a representation of the spoken word. This is not true of the languages of all countries.<sup>1</sup>

Many writers have offered theories on why spelling has been difficult. Paul C. Burns and Alberta L. Lowe in The Language Arts in Childhood Education offered one of the best explanations of this. These writers stated that all the words that appeared in the first five verses of Genesis (as in the King James Version of 1611) also appear in the first 5,000 words in Horne's A Basic Writing Vocabulary. This should suggest to one that spelling has not changed very much in the 350 years. However, pronunciation and usage have changed. This accounts for the difficulty in spelling since pronunciation and usage are conventional, not scientific. Noah Webster included in his first dictionary proposals for easier spelling; for example, tuf for tough, cheque for check and many more.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G. R. Turner, "But My Spelling Is Terrible," English Journal, LV (November, 1966), p. 1091.

<sup>2</sup>Paul C. Burns and Alberta L. Lowe, The Language Arts in Childhood Education (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1966), p. 257.



The early elementary schools made no systematic attempt to give direct instruction in spelling, but spelling received some attention. The first spelling textbook was Noah Webster's famous "blue-backed" spelling book, which was published in 1783. After the adoption of the blue-back book, spelling became a popular school activity. Some of the early books had 10,000 or more words; whereas, one today would have only 3,000-5,000 words. We have attempted to list those words which are most important for children to learn to spell. This was not done in the past.<sup>3</sup>

Even though the early elementary schools made no systematic attempt to give a directed form of instruction in spelling, one would find that spelling occupied a larger portion of the curriculum than would be possible to occupy in the modern school with its broader educational goals and more complex problems. In the past, spelling bees served as community get-togethers; whereas, today good spelling is considered one of the social graces. In the culture of the American people, a requirement among educated people is the skill of correct spelling.<sup>4</sup>

By 1818, five million copies of Webster's spellers had been sold. Between the years 1840 and 1880, one million copies were sold. Even

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>4</sup>Mildred A Dawson, Marion Zollinger, and Ardell Elwell, Guiding Language Learning (2nd ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), p. 334.

as recent as 1946 a 5,000-copy edition was grabbed up by collectors. Since so much emphasis is placed on orthography, many teachers and parents have remained interested in the ability of children to spell.<sup>5</sup>

### CAUSES OF INABILITY TO SPELL

A pamphlet published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development quoted Emmett A. Betts as listing eight causes of spelling deficiencies. These eight causes that Betts listed are outlined below:

1. Limited mental ability
2. Limited reading ability
3. Hearing impairment
4. Visual defects
5. Faulty listening skills
6. Poor handwriting
7. Overemphasis of phonics
8. Poor study habits<sup>6</sup>

Betts seemed to think that the causes of confusion were that pupils spelled before reading, learned difficult words too soon, learned to

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<sup>5</sup>Harold G. Shane and June Grant Muiry, Improving Language Arts Instruction Through Research (Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1963), p. 68.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

spell letter-by-letter, isolated parts of words, and memorized rules. Even today, teachers can be found who have a very strict spelling program which has included within its framework a long list of rules to be memorized. This, in itself, is enough to cause students to hate spelling.

One of the most severe problems that teachers face is the attitude that students have "I can't spell" or the "What difference does it make whether I spell or not?" The teacher must realize that spelling is consistent day-by-day hard work and has importance to the individual student in developing skills.

Horne and others have blamed the traditional methods of teaching spelling in the past as being one of the main causes of the inability to spell, but in Times Education Supplement, Mr. John Sceats was quoted as saying that traditional spelling was not all bad and that we could not ignore all of the traditional methods of teaching.<sup>7</sup>

Mary Key presented an interesting theory on why some students misspell words. In her article in the Elementary School Journal, she said that many spelling mistakes reflect exceptional capability or creativity. An example given was that a well-organized and efficient person carries patterns in his mind and by analogy applies them

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<sup>7</sup>Staff Reporter, "Middle of the Way in Spelling," Times Education Supplement, 2779 (August 23, 1968), p. 1.



consistently to words he may not have seen before. In other cases, persons of extremely high intelligence are busy thinking about ideas and developing new theories and are simply not concerned with how to spell out these marvelous ideas. There are those creative persons who rebel at doing anything the same way twice. The writer stated further that the greatest problem could be with the adults and not with the children. She said that none of us had any idea of how much creative flow of energy had been cut off by constructing fears of not being able to correctly put the ideas down on paper. She thought that this started in kindergarten and carried on through the university, where the teachers grabbed their red pencils and attacked the spelling on the first page of the term paper.<sup>8</sup>

Dawson, Zollinger, and Elwell tell of an upper-grade class which became interested in the kinds of problems they were having with spelling. They listed common reasons for making these errors. The list was as follows:

1. Not hearing or pronouncing the word correctly, as proably for probably; wich for which
2. Being careless or uninformed about homonyms, as its for it's
3. Not using the apostrophe correctly, as the Browns' dog

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<sup>8</sup>Mary Key, "English Spelling System and the Initial Teaching Alphabet," Elementary School Journal, LXIX (March, 69), p. 346.

4. Not forming plurals correctly, as citys for cities
5. Not using a prefix correctly, as disatisfy for dissatisfy
6. Not knowing whether to double the consonant before adding the suffix to retain the long or short vowel sound, as shinning for shining
7. Not checking for careless errors, as the for then
8. Not using i and e in the right combination, as recieve for receive
9. Not remembering the spelling of words with especially difficult letter combinations, as nabors for neighbors.<sup>9</sup>

These students listed their errors day by day and identified the cause of the error. This made the students aware of their errors, and they soon began to improve.

One of the reasons given for incorrect spelling is that the English language is entirely unpredictable. According to the Scott, Foresman and Company edition of Spelling Our Language the above reason is always not the case. Many words are spelled according to regular patterns that recur. Words which seem hard to spell are easier when something is known about their history. The Scott Foresman Company contends that if enough is known about the regular

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<sup>9</sup>Dawson, Zollinger, and Elwell, op. cit., p. 346.

spelling patterns, origin of English words, and how English words are formed, spelling would be easier and more fun.<sup>10</sup>

Another reason for difficulty in spelling is that English is such a mixture of many languages and influences. There are several volumes of dictionaries, but no dictionary contains a complete English vocabulary. Many words were changed when they were placed in English dictionaries, also, many of them kept the spelling patterns of their native languages. This could account for some of the unusual spelling of many words.<sup>11</sup>

#### METHODS OF TEACHING SPELLING

Some work has been done on the methods of teaching spelling; however, this seems to be a field that has not been thoroughly developed. The writer did observe from research that more is beginning to be done than has been done in the past.

Harold Blau, Director, Long Island Reading and Education Institute in Jamaica, New York, has created a method of giving "First Aid" to extremely poor spellers. This first aid can be done inexpensively and with equipment that is or could be available in every school. This is accomplished with a tape recorder.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Marion Monroe, Ira Aaron, and Andrew Schiller, Spelling Our Language (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1969), p. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Harold Blau, "First Aid for Extremely Poor Spellers," English Journal, LIV (October, 1965), p. 644.

The procedure is a fairly simple one. The first thing one should do is to have the student record a spelling list of words. The pupil starts the recorder and recites a word, and then writes the word. Without stopping the recorder, he follows this same method for five or ten or even fifteen words. However, no more than fifteen should be used. The words could be selected from a spelling list, a personal list, or any list that would demonstrate a rule. After he has recorded the list, the student should study the list. After the student has studied the list, he should replay it. While doing this, he writes from his own dictation. Next, he checks for correctness, works on the wrong words, replays the group, writes only the words he missed and continues the process until he has all the words corrected.

One of the reasons for the success of this program was that the student was his own teacher, who never lost patience, and repeated himself endlessly and correctly. The student should have earphones for this to be successful because this keeps the other students from hearing him struggle to learn.

One of the greatest problems that a teacher faces is that of motivating the student to acquire the art of spelling. Lurene Brown evidently had this in mind in her article "Let's Put an 'I' in Spelling." She said that the secret of teaching spelling was getting students to want to learn to spell. She contended that students learn because

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



they want to and because learning seemed important to them. This should help an English teacher see that she must make learning more exciting.

Lurene Brown suggested that every student in the class should keep a vocational spelling list in his notebook and add words as he finds a word that is useful and appropriate. Columns should be placed on the child's notebook with appropriate room under each heading. The following are some of the headings that could appear: farmer, florist, teacher, lawyer, banker, homemaker, and doctor.

Other listings could be made as students suggested them. Under each heading a suitable word could be placed; for example, under doctor, patients, and medicine would be suitable. These lists should be considered a personal matter and could be checked when the English notebook is graded. At another time one might work with hobbies and school subjects could be used. After these lists have grown, the class could consider the problem homonyms and similar words. An example of this would be its and it's.<sup>14</sup>

The teacher must make spelling a subject that should be taught every day. One should try to do away with the attitude of "I never could spell" and instill in the students that every one can spell if he has a desire to want to learn to be a correct speller.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Lurene Brown, "Let's Put an 'I' in Spelling," English Journal, LIV (October, 1965), p. 644.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 645.



Some educators are going so far as to advocate the teaching of the spelling rules. C. P. Archer in his article, "Shall We Teach Spelling by Rule?", explained the debate going on in the teaching of rules. He took the stand that rules should be taught by using both inductive and deductive methods of learning. He also stated that only rules that justify the time should be taught.<sup>16</sup>

Many times teachers have been guilty of pushing children too soon. Frederick Breed discussed the compilation of children's word lists and the debate surrounding the subject of vocabulary in an article in the Elementary English Journal. He stated that word lists should be made up of words that children use in normal discourse rather than those taken from adult lists.<sup>17</sup>

The University of Wisconsin conducted research in the local schools in Wisconsin. Three experiments achieved significant results. In one of the experiments, ninety-nine sixth graders received three different kinds of spelling instruction. One of these was with work-books. The students were taught a spelling method and were led to apply it in writing new words. Individualized instruction was also used.

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<sup>16</sup> C. P. Archer, "Shall We Teach Spelling by Rule," Elementary English, VII (March, 1930), pp. 61-63.

<sup>17</sup> Frederick S. Breed, "Adult Patterns for Children's Clothes," Elementary English, V (February, 1928), pp. 43-45.

On recall and recognition tests and proofreading tasks, previous achievement levels were maintained regardless of the method of instruction used. Females scored higher than males. Spelling errors on theme writing revealed that workbook instruction helped the least when transferred to a writing situation. Frequency of dictionary usage was marked highest with the spelling workbook approach.<sup>18</sup>

Another experiment was conducted at Central Connecticut State College Reading Language Arts Center. The results are reported below:

Second graders were used to determine the effectiveness of three approaches to spelling instruction to produce differences in spelling achievements and in the ability to generalize phonic principles. The Intelligent Quotient groups ranged from 111-140 and 90-110. The three approaches used to spelling were: 1. A phonic structural approach which utilized skill and word maintenance and integration of language skills, 2. A whole word approach emphasizing meaning and context and utilizing the analysis of words and development of meaning, 3. A teacher directed approach utilizing skills taught in the reading program to develop spelling skills. No significant differences occurred in spelling achievements either within the study's total population or within the 111-140 I. Q. range, regardless of the approach used. The phonic-structural approach produced a significantly greater gain in spelling over the other approaches within the 90-110 I. Q. range. Significant gains in growth of word discrimination occurred for the total population and both I. Q. ranges as a consequence of utilizing the teacher-directed approach. Interpreted generally, results indicated that the phonic structural and teacher-directed approaches are more effective than the whole word approach in developing spelling ability and word discrimination. This study was biased toward the above-average population.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

## MISCELLANEOUS

At times, the teaching of spelling is controversial, challenging, and curious. It can be perceived as a very inconsistent thing which plagues a writer and makes little difference to a reader. In stores one may see words misspelled as Koffee 5 cents. In today's world, a child is torn between spelling-book words and words of the outside world. The child is also confused in the classroom when we tell him to sound out a word before he spells it, and he does and tough comes out "tuff." Words like "pair," "pear," and "pare" all sound alike; however, one is not free to choose among them. Teachers need to conduct a spelling program which builds desirable understandings, skills, and attitudes toward the subject. One must instill in learners an attitude that spelling is much more than merely letter order. Students must realize that spelling is a valuable tool and not an end in itself. They must realize that it is necessary for written communication.

Many activities can promote a curiosity of words. One such activity was used with a seventh-grade class. The class became interested in coined words and in a short time collected twenty of them. After discussing word functions, trying to substitute traditional words and phrases in the context in which they were found, and comparing the effects, they began coining words for their own use. It seemed

that high interest began to develop in how new words came into our language and how both spelling and meaning of words came from era to era. One teacher helped children understand that one word can have many different meanings and that context signals the meaning of words. Some sentences used in doing this were "catch the ball," "The door catch is broken." "He fished only for ten minutes but got a good catch." Students worked in pairs and found as many synonyms as they could for the underlined words, reading just the synonyms to classmates without revealing their word. Students soon discovered that everyone had the same word.

It has been quite common in the past to have spelling programs in which children worked with lists of words taken from different sources. However, more teachers are beginning to use natural situations associated with written communication activities to develop spelling powers of children in a more meaningful way.<sup>20</sup>

The Journal of Educational Research stated that the motivation of spelling is affected by the teacher and the pupil attitudes; the educational expectations that the parents have for the child; the level of motivation that the pupil has for oneself; work habits; instructional methods and utilization of them; and last but certainly not least,

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<sup>20</sup>Alma Bingham, "Making Spelling Purposeful," The Instructor, 78 (October, 1968), pp. 94-5.



self-confidence. The writer elaborated upon the importance of the interaction between the pupil and teacher to create interest in spelling and in the language arts instruction which is related to spelling. He said that this made the difference between excellent results from enthusiastic use of the most efficient methods and poor results achieved through drab mechanical teaching and learning.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Thomas D. Horne, "Spelling," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed. Robert L. Ebel (4th ed. New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 1286.



## Chapter 3

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to see if instruction in dictionary skills would decrease spelling errors. The author compiled the spelling errors in ninth and tenth grade English themes at Todd County Central High School. The author graded 512 themes and completed a list of words misspelled for a total of 782. After duplications were eliminated, a total of 263 words were completed. The themes were written in class and students wrote on any subject of their choice. The misspelled words are listed alphabetically in Appendix A, pages 34-36.

The most frequent misspelled words were: a lot, too, its, their, there, principal, and all right (See Table 1, pages 21-22). In the first group of English themes, a lot was misspelled most often. The students were very insistent about writing the word as alot (sic). Too was another word that was frequently spelled incorrectly. During the first writing it was misspelled twenty-two times. It was misspelled most often as to. Its was most often misspelled as it's. The students seemed to have trouble in distinguishing between when to use it's and its. Their and there were two other words that were used interchangeably in the wrong way. Students seemed to have trouble in understanding

Table 1

A List of Words Most Often Misspelled  
in Descending Order

Misspelled Words	Frequency
a lot	23
too	22
its	15
their	14
there	13
principal	12
wants	10
always	10
all right	9
usually	9
things	9
really	9
buses	8
know	8
coming	7
schedule	7
friend	6
favorite	6
here	6
library	6
two	6
though	6
tobacco	6
your	5
gym	5
instead	5
nice	5
to	5
played	5
privilege	5
stayed	5

Table 1 (continued)

A List of Words Most Often Misspelled  
in Descending Order

Misspelled Words	Frequency
since	5
still	5
spirit	5
asked	4
because	4
first	4
finally	4
mock	4
people	4
strick	4
until	4
women	4
business	3
dumb	3
drank	3
drunk	3
grade	3
name	3
ready	3
rallies	3
rally	3
weighs	3
year	3
years	2
excused	2
get	2

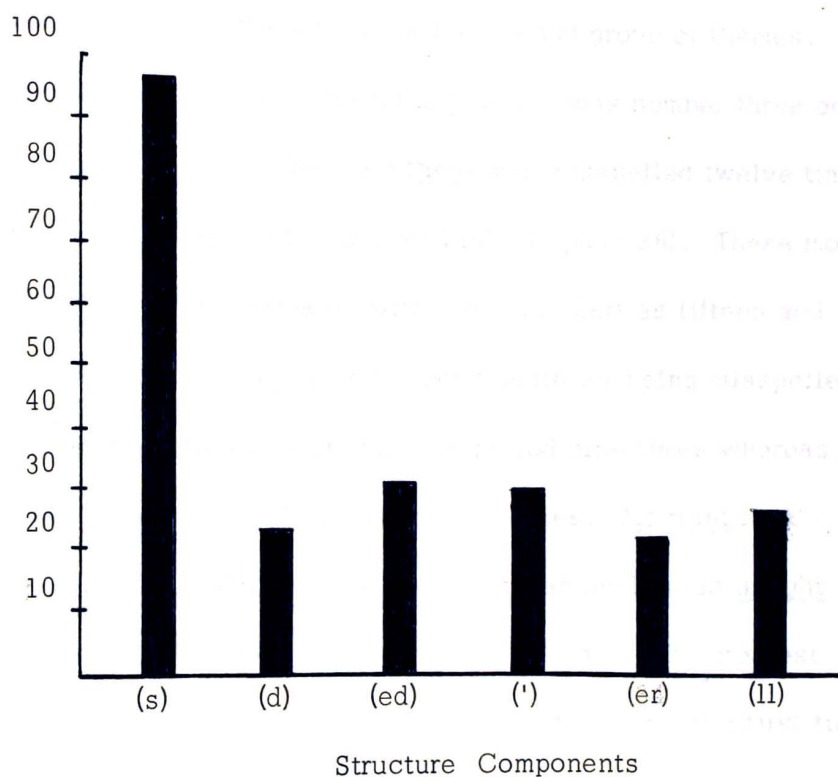
that their was to be used to show ownership. Their was misspelled fifteen times and there fourteen. The remaining words are in Table 1, page 21-22.

A frequency chart was constructed for the structural components of most often misspelled words. The writer found that the s was the letter most often omitted (See Table 2, page 24.) During the first writing the s was left out ninety-eight times. The ed was the second most frequent error. Students failed to put the ed on the word thirty times. The apostrophe ran a close third by being omitted twenty-seven times. For the remaining errors see Table 2, page 24.

The author selected twenty lessons in the use of the dictionary from the textbook, Modern Grammar and Composition and from the Thorndike Barnhart Dictionary. These lesson plans are included in Appendix C, page 41. Three periods a week were given to student use of the dictionary. At the end of the instructional period of six and one-half weeks, English themes were again assigned. For the first two weeks the students chose their own topic. On the third week the students wrote on the topic, "The One Thing I Want Most." For their final theme the students were given the topic, "How to Improve Todd Central." The themes were graded for misspelled words each week and given back to the students to look-up in their dictionaries and to correct the spelling.

Table 2

## Structural Components of Most Often Misspelled Words





A record was kept of most often misspelled words each week. A total of 190 words were misspelled. The second list of misspelled words is included in Appendix B, pages 38-39.

The most frequent misspelled words were there, too, their, all right, a lot, and knew. The word there was the word which was misspelled the most during the writing of the second group of themes. This word was again confused with their, which was number three on the second list of words. The word there was misspelled twelve times and their misspelled seven times (See Table 3, page 26). These most often misspelled words compared with the first chart as fifteen and fourteen respectively. Too ranked second again for being misspelled the most, however, this time it was misspelled nine times whereas, the first time it was misspelled twenty-two times. All right ranked fourth as being misspelled the most since it was spelled as alright five times as compared with ten times the first time. The greatest improvement was seen in the spelling of the word a lot. The first time it was misspelled twenty-three times but the last time only four.

The total number of words misspelled on 512 English themes before instruction was 782. After the instruction of twenty lessons in use of the dictionary, students misspelled 190 words on four themes each for a total of 512 English themes.

Table 3

A Second List of Words Most Often Misspelled  
in Descending Order

Misspelled Words	Frequency
there	12
too	9
their	7
all right	5
thing	4
a lot	4
knew	4
sense	3
country	3
feels	3
know	3
marry	3
summer	3
business	2
rather	2
it's	2
and	2
doesn't	2
feels	2
always	2
there's	2
time	2
wear	2
wreck	2
our	2

The difference in the total number of words misspelled before and after instruction was 592. This difference represented a decrease of .757 percentage (75.7%). This was a substantial decrease in the number of total words misspelled. However, five words most often misspelled ranked high on both lists before and after instruction.

These words were: a lot, too, their, there, and all right. The writer concluded that many of the spelling errors were not due to lack of knowledge about how to spell the words, but errors were many times due to poor habits and carelessness.

## Chapter 4

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A review of the literature revealed that spelling programs in the past contained word lists which children learned, and many times did not translate to written work in classes. However, more teachers are beginning to use natural and relevant situations associated with written communication activities to develop spelling powers of children in a more meaningful way.<sup>1</sup>

The Encyclopedia of Educational Research stated that the motivation of spelling was affected by the teacher and the pupil attitudes; the educational expectations that the parents had for the child; the level of motivation that the pupil had for oneself; work habits; instructional methods and utilization of them; and last but certainly not least, self-confidence. The writer elaborated upon the importance of the interaction between the pupil and teacher to create interest in spelling. This made the difference between excellent results from enthusiastic use of the most efficient methods and poor results achieved through drab mechanical teaching and learning.

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<sup>1</sup>Alma Bingham, "Making Spelling Purposeful," The Instructor, 78 (October, 1968), pp. 94-5.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas D. Horne, "Spelling," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, ed, Robert L. Ebel (4th.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 1286.

Thomas Horne recommended that the selection and gradation of spelling words for instruction should be chosen from the words which were the most important in the writing done by children in that grade and which were also important in the writing of adults.<sup>3</sup> Horne also recommended the use of the dictionary as basic to any spelling program and crucial for accommodating individual differences.<sup>4</sup>

The author of this study graded many English themes and noticed that misspelled words occurred again and again. These words were circled with a red pencil and returned to the students which resulted in little improvement. Therefore, it was the desire of the author to seek a more efficient way of spelling instruction.

The purpose of the study was to obtain a list of words misspelled in ninth and tenth grade English themes at Todd Central High School and to teach dictionary skills to these students to see if these misspelled words could be decreased on a second group of English themes. These first group of English themes were written in class on any subject of the students' choice. Five hundred and twelve themes were corrected for misspelled words and a list of 783 words were obtained after duplications were eliminated; 263 words comprised the spelling list for instruction.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1285.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



Twenty lessons on the use of the dictionary were taught to the same group of students for six and one-half weeks. These lessons were taught for three periods a week, or 165 minutes of instruction per week.

At the conclusion of the instruction in use of the dictionary, students were assigned a theme to write each week for four weeks. The total number of themes written were 512. The themes were graded and returned to the students to look-up in their dictionaries to correct the spelling errors. A record of misspelled words was kept of the second group. A total of 190 words were misspelled on 512 English themes.

The difference in the number of words misspelled on the first English themes and the second group was 592. This decrease in the difference represented a .757 (75.7%) percentage positive change in the number of fewer words misspelled after instruction in the use of the dictionary.

Finally, there is a need for more systematic and realistic research in this area. This will mean a working arrangement between educators, counselors, and parents. The task of decreasing spelling errors is not the problem of any one group but rather a responsibility of each of us no matter what our professional identity.

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## APPENDIX A

Words Misspelled on First Group of English Themes

## LIST OF MISSPELLED SPELLING WORDS

an	assembly	college	enjoyed
and	associate	come	Elkton
asked	afternoon	consideration	earlier
all right	buried	cafeteria	especially
a lot	boat	chance	exercise
agriculture	buys	crowded	eraser
always	bad	cute	excused
argument	bothering	dislike	elementary
aggravate	basketball	drunk	first
almost	brother	done	fender
awful	business	disappointed	funny
absolutely	buddy	don't	fine
announcer	biggest	demonstration	find
athletics	been	dumb	fence
ability	buses	deserve	favorite
answer	because	dyed	far
around	cauliflower	died	finally
afraid	Christmas	difference	front
although	championship	enough	friend
along	camera	effort	floor
acceleration	catch	encourage	grandmother



## LIST OF MISSPELLED SPELLING WORDS (continued)

got	its	lot	making
gets	instead	looks	maneuver
game	I'm	lounge	mess
grow	interest	least	nothing
grammar	ignore	license	necessity
guide	interruption	life	named
graze	insurance	month	nice
gym	jumped	metal	next
having	January	mocking	necessary
hurt	juke	mocked	negative
high	know (no)	model	no
happiness	kept	meat	off
hour	keep	meet	orphanage
hole	lovable	money	our
horses	liked	messed	ourselves
hold	learned	majoring	opinion
here	likes	made	patience
hear	lets	much	pneumonia
imitation	listen	morning	pasture
important	lesson	maybe	points
it's	library	murderer	putting

## LIST OF MISSPELLED SPELLING WORDS (continued)

puzzles	rode	stretch	usually
pen	road	skating	utility
pleased	realize	structure	vacation
person	riding	to	unless
played	stopped	two	ugly
pick	spread	too	women
people	smoke	their	weren't
pitched	Saturday	there	won't
Pekingese	stayed	they're	want
pep	sled	tournament	wait
particular	subject	think	with
privileges	sophomore	trophy	well
principal	snow	though	weigh
principle	separate	transmission	wrestled
period	stuff	tired	Wednesday
prejudice	spirit	torn	weather
really	since	throw	whipped
ruin	suppose	tobacco	week
rallies	supply	touchdown	which
quiet	scissors	until	witch
quite	school	used	where
report	silly	urge	year
			your

## APPENDIX B

Words Misspelled on Second Group of English Themes

WORDS MISSPELLED ON SECOND GROUP OF ENGLISH THEMES

an	does	graduate
a lot	doesn't	getting
allergic	during	honor
always	dreamed	have
auction	energetic	happening
and	easiest	its
amount	ever	it's
began	educated	idea
beginning	enough	interested
barefoot	fixed	intergration
bore	friends	Jesus
business	falls	know
cafeteria	funniest	looked
choice	feels	leading
challange	furlough	license
coming	fine	live
college	folk	liked
county	father	minutes
chrome	game	meant
cheerleading	girls	month
compliment	goal	married

## WORDS MISSPELLED ON SECOND GROUP OF ENGLISH THEMES

(continued)

making	rules	tired
mind	rough	things
mama	swimming	to
much	steal	too
most	still	trouble
no	set	tries
new	switched	trying
our	squirrels	treaded
played	since	university
packs	stomach	unnecessary
puts	stayed	varsity
peep	stopped	wade
prettiest	seems	wart
pregnant	smoking	wardrobe
parents	teachers	wears
principal	thankful	wear
period	that	wanted
rather	the	why
rode	thinks	what
room	their	weren't
references	there	whole
	wheels	wreck



## APPENDIX C

### Appendix C: Adjectives and Adverbs

#### Lesson Plan Topics for Instruction in Dictionary Skills

LESSON PLAN TOPICS FOR INSTRUCTION  
IN DICTIONARY SKILLS

1. The Dictionary as a Source of History
2. Etymology
3. Historical Order of Definitions
4. Dictionary as a Source of Grammar
5. Functional Labels in Dictionary
6. Inflectional Forms of Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives and Adverbs
7. Principal Parts of Verbs in Dictionary
8. Comparison of Adjective and Adverbs in Dictionary
9. Usage Labels (Obsolete-Archaic-Dial-Slang)
10. Dictionary as a Source of Sound
11. Problems of English Spelling
12. Correction of an Incorrect Material
13. Phonemes, the Basic Sounds of Language
14. Graphemes, the Basic Units of Written Language
15. Respelling of Words in Dictionary
16. Finding Silent Consonants
17. Finding Respelled Words in Dictionaries
18. Compounds in Newspaper Articles
19. Prefixes
20. Homonyms and Synonyms