Attitudes and Expectations in the Learning and Teaching of Spelling

by

Susan Greig

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

Master of Philosophy

ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS IN THE LEARNING AND TEACHING OF
SPELLING

by Susan Greig

This study considers a range of factors which may influence pupils'
progress in learning to spell.

Sixteen pupils are observed and studied in three different situations.
Two are poor spellers receiving tuition under the Special Needs
provisions; the other fourteen are defined as learning to spell
successfully.   Factors which may have contributed to both the failure
and the success are identified.

The Review of the Literature addresses these factors under four
headings: the Task, i.e. Writing Systems in general and Standard
English Orthography in particular; Using and Learning the System;
the Teaching of Spelling; and the Attitudes and Expectations which
surround the Learning and Teaching.

The evidence from this study supports a conclusion that greater
influence was exerted by attitudes and expectations than by the other
factors identified, but also that better understanding of the spelling
system and children's interaction with it would lead to more helpful
attitudes and expectations among teachers.

The study is an attempt, through prolonged, detailed observation,
discussion with pupils, teachers and parents and an interdisciplinary
approach to research findings, to make a useful contribution to the
mitigation of an inhibiting and distressing difficulty.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS IN THE LEARNING AND TEACHING OF SPELLING

LIST OF TABLES:

ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS IN THE LEARNING
AND TEACHING OF SPELLING

INTRODUCTION:

I wished to investigate a persistent and apparently intractable problem for some pupils, an inability to master spelling, which is inconsistent with their overall competence and which seriously hinders their general educational progress. While there might well be constitutional cognitive and psychological deficits in a very few, otherwise normal, children which might make dealing with the written language more difficult for them than for the majority, I wondered whether such an explanation could possibly account for the numbers involved and whether it was being offered and accepted too readily. Were too many pupils being accepted as constitutionally poor spellers for whom little could be done? Are some "learning difficulties" in fact teaching difficulties?

I came across the problem many times in the course of teaching in secondary schools and once in my own family, but most noticeably while working for the Adult Literacy Scheme, where the expectation had been that the students would want to learn to read. In practice there were very many who felt that their reading ability was sufficient for their needs but found themselves severely restricted in their lives by confusion and helplessness over spelling. Both with the schoolchildren and with the adult students it appeared that, for many, this spelling difficulty was their only significant defect. They were slow and reluctant readers, but could often extract what they wanted from a text. They were competent in other respects, but the demands of the secondary curriculum and of modern adult life were such that they were regarded, and regarded themselves, as educational failures, were greatly limited in their opportunities for employment, and often in their social life. They suffered badly from lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem.

An important motive for trying to understand and alleviate spelling problems came from that observation of the personal unhappiness of those students, many of whom proved to be able to learn well as adults and could probably have learned at school if they had been better understood and managed.

This was in the 1970s when the BBC was drawing attention to the high incidence of adult illiteracy in Britain and, with the Government, running a campaign to tackle it. Public awareness of the problem began to increase at that time, but there is now also again a great deal of discussion of standards of reading and writing in schools. This concern, together with the government's insistence on penalties for poor spelling and grammar in the marking of public examinations and its intervention in laying down much of the content of the English curriculum have made spelling the subject of fierce, frequent debate. This is further fuelled by increasing calls for a better educated and more trainable workforce and by unflattering comparisons of our educational achievements with those of some other nations, notably the Japanese, whose generally high standard of literacy appears to be closely associated with their economic success. It is hard to imagine this emphasis on "correct" written English diminishing in the foreseeable future, even if we doubt, as we may, that it will be quite as effective in solving our

problems as some hope.   Therefore, whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, spelling has become and, I believe, will remain an important and salient activity in British classrooms and contributions to the understanding of all the influences which surround it must be helpful.

Some research, much of it recent, suggests that spelling, far from being less important than reading, as it has often seemed to be regarded, may be an important factor in learning to read (Chomsky 1971, Frith 1985, Ellis and Cataldo 1992).   If correct, this finding makes spelling even more important.

I believed that a better understanding and more effective practice could eliminate quickly a large number of problems, trivial in themselves, which, if allowed to persist, seemed to hinder, or even stop, progress and to generate pessimistic and unhelpful attitudes and expectations in the pupils themselves, and in their teachers and others close to them, which, in turn, further discouraged the pupils and depressed their performance.   I reasoned that the elimination of these early small problems would leave the psychological and support services freer to work really effectively with those who genuinely do have deep-seated and complex difficulties.   There is an example in New Zealand where the Reading Recovery programme, initially expensive and labour-intensive, appears to have succeeded in reducing the incidence of literacy difficulties (and therefore much of their later costs in money and time) to less than 1% of the school population (Clay 1990).

Western Secondary Education (which, in Britain for more than forty years, has been compulsory for everybody and lasts for five years) is based overwhelmingly on the written word.   Recent welcome attempts to make it less academic may have reduced the amount of reading and writing demanded of pupils daily in school, but they are still an inescapable part of even a minimally successful school career.   The high correlation between the truancy and illiteracy figures, as well as poor readers' and writers' own accounts, testify to the misery, boredom and frustration they experience daily as they face instructions they cannot understand and tasks they cannot perform.   It seems only common sense and common humanity that we should either teach them to read and write sufficiently well to be able to do what we require from them or we should not continue to confront them with material couched in a medium we know they cannot cope with.

There is a view, probably quite widely held, that insistence on correct spelling is snobbish.   We know that until the time when spelling began to be standardised, and even for some time after that, quite learned and literary people spelled as they liked, often different versions of the same word in the same paragraph, and no-one complained.   It is true that much of the concern with spelling is snobbish, but I found that no-one was more "snobbish" in this respect than many of the poor spellers of the literacy scheme.   They were dissatisfied with themselves for being unable to spell and unimpressed by suggestions that it did not matter.   Their own attitudes were often reinforced by the contempt which they had encountered because they wrote so badly.   They were in no doubt about the need to learn to spell.

Snobbery of one kind or another seems to be inherent in most societies and 1 suggest that it may be easier to teach people to spell than to try to improve the attitudes of others towards them when they cannot.   Moreover there do seem to be two kinds of poor speller, those who are unabashed by their

deficiency and uninhibited by it from writing and those for whom it makes writing simply unbearable.   Teachers cannot know which of these each failing pupil is going to turn out to be.   They must, therefore, teach them all.

Another argument against over-insistence on spelling and for a relaxed attitude to literacy in general comes from the undoubted success which many people seem to make of their lives without it.   Again, experience with the literacy students casts doubt.   A significant proportion of those who asked for help were people who had managed without reading and writing, happily and successfully and sometimes well into middle age.   But all of these had had a "scribe" who read and wrote for them and they came to us because this person had gone out of their lives, nearly always in distressing circumstances. Thus they were trying at last to master a task they had always found difficult and uncongenial at a time when their lives had been seriously disrupted and they were confused and unhappy.   We cannot predict who will need to learn nor when, so, again, it is safer to teach everybody.

There have been reasons why little attention has been paid to spelling and why research into it has been so unsuccessful until recently.   Two of the most important are that influential linguistic scholars earlier in this century asserted the overriding importance of speech and showed almost no interest in writing (Saussure 1959, Bloomfield 1935, Minkoff and Derrida quoted by Sampson 1985) and that almost all the research consisted of psychological experiments conducted in artificial conditions, using artificial materials, so that one could not know whether the results obtained would hold good in classrooms.   Two of the most comprehensive collections of papers devoted to spelling (Frith 1980, Sterling and Robson 1982) report such experiments and produce much interesting and valuable information, but they need to be complemented by observations of pupils working in their ordinary classrooms.   Another reason may be that

> The topic's sprawl across several disciplines results in
> identical issues being discussed in quite separate contexts
> in different vocabularies (Levine 1986, p.6)

so that

> the problem for the investigator soon becomes one of what
> areas of potential study can safely be left out rather than
> what deserves to be included (ibid, p. 18)

Writing and reading involve many academic disciplines, physiology, neurology, psychology, linguistics and education and it must be hard for researchers to be aware of the findings of all these and easy to fall between stools.   At a conference in 1990 entitled "Psychology, Spelling and Education" (Newcastle Polytechnic, 9/07/90) it was irritating that questions raised could frequently not be answered because they did not come within the speakers' narrow disciplines;   there appeared to have been little intercommunication between the psychologists and linguists who led the seminars.

All this has changed recently.   Writing and spelling have captured scholars' and researchers' interest and their importance is recognised and observation in the classroom of pupils actually working at their normal tasks has begun to produce helpful models and practical advice.

Discussion of the problem had tended to focus on deficiencies in the failing pupils themselves and in the methods used to teach them. But there are other factors to be considered as well, such as our understanding of the spelling system and the way in which competent writers use it, learners learn it and teachers teach it. It has always seemed to me, from my experience with poor spellers of all ages, that a large and influential part of the problem is emotional and concerned with attitudes and expectations. These are the attitudes which pupils hold towards the written language and the expectations they have of it and of themselves as learners and users of it. On reflection, I seldom had a pupil who was longing to be literate, working hard at it but failing; most were distressed that they could not do it, disliked being less competent than their fellows and worried lest their failure was a symptom of low intelligence or mental abnormality. But there was nothing they actually wanted to read or write and, for many of the adult students it was enough for them to reassure themselves by learning a little to prove to themselves that they could learn; sometimes they left the scheme at this point, satisfied or at least reconciled to their inability. Almost as influential may be the attitudes and expectations of others who are close to pupils as they try to learn to spell.

This thesis is an attempt to identify factors which may be involved and the influence they may have on pupils' progress in learning to spell.

In Part A two individual Case Studies are reported of pupils who had received "statements of need" because of "specific learning difficulties". I provided the tuition required by their statements and the studies are an account of their histories, of our work together and of what they, their parents and their teachers said, and seemed to feel, about them and their learning problems and about the task of learning to spell. I identify factors which seem to have created and exacerbated their problems and others (very few) which seem to have had an encouraging influence. I made these Case Studies first and have begun my account with them because I wanted the whole thesis to arise from detailed observations of what poor spellers actually did, said and seemed to think and feel. In this way, I hoped to identify very clearly some key issues in the learning and teaching of spelling on which I would then base my review of the literature.

Part B contains my Review of the Literature and considers the light which previous research can shed on those factors under four headings:

Chapter 1. The Task: the material which learners must master, the English spelling system. This is examined within the context of writing systems generally.

Chapter 2. How we use the system and how we learn to use it.

Chapter 3. Teaching spelling.

Chapter 4. The attitudes and expectations which surround pupils as they learn to spell.

In Part C a further study follows of the written work of 14 pupils in their last year in primary and first year in secondary school. These pupils were not selected for any particular characteristics, nor were their schools. I

simply chose those nearest to my home, which seemed to be a way of making a kind of "random" choice; I knew nothing about them before I started work.

I had intended to compare the activities of, and the influences on, successful and failing pupils in those schools, but when I started work in them I became aware that the schools were considered to be very successful and I, too, was impressed with them. I decided that this success offered me an opportunity to make a study of good and effective practice and to make some comparisons with that of the schools in the individual case studies, which I had found unsatisfactory and ineffective.

This decision, of course, makes it necessary to define the word success, as used here.

These schools were highly regarded locally. They regularly obtained excellent results, latterly also as recorded in the Government's League Tables. They had a loyal and admiring group of parents, some of whom had moved house in order for their children to be eligible for them, as well as a waiting list of candidates from outside their catchment area. The behaviour of the pupils I encountered was friendly and orderly, the organisation was effective and the lessons I observed were interesting and well presented; they seemed to interest the pupils' and engender their enthusiasm. There was an atmosphere of confidence and purposeful enthusiasm among the staff.

In particular, I feel justified in calling their teaching of writing and spelling successful for the purpose of the study on the basis of two criteria: the pupils I studied, even when they found written expression difficult, kept on writing and were not prevented from performing their written tasks by those difficulties and they knew what to do to find the spelling of a word which they wished to write but were unsure of. They sometimes found their schoolwork difficult or tedious but, while doing it, they were never rendered helpless by an inability to spell.

Part D gives brief accounts of four different programmes designed to promote literacy, of which three are judged to be effective; the fourth, although very valuable to its students in important ways, cannot, I believe, be considered truly effective as a literacy programme. From these very different programmes essential features which seem likely to be responsible for their effectiveness or otherwise, are identified and summarised.

Finally, the experiences of the pupils in the three different situations of Parts A and C, the salient features of the programmes in Part D and the findings from research in Part B are discussed and an attempt is made to identify influences which are likely to promote the steady, untroubled development of accurate spelling.

PART A: TWO INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES.   STUDENTS M. AND C.

INTRODUCTION: As part of my attempt to investigate the difficulties which
often surround the learning of spelling, I wanted to make a detailed Case
Study of a pupil experiencing such difficulty.   Concentration on a single
pupil seemed to offer the best chance of eliciting as fully and accurately
as possible the thoughts and feelings of such a pupil and of close and
detailed observation of his or her experience with the written language.
It would be important for the pupil to have been at school for some time
because he or she would have acquired more ingrained learning habits,
attitudes and expectations and greater experience of writing than a younger
child.   Moreover, it was clear that the best way to achieve this
opportunity to study a pupil in depth would be to teach him or her.

I contacted the Area Support Team of the Local Education Authority where I
live and was put in touch with two schools which each had such a pupil on
its roll.   They were M., a boy of ten in his last year of Junior School,
and C., a boy of thirteen in the third year of Secondary School.   Both had
"Statements of Special Educational Need".   They were the only two pupils
suggested to me and I accepted the task after short discussions with a
member of the Support Team and teachers who knew the boys.   Thus they were
selected for me effectively by their Statements of Need.   I was engaged to
give them five hours and three hours respectively of individual tuition
weekly and I decided to make a Case Study of each boy.

The combination of teaching someone, especially someone in difficulties
with learning, and at the same time using them as a subject for research
raises ethical considerations.   I explained at once to the teachers, with
whom I negotiated the details of the work and with whom I later liaised, to
the boys themselves and to their parents that I wished to use the work for
my research.   I received the consent of all these people and the promise of
co-operation, for which I was very grateful.

No-one asked me whether the demands of the research were likely to conflict
with the pupils' best interests, but I had anticipated that possibility and
had resolved that the pupils' interests must be paramount and that it would
be the research which suffered in any such conflict.   Thus there could be
no experimental element in these Studies, no witholding or withdrawing of
promising techniques in order to observe their effects and there were often
questions which I would have liked to ask but did not, so as not to increase
the boys' unhappiness or exacerbate the relations, which were already
strained, between them and their adults and among those adults.

The resulting studies are in the category of pure, qualitative research and
are ethnographic in method.   They incorporate descriptions of events and
behaviour, as I worked with the boys, and my interpretations of these, to be
examined in the light of relevant research findings.   They have, perhaps,
some of the characteristics of Action Research as described by Cohen and
Manion (1980 p.208) in that I taught them as I studied them, was undoubtedly
intervening and the work was small scale and situational, but the teaching
was incidental to the research, a means of spending time with the boys, of
observing them as they interacted with the written language, of gaining
their confidence and studying their feelings, hopes, expectations and fears.

In these studies and in the Appendix some of M's and C's spelling is analysed in ways suggested by different authorities, Arvidson (1963), Peters (1975), Nelson (1980), Read (1986), Klein and Millar (1990) and Cripps (1991).

Admittedly Nelson and Read made their analyses in the interests of their research and nowhere claim that they should be used as a diagnostic tool for individual spellers.   Cripps is much influenced by Peters, who did devise her scheme specifically as a diagnostic tool, but a long time ago.   She might well claim to have started this ball rolling and would doubtless expect by now that her analysis would have been superseded.   Klein and Millar, however, with all the benefit of the recent research on spelling behind them, seem only to have produced a condensed version of Peters' product.

None of these offered much practical help with my students' problems.   They result in some of the errors appearing in more than one category and many others not appearing in any category at all.   I think that I know how most of these misspellings came about and therefore to which categories they should be assigned and what other categories are needed to accommodate them satisfactorily, but that is because I could study and observe each boy over a long period;   each word was written as I sat next to him and watched.

The useful analysis, though much more time-consuming to apply, I have found to be Arvidson's, the earliest of the six.   Where the others address questions of the structure of words and the way in which students master or fail to master them and speculate on the underlying deficits which cause them to fail, Arvidson addresses the frequency of use of words.   It is a method of organising the task for the future, rather than a means of diagnosing students' past mishaps and existing defects.   By analysing pieces of writing according to his method the student and the tutor can obtain accurate and objective information about the number of words mastered set against the usefulness of those words and organise their task.

This topic is dealt with in greater detail in the Review of the Literature in B. 3. (c).

*N.B— M's tonsillectomy
& house move – at 5*

A.1.   STUDENT M: A CASE STUDY:

"What is dyslexia?   How did I get it?"

The sources for this account are my Research Diary for the period 1st.
July, 1990 to 31st. July, 1991, my Tape-Recorded Conversations with M.,
the Scripts he produced in the course of our work together and two
reports of the Educational Psychologist who examined M. and advised on
his tuition.   References to these sources are indicated in brackets by
D., T., S. and E.P. respectively with dates.

HISTORY: M. was born on 30.12.79.   He has one sister just over a year
younger than him and lives with her and both his parents.   His father is
a businessman and his mother a part-time secretary.

His parents were alerted to M's problem by one of his teachers at a
parents' evening when he was seven.   They pressed the Local Authority to
"statement" him, but this was finally agreed only in July 1990 when he
was nearly eleven.   In the meantime M. continued to have some help from
the part-time Special Needs teacher in the school but the parents, losing
confidence in the Local Authority's investigations of M's difficulties,
took him to an independent educational advisory service, who diagnosed
"dyslexia" and advised them to take him to the local Dyslexia Association.
They did, the diagnosis was confirmed and M. had weekly lessons there,
which ceased once he started work with me.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIS TUITION: There were administrative delays which
prevented my starting work with M. until November, 1990, although all
concerned had agreed that he should have help and I had been available
since the previous July.   The arrangements for my lessons with him
involved some discussion and conflict.   The school was resentful of the
large amount of extra help allocated to M. when they felt that his
problems were much less severe than those of other pupils who were not
"statemented" and were receiving only the help available within the
school.   There was an attempt to persuade me to perform my task by
joining in group work with the class;   I tried this and felt it was

unsuccessful and very time-wasting and I felt sure that M. needed
individual help.   However, we all agreed that it was undesirable that he
should miss more than necessary of his normal school curriculum (the
psychologist's report (12/4/90) had recommended "access to a full, broad
and balanced curriculum") and I argued in favour of my work with him
being done out of school hours on the grounds that he needed the extra
time and it would give him an incentive to improve. This was not agreed;
not surprisingly, no-one was more opposed to it than M. himself who
foresaw a threat to his football.   In the end and after a struggle, again
because it was said to be against regulations, I obtained permission to
withdraw him from Assembly on three mornings a week; this reduced the
proportion of lesson time which he missed, but he was still missing 15%.
For several weeks M. very much disliked being separated from his group in
lesson time and being made conspicuous, although later on he came to
prefer his individual lessons.

> Interview with H, J.A. (teachers who had taught M. as an infant)
> and J.P. (one of M's two current teachers).   ... J.P.said he had
> been v. confident in the class but had lost all that and his
> drafting/redrafting skills had vanished and his ability to work
> in a group.   Certainly, from having hated being taken out of his
> group, he now likes being out of it and is reluctant to go back.
> (D. 8/7/91)

In July 1991 my work with M. ceased as he was moving to his Secondary
School where there were different arrangements for supplying extra help.

MY ASSESSMENT of M., built up in the course of our lessons, was that his
greatest problem was emotional.   He was very conscious of the anxiety
and conflict which his difficulties had caused for so long, he had a
strong sense of failure and was very unwilling to try to improve for fear
of failing again.   He was very confused and anxious about the diagnosis
of "dyslexia".   "What is dyslexia?   How did I get it?" he asked me (D.
4/3/91) and went on to describe how worried and puzzled he had been by
the diagnosis.   He seemed to feel oppressed by his younger sister (who,

I was told by the teachers, was very successful and outstandingly
ambitious). We seldom talked about her - "I don't get on with my
sister," - M. said, (D. 9/11/90) and, when we did, it was always because
he felt she had been responsible for some upset in his life.

Alone in his class he did not go on a week-long expedition with them; he
was afraid of going away from home, but he took an opportunity of going
for one day, which made me think he would really have liked to go, if he
had dared (D. 7/2/91 and 24/5/91). He was very concerned about his
health.

> His mother was away that day. He had been left with a
> neighbour and was going to her after school, but, if he was
> ill, his father would have to come to get him. I asked was he
> likely to be ill? No. (D. 15/4/91)

> He wasn't ill. (D. 18/4/91)

He was very afraid of getting into trouble at school, although this had
seldom happened and he was considered well-behaved, co-operative and
enthusiastic by his teachers. Once we were discussing cars.

> Told him about the computer in my car. He was v. interested
> so took him out to see it. Total panic in case we were seen,
> "caught" etc. and got into trouble. Looked at the computer
> and worked it but couldn't concentrate for fear. I suggested
> he sit in the driving seat as it's easier to see it and work
> it but he wouldn't - quite right perhaps, he's probably been told
> never to get into a car. What a frightened boy he is!
>
> (D. 16/5/91)

HEALTH: He suffered from heavy catarrh, which disrupted our lessons
with sneezing and frequent exits for more tissues (Frequent examples
from the Tapes). Otherwise he seemed robust, seldom absent and very
energetic always in break. He was very keen on football and played for
a team. He was slightly "young for his age", in my subjective view.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT: Quin and Macauslan, in a useful book, Dyslexia:
What Parents Ought to Know (1986), list fields of normal development (p.
27) and devote a section to each one.   It may be useful to use this list
as a base for considering possible constitutional deficits in M. which may
have contributed to his difficulties.

Hearing: The "support" teacher, who had given M. regular help since his
arrival at the school, commented that his grasp of phonics was defective
because he could not hear the sounds properly (D. 12/11/90), but there is
no record of his having had a full audiometric test.   His catarrhal
problems might support this view and it does seem quite likely that in
the past he had some "high tone" hearing loss (Quin and Macauslan 1986
p.36), especially as this disorder has been found to be common among
children with "learning difficulties" (ibid. p.33) and there must have been
some symptoms which led to his tonsillectomy.   But his hearing seemed
to me, now, to be rather acute;   he was quick to notice any peculiarities
of my pronunciation, for example noticing that I pronounced "pizza" with a
short "i", whereas he thought it should be long (D. 11/1/91), and had no
difficulty in hearing what I said, even though we sometimes worked in
rather noisy conditions and I could not always hear him clearly.
Moreover the spelling errors he made were precisely those which have
been shown to arise in the course of normal spelling development, as a
result of the superior accuracy of hearing of pre-literate children who
have not had their hearing corrupted by familiarity with standard
spelling (Read 1986 pp.1-41, Smith and Bloor 1985 p.11).

Vision: Spectacles had been prescribed for him at the time when he first
saw the LEA psychologist.   Soon after that, the independent psychologist
who was consulted by his parents identified a "tracking" irregularity in
the movement of his eyes when he read and the parents understood that
the diagnosis of "dyslexia" was based on this (D. 8/3/91).   He was
referred for eye-tests and different spectacles were prescribed which
created some argument about which were right for him.   In fact he never
wore either pair and I did not know he had them until we had been
working together for six months, when M. told me about them and also that
he had seen the eye-specialist again and that the "tracking" problem had

cleared up (D. 23/5/91). The relationship between abnormalities of vision and literacy achievement has been debated for some time and is still unclear. Quin and Macauslan (1986 pp. 56 - 58), summarising research findings, discount it, but Stein (1991 p.41) disagrees. He raises the question of whether the abnormalities are the cause or the effect of the poor reading and this is one of the central points made by Bryant and Bradley (1985 p.14) about many of the factors which have been proposed as causing literacy problems. The evidence from M's experience, as far as it goes, seems to be on the side of its being a result of poor reading, since the spectacles designed to ameliorate the tracking problem were never used but the problem cleared up just the same and coincidentally with more confident and successful reading.

Perception, Movement, Knowledge of Right and Left: I could not detect any problems here. M. was not clumsy and seemed to be quite a successful footballer, playing regularly for a team and "picked" by friends for games at school. He did not get confused with right and left. He preferred drawing to writing, drew with confidence and often explained his ideas with a diagram.

Vocabulary: His written vocabulary was rather limited, but my subjective view was that he had quite a wide spoken vocabulary, at least for someone who read so little for pleasure. I received the impression that there was plenty of conversation at home and that he and his sister were consulted by their parents and encouraged to express their views. Against this, his WISC score for vocabulary was his second lowest, 7, on that test (E.P. 12/4/90). However, that was a formal test where the testee has no choice and is asked to give meanings of words with examples of them in use, which is very different from normal conversation. All M's performances under test conditions were poor

> K. (the Headmaster) showed me his reading results (they all
> - the 10-year-olds) - took a test last week. M. had Reading
> Age of about 9 ... mostly, K said, because he refused to attempt
> the questions at the end of the test. (D. 18/3/91)

and the psychologist commented on the significant signs of anxiety M. showed.

> It is interesting to note that M's behaviour during much of
> the testing session showed a degree of anxiety and almost over
> keeness (sic) to please and succeed. His responses to some
> of the verbal test items were extended and in some cases even
> long-winded, which some psychologists have suggested is an
> indication of overall anxiety.   (E.P. 12/4/90)

Articulation: This was not very clear; he tended to speak rather fast
and indistinctly, to lisp a little and he stammered slightly at first.   I
occasionally suggested he should slow down and speak more clearly, which
he was able to do when he was calm.   I never mentioned the stammer to
him, until he mentioned it to me and pointed out that it had disappeared
(T. 23/5/91)

Syntax and Sentence Construction: M. had no difficulty with deciding what
he wanted to say, arranging his ideas in a sensible order to tell a story
or argue a case, and forming sentences correctly.   In a first draft his
punctuation was almost always incorrect, but also he could almost always
correct it unaided when he reread it.   His writing was not very
interesting or imaginitive, but his ideas were correctly expressed except
for his spelling which was very poor and his handwriting which was
immature, irregular and non-cursive (see Appendix IA).

General Activities: Quin and Macauslan's (op. cit.) account covers only
the accomplishments of children up to the age of five, but throughout my
time with M. I observed nothing, and never heard from others of anything,
at which he was unusually unsuccessful except reading and writing.   He
was an enthusiastic, friendly, popular, humorous and helpful member of his
class and of the school and spoke with confidence in discussions.   He
hid his anxieties fairly effectively from the other children, except for
some intimate friends, but the teachers were all aware of them and I
think it likely that the other children were too.

It does seem likely that he was normal and making normal progress in every way, except for reading, handwriting and spelling.

LITERATE CULTURE IN THE HOME: One of M's teachers suggested to me (D. 8/3/91) that his parents did not provide him with a favourable atmosphere at home to help him to improve his literacy; she felt that they were not literary people themselves and that they probably did not provide books or encourage him to read and that the family's pastimes were only sport and shopping.   She may not have known that he had an outstandingly accomplished and successful younger sister, who was an enthusiastic student and a "bookworm".   1 visited the home once and found plenty of suitable books, but also, as I already knew, a colour television set in M's bedroom and I knew, from my conversations with him, that watching it was his preferred method of relaxation and that he would never choose to read or write instead.   I met the parents three times and, certainly, they were not "bookish" people, but they were very concerned about their children's education and took a great interest in it.   M. could not possibly have been described as a "culturally deprived" child.

FINANCIAL CIRUMSTANCES: He was not financially deprived either.   Both parents were in white-collar work, the mother part-time, and generally at home by the time the children returned from school.   The family lived in a new, pleasant house on an estate.   They were well-dressed and there was no sign of any financial distress.   M. was not always given everything he asked for, but I received the impression that these refusals arose from principles of child-rearing rather than shortage of money.

MOTIVATION: It was very hard to interest him in any written matter but I suspected that this lack of interest might be a defence against being asked to read and write and I had the impression that the range of his interests began to widen a little during the time I worked with him; he even showed signs of taking some interest in the language, the relationship between words, etc.   He was capable of long sessions of sustained hard work, though he was clearly not used to it and complained

at first.   Three of our sessions each week lasted an hour without a
break and it was not hard to keep him working.

LITERACY: Reading: He disliked reading and never came to like it during
the period of our work together. He hardly ever found what he was
given to read interesting.   But he did choose (because he remembered its
being read to the class, lower down the school by a favourite teacher)
and read right through "The Midnight Fox" by Betsy Byars.   That is, he
read nearly all of it, sometimes aloud, sometimes silently and then
answered questions to enable me to check that he had understood it;   I
read some of it to him from time to time to give him a break and to
speed the story along.   He was sometimes quite unwilling to continue and
his performance fluctuated as always with his mood, but I insisted as I
felt it was important for his sense of achievement to have read all
through an entire book, especially one considered too hard for him and
with a Reading Age above his Chronological Age;   it was estimated at
about RA 12 and displayed, in Blackwell's Bookshop, Oxford at least, as
suitable for 12-13-year-olds, well above his chronological age of 11.2 at
that time.   He finally read the last chapter almost without help.

> We finished The Midnight Fox.   That is he read the whole of
> the last chapter and got through it (4 pages) with very little
> help from me.   Lots of self-correction and this time he was
> really following the story. He did seem pleased that he had
> finished it and, although I had my doubts at times on the way,
> I concluded that it was important to make him finish at least
> most of the books he reads.   All the more important to choose
> them carefully! (D. 11/2/91)

He could also often read and understand non-fictional material of the
kind which is contained in the Guardian Tuesday Supplement, not only that
aimed at Primary Schools but the Secondary School material as well, as
long as he was calm and expected to find some interesting or practical
information in it (T. 23/5/91).

He was extremely "careless" when reading aloud, when we began to work
together, and would say any word which looked similar to the word in the
text, especially one that started with the same letter regardless of its
sense (Example: "Aunt Millie came out of the horse", (D. 14/1/91). The
psychologist had also noticed this behaviour.

> A miscue analysis of a passage with a readability level of
> eight to eight and a half years (in terms of the complexity
> of the mechanical reading required) showed that M. is somewhat
> over dependent upon the use of grapho-phonemic cueing, in
> particular the beginnings of words. He seems to say any word
> with the beginning letter which matches that written. M. does
> not read on to help him guess at unknown words, and there is
> little attempt at self-correction. It seems to be that either
> he does not notice miscues or does not have the confidence to go
> back and admit that he has made a mistake. Also, it is noted
> that he made little use of picture cues. (E.P. 12/4/90).

At first he never looked at the pictures alongside a text and my
overwhelming impression was that he looked upon reading as a "school
ritual" (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1982 p.98), which had to be gone through
but he did not see it as having any practical value, and certainly not as
a method of communication; it may not be an exaggeration to say that he
looked upon using the pictures, and even perhaps the meaning, to "decode"
the text as "cheating". His teachers had already observed that he was
much more concerned wih the "mechanics " of reading than with the
meaning of what he read (D. 13/9/90). He equated reading with reading
aloud; his teachers had told him to read at home every day for half an
hour and he objected on the grounds that it gave him a sore throat!
Although I was able to observe him closely over eight months, I did not
observe any regularly-occurring miscues. That is, I found no miscues
which occurred when he was reading badly which also occurred at all often
when he was reading well and no pattern of errors which would suggest an
underlying physical or neurological deficit. It was rather a case of
performing very well when he was confident and interested and very badly
indeed when, as often happened, he was tense and worried.

Writing: The psychologist's report says:

> In terms of "emergent" theories of the development of children's
> writing, M. would seem to be at the phonemic stage of writing,
> where he relies heavily on sight/sound association to spell
> words which he has difficulty with. (E.P. 12/4/90)

He might have added that there were very few words with which M. did not
have difficulty.   His handwriting was irregular, non-cursive with sudden
intrusions of capital letters in inappropriate places, very little
punctuation (but he could always correct this, see above) and very
deviant spelling, although the strong tendency to reproduce the sounds of
the words was evident.   He was, again, very unwilling to write, although
he seemed to approach writing with much more confidence than reading,
perhaps because he had control over the content and could choose the
words himself (Bettelheim 1982 p.87ff.).

SPEAKING: He talked a good deal and liked discussion; in fact his
teachers told me he was much missed when there were class discussions
because he was always ready to put his point of view and did so
effectively

> Talked to J.P. for a bit.   She said they really noticed M's
> absence in discussions because he always spoke up and contributed
> well and encouraged others.   We agreed the arrangements were all
> wrong and he ought to be doing it (his extra tuition) outside
> school hours.   She is very keen on social integration for her
> pupils.   But does she mind if they can't read and write?
>
> (D. 26/11/90)

Later they complained that being withdrawn from the group for so much of
his time had alienated him from it and he no longer contributed to those
discussions (D. 8/7/91).   I think good talk may have mitigated some
potentially adverse effects of his literacy difficulties.

ATTITUDE: At first M. was clearly distressed and angry at being taken out of his class.

> Things I don't like:
> I do' like plelpr tleing me what to do. and roteing me about.
> I don't like do what like what I doing now. And i don't like
> to be tauk out of the unit because as sune I chan get on becaus
> it's ten oclock on Monday and Thursday Friday it's nage ningan.
>
> ("1 don't like people telling me what to do and ordering me about.
> I don't like doing what I'm doing now. And I don't like to be taken
> out of the unit because as soon ... I can't get on because it's ten
> o'clock on Monday and Thursday, Friday it's nine again") (S. 4/3/91)

He never wrote as badly as this at any other time, certainly not with this disregard for grammar and syntax. Incidentally, his remarks about the timing are quite wrong. Our lessons went on much later than he says! He was very upset and had clearly been "bottling up" some of this as, by the time of this outburst, we had been working together for over three months.

However he was also, as it appeared, relieved to be having help with his difficulties. He was apprehensive at first about the reaction of his fellow-pupils but later he informed me that, although some had teased him, his friends had been "very supportive" (D. 4/3/91).

He was friendly and co-operative from the beginning of our lessons, but rather shocked and discouraged to find how hard he had to work. "Can't we play a game?" he frequently asked at first; he had played a lot of games at the Dyslexia Centre (see Appendix IIA) and associated them strongly with literacy lessons, which he thought ought always to be fun (even though he clearly and openly disliked real literacy activities). However, he accepted my explanation that games would not really help much and that we had a lot of work to do.

His moods fluctuated greatly in the early weeks and he several times
appeared to be so worried, as a result of events which had upset him,
that he could not concentrate. He seemed also to react very badly to
late nights and I could nearly always tell more or less what time he had
been to bed the night before by his behaviour in the lessons.

SELF-CONCEPT: After seven months his mood seemed to be much more
settled, but he was still quick to define himself in terms of things he
could not do.

> Discussion about using his father's computer occasionally for
> his writing. "I'm not very good with computers". But he
> thought he might ask his sister to work it for him. I said,
> "Why not learn to do it yourself?" No answer. Looked gloomy.
> Doesn't want to fail again? (D. 14/11/90)

Later on he did learn to use it.

His sister is younger than him and he claimed not to be on good terms
with her, but he seemed to acknowledge her as competent and successful
and able to do things he would never be able to. She had a full
programme of after-school activities; he seemed to have only football on
Saturdays and also seemed to spend a good deal of time in the car as
their mother drove her to these activities and then as they waited for
her. His teachers were very aware of this discrepancy between them and
commented on it several times with concern and disapproval. M. and I
never discussed it but he was very sociable and I felt sure he would
have liked to have done more but was too frightened of failing at
anything new.

My observations of M's abilities are summarised in Tables I - III.

TUITION: M. was due to go to his Secondary School in September, 1991 and
it seemed very unlikely that he would have any further individual help
after that; the Secondary Schools had their own ways of dealing with the
pupils with statements. I was afraid that his "statement" might mean

that he would be regarded as one of the "less able" and that too little would be demanded of him and that, without individual support, he might lose the confidence he had gained and fall back into pessimism about himself and the language and into his old habits of evasion.   I therefore felt we should concentrate on helping him to reach a kind of "watershed" of success, equipping him as well as possible to be able to work independently, to gain enough self-confidence to be able to do his best work without support and to acquire enough effective strategies for dealing with his difficulties himself, whenever they arose.   The broad aims of my tuition, therefore, were:

Self-knowledge: M. needed to understand himself, particularly the factors which helped him to read and write well and those which impeded his success.   Above all, he needed to alter his self-concept as a disabled and failing reader and writer and be convinced that he could succeed and that it was worth his while to try.

The Written Language: M. needed to understand that the written language is not just "speech written down" but that it has separate codes and conventions of its own which must be mastered.   He also needed to know that the written language is systematic and that there are patterns in it which are based on rules which do, usually, work.

Communication: M. needed to be convinced that writing is an important means of communication, not merely a formal ritual, and one that will be useful to him throughout his life for all sorts of purposes.

Reading: M. needed to read for meaning and to accept that accuracy is important because inaccuracy will distort the meaning of what he reads. He needed to make use of a much wider range of cues and strategies than he had been in the habit of using.

Writing: Again, M. needed to understand that we write (usually) to communicate and that, therefore, he must write with the reader in mind; the conventions need to be observed because they facilitate the transmission of the message.   He needed to set his writing out correctly

TABLE I.   STUDENT M: QUIN AND MACAUSLAN'S ANALYSIS

HEARING:	Good	VISION:	Tracking Poor (?)	PERCEPTION:	Good
MOVEMENT:	Good	R. & L:	Good	VOCABULARY:	Good
ARTICULATION: Slight Stammer (?)		SENTENCE CON- STRUCTION:	Good	GENERAL ACTIVITIES:	Good

\#
Table I illustrates the specific nature of M.'s difficulties.   In all
areas other than reading and writing his development had been satisfatory.
Of the two problems, recorded here, the stammer seemed to me very slight
and I did not observe the eye-tracking problem at all, but they are
included because they were mentioned to me by others and by M. himself and
were said to have cleared up after a few months' tuition, though not
necessarily because of it, although M. himself felt that that had been the
reason for his ceasing to stammer.
\#

TABLE II.   STUDENT M: PETERS (1967) ANALYSIS

PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABILITIES

MOTOR:	Good	SENSATION:	Good
PERCEPTION:	Good	IMAGERY:	Good

PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

OPPORTUNITIES TO WRITE CREATIVELY:	Probably
EARLY PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCES:	Unknown
SPELLING TEACHING:	Probably Phonic Analysis

MOTIVATIONAL

A CASUAL ATTITUDE:	Apparently casual to writing
SELF-IMAGE:	Very poor

\#
Table II again suggests satisfactory general development, but includes the
emotional factor of motivation, where M. had genuine serious difficulty.
He adopted a casual attitude towards reading and writing, but was
punctilious, to the point of fussiness, about puctuality, dress, school
rules etc.   I felt that his attitude to writing was adopted to hide the
distress it caused him.

Unfortunately it is possible to comment on previous educational experience
only by inference from M.'s behaviour and from what he told me.   It seems
likely that he was not required to try to train his visual perception and
imagery and that a phonic strategy was the only one offered him.

TABLE III.   STUDENT M: PETERS' (1970) ANALYSIS

FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESS IN SPELLING

VERBAL INTELLIGENCE:	Average	VISUAL PERCEPTION OF WORD FORM:	Good when attending
CAREFULNESS:	Generally careful, but not in writing	SPEED OF HANDWRITING:	Slow, Not Cursive

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT A PARTICULAR CHILD

Is he on the way to becoming a good speller?   No, getting worse.

Is he verbally intelligent?   Yes.

Is his visual perception of words adequate?   Yes, when he attends.

Is he a careful child?   Generally, very, but not when writing.

How much can he copy from one glance at a flash card?   Quite a lot.

Does he see himself as a good speller?   Emphatically not.

****

The analysis in Table III is based on Peters' manual for teachers. The practical questions about an individual child bring into sharper focus the personality traits and emotional attitudes which inhibited M.'s learning of reading and spelling, in spite of his average ability.

with straight margins and correct paragraphing and punctuation, to use
cursive writing and use capital letters correctly.

Spelling: M. needed to know that there are more techniques for spelling
words than the phonic one, which was the only one he used when our
lessons began. He needed practice with using a variety of strategies and
deciding when to use them.   He needed to look at words more carefully
and to train his visual memory.   Sadly, he also needed to forget many
incorrect spellings which he had practised assiduously and which were
firmly lodged in his memory.   He also needed to be able to group words
of similar spelling patterns and to see the connections between related
words - and, if possible, to become interested in words themselves and
language in general.   He needed to learn some metalanguage.

MY METHODS of tuition were directed to achieving these aims as quickly as
possible, as time was very short.

Self-knowledge: We spent a fair amount of time, about once a fortnight,
discussing him and his worries and monitoring his achievements and
progress, which were considerable.   It had never occurred to him,
naturally, that he was good at some aspects of writing which many others
find very difficult, like finding the words, getting his thoughts in order,
constructing sentences etc.   His problems were technical ones with
handwriting, spelling, punctuation and setting out his writing; we
sometimes made a detailed analysis of it and it emerged that it looked
very much worse than it was.   Countimg the spelling mistakes was
depressing but counting the words written correctly as well gave a much
more encouraging picture . (See Appendix IIIA).   Observing the frequency
of use of words was cheering when it became clear that he had mastered
some that he needed to write very often and it also encouraged him to
wrestle with other common words on the grounds that they would
inevitably crop up again and again and it was, therefore, certain to be
worth his while to learn them.

M. sometimes read into a tape-recorder, which he did not like doing but
it enabled me to demonstrate to him how unnecessarily inaccurate some of

his reading was and how this inaccuracy could completely alter the meaning of what he was reading. It also demonstrated to him how easily he could monitor his own accuracy, if he attended to meaning.

Another reason for using the tape-recorder was because he did not like it and it seemed to me a useful way of accustoming him to working under emotional pressure, which was very necessary for him. I doubted, and so did his headmaster (see above D. 18/3/91), that he had ever achieved even his average performance under test conditions. I discussed his moods very openly with him and tried to persuade him that he could control them and work well in spite of them. In some lessons I demanded a great deal from him, even if he was not feeling very well, but I made the reasons for doing this clear and was often able to demonstrate to him that he had been able to do good work in spite of all these pressures - even perhaps because of them sometimes.

I tried, whenever possible, to give him objective feedback on his work, rather than my own opinions. There is much evidence of the persistence of poor self-concepts (Burns 1982 p.191) and the necessity, if they are to be eroded, of correct feedback which is demonstrably correct so that the pupil cannot avoid accepting it. M. had often been praised for work which he knew was poor, so that he appeared to be quite sceptical about teachers' comments and would be more convinced by objective evidence of success. Luckily he was often successful and sometimes forced to admit that he had done well!

The Written Language: M's only strategy for dealing with spelling in the past had been to listen to the sounds of words and try to put the right letters down for them. I tried to get him to see written and spoken English as two separate systems (though, of course, strongly related) and to use a wider range of strategies. I introduced him to the concept of grammar, the names and functions of the parts of speech and prefixes and suffixes. I did not expect him to master these; nor did we do much parsing, but I believed it was helpful for him to know that there are systems at work and to begin to be able to relate certain spelling patterns with the functions of certain types of words.

Communication: I felt it essential for M. to understand what the written language is for and that it is a practical means of communication. We considered how, when, what and why people read and write (especially those important to him like his parents and various celebrities) (J.R. Martin 1985 p.28). It seemed likely that an emphasis on "creative writing" in school had given an unwilling student like M. the idea that failure with that did not matter, since it is clear that, in "real life", only those who choose to do so ever write stories. He expected to manage throughout his life without doing any writing and that the only reason for writing now was to get good marks at school (D. 11/2/91).

> Talked a bit about writing and reasons for it. It took some time for him to acknowledge communicative reasons - at first it was all for good results at school etc. (D.11/2/91)

Reading: After the triumph of the completed full-length children's book (see above) we returned to fiction only for an occasional short story and when I gave him some help with books he was required to read with his group in school. I put a greater emphasis on non-fiction, on silent reading with a purpose, tested by questions and by requiring a written response; also reading advertisements, notices, small print and looking up addresses and television programmes etc.

Writing: It is difficult in school to create situations where one genuinely needs to write (Stubbs 1980 p.115), but we anticipated grown-up life and practised writing cheques, shopping lists, job applications, letters to firms etc.

Spelling: I encouraged him to use a multi-sensory approach (Fernald 1943 pp. 195-6), looking at the word and simultaneously saying it, while both listening and feeling what the speech organs were doing and then saying it again as he wrote it; to think of analogous words and of grammar; to write words down and look at them to judge if they are correct; and to remember other words which have previously been associated with the one he wants. The words chosen for special study were those from Level 1 of the Arvidson list (1977 and Greig 1981), 300 words which are so

frequently written by all writers that they must be mastered, and words of special significance for him; some of these were long, technical and "difficult" and it was encouraging for him to find that he could master them and could thus write about things which really interested him.

ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS OF SIGNIFICANT ADULTS: I attended one formal meeting about M., which was held in the school on 8/3/91. Also present were M.'s parents, the Headmaster of the school, M.'s class teacher, the LEA psychologist and the member of the LEA Area Support Team with responsibility for advising on M.'s management and tuition.

The first to speak was his mother, who asked "Will M. be able to go on having this help for the rest of his school career?" She seemed to feel sure that M. suffered from a permanent disability and would never be able to work alongside other children without special support. Both parents recognised M's anxiety, but, when I suggested he might compare himself unfavourably with his successful younger sister, his mother denied emphatically that this could be a problem, although she also said that she took great care to see that the sister was never around when M. did his reading, which suggested that she was aware, at least unconsciously, of such a possibility. Four months later she was very sure that M. did find his sister's greater confidence and success discouraging and that he needed to be protected from comparisons with her (Diary 16/7/91).

M's father seemed anxious to ensure our work with M. was accountable; he wanted to know how progress could be compared with the progress made by the rest of the class over the same period of time. Both parents seemed mistrustful of the school and especially of M.'s teacher, who was present at this meeting and who is the teacher responsible for the school's language policy; there was a somewhat hostile exchange between them; she seemed to feel that their demands were unreasonable and impossible to meet without detriment to her other pupils and they that she did not appreciate how serious it was for M. to be so behind his fellows and, perhaps, that she underestimated his ability. The parents seemed to feel that improving M's achievement in reading and writing was the responsibility of the school only and they seemed unaware of how much all

the discussion and conflict which had gone on for over a year might have added to his anxiety. However, I received an impression (confirmed in all my encounters with him and his family) of M. as a much loved and very well cared-for child, who was also clearly very fond of his family (even of his tiresome sister, although he could not have admitted that), but I feared that that might well have increased any sense of guilt which he felt; I was sure he felt he was a disappointment to them because they were clearly so worried about him.

On each occasion when I discussed M. with his headmaster, without his parents being present, he mentioned his opinion that M. was "not very bright" (D. 7/9/90, 19/10/90 etc.). He deplored the pressure which he felt was put on him by his parents and the pressure they put on the Local Authority and the school and he resented the preferential treatment which M. was receiving when he considered that there were other children who needed this more and did not have it. I felt sure the problem was complicated for him by the fact that M's father is also a governor of the · school and by the current public emphasis on standards of literacy and discussion of teaching standards.

His prescription for M. was to accept his poor achievement and allow him to continue, as he felt he was already, making slow progress "at his own pace" and concentrating on giving him emotional support and encouragement. He did agree with me, however, that, with his present standard of literacy, M. would find himself struggling at Secondary School. Moreover, I thought M. had almost ceased to make any progress at all "at his own pace". I felt that, if he had been moving, it was in the wrong direction and I felt that the headmaster seriously underestimated both his ability and his need. Later he said he felt that writing would soon be unnecessary (D. 18/7/91) and I had already noted that, although reading was formally tested in the school (the LEA required it), spelling was not. I doubt if the headmaster expressed this prediction of the demise of writing to his staff or pupils, but I feel it may well have coloured his approach to its teaching, if only slightly.

I have described, above, a conversation with M's class teacher, in which
she complained of lack of literary culture in his home. She strongly
advocated a "real books" approach to reading and seemed to feel that all
children who had proper parental support responded well to this.   I
asked her why she thought that M. and three or four others in the class
had not responded well and she said, "I don't know; I think they're lazy."
I asked her how she had dealt with him before I started teaching him and
she said that she had not singled him out in any way and, for instance,
when the class were doing silent reading, M. did it too; although she
knew he could not read effectively alone, she felt it was "good for his
self-esteem" to be doing what the others did (D. 8/3/91).   It seemed to
me that it might be good for his "public image" (although the other
children were well aware of his difficulties), but I felt sure that M.
could only spend those sessions pretending to read and miserably
conscious that everyone around him was doing something he could not do;
it could not improve his self-esteem and must surely have lowered it.

A "critical incident", from the point of view of revealing the attitudes
of M. and his teachers and the mismatch between them was that of the
Missing Journal.

> By mistake I went off with his Journal, which I know he has to
> keep up for his teachers.   As I was not coming back for three
> days, I brought it to the school and handed it over in a staff
> meeting (which happened to be going on when I arrived).   The
> Headmaster laughed at the idea that he would be worried about it
> and the staff didn't seem to think it mattered.   I think it *should*
> matter and that he *would* be worried about it.
>
> (D. 7/1/91)

> The staff had *not* given him back his Journal
> which I took away by mistake on Monday and brought back on
> Monday p.m., much to their amusement.   He *was* worried
> by this as he had to give it in to-morrow - as I had anticipated -
> and we had to make rather an effort to find it, which we did.

To M. (and to me) it seemed that a good deal of importance was attached to this Journal by the teachers. For instance it had to be written daily, in black ink, in a particular exercise book and be handed in regularly each week. M. was always extremely worried about "doing the wrong thing" and they must have known that by now. It was *they* who did not not take it seriously, not him!

(D. 10/1/91)

SUMMARY: It seemed to me that M. was a child whose parents thought he was permanently visually disabled and one of whose most significant teachers thought his hearing was impaired; his headmaster thought he was unintelligent and his class teacher thought he was lazy. All his teachers criticised his parents for putting too much pressure on him and his parents felt the school expected too little of him. Although little of all this may have been conveyed openly to M., some of it was and certainly an atmosphere of confusion, anxiety and conflict existed over a long period, during which special help was said to be necessary for him but was not forthcoming. An attempt was made to explain his difficulties to him by naming them "dyslexia", but little attempt to explain that word's meaning was made and he was offered only soothing words and "encouragement" of a discouraging nature, when he needed to be given clear, specific strategies and techniques for improving his performance and clear, objective and specific "feedback" on his progress.

He did not see the written language as useful or pleasurable and expected to do without it once he had escaped from school. It is not surprising that he made little progress until he altered those perceptions of himself and of reading and writing. He achieved this when, in the secure situation of individual tuition, he began to perform successfully and received clear, objective evidence of that success; and when he was persuaded to investigate the role which written language played in grown-up life for most people, which led him to understand that to master it would be to his advantage.

1992

EPILOGUE: M. went to his Secondary School in September 1991.   In July
1991, I contacted the Advisory Support Teacher who had overseen our work
together to ask how he was getting on and received the following reply:

> ... he is now in all mainstream lessons, is "holding his own",
> but still has quite a big spelling problem.   He "seems happy".

She does add that this does not tell us much, which is true, but at least
it seems that he is following the normal curriculum with his peers and I
feel that that is important good news and must help him not to feel
"disabled" and resigned always to being behind the others.   Sadly, I did
not find it surprising that his spelling should still be a big problem.
His confused visual images and unhelpful habits had persisted for too
long to be able to be reversed quickly.   But I am confident that he can
now write when he needs to and knows what to do when he is unsure.   He
will probably never enjoy it, nor perhaps read for pleasure, but will be
able to "get through" tasks he needs to perform.   He is not helpless.

DISCUSSION: M. was categorised as "dyslexic" and as having "specific
learning difficulties" and certainly his difficulties were limited to his
handling of the written language.   In other respects he appeared to have
developed normally and quite successfully.

M'S SPELLING: A detailed analysis of M's spelling (Appendix IVA) in work
which he produced in our lessons suggests that, whatever happened in the
past, he was then at the stage of a much younger child whose spelling is
progressing normally, but he had three disadvantages:

He was hindered emotionally by lack of confidence and fear arising from
his long history of failure.

He was not interested in reading or writing nor in the subject matter of
most of what he had to read and he had passed the age (Read (1986, p.118

- 122) at which children seem to be fascinated with the processes of written language. Thus he had no motivation to read or write.

He had accumulated, in his memory, a few correct images of words, together with a great many well-established, incorrect images; also many confused images of words he had sometimes misspelled and sometimes spelled correctly. All these would need to be unlearned, relearned and consolidated before he could "achieve the machine-like movements that are automatic, predictable and infallible" which Peters (1967 p.11) cites as the hallmark of the good speller. It seems unlikely that he will ever reach that state, but he should be able to write with greater confidence and know how to check his spelling when he needs to.

There was also a vicious circle; because he was bad at writing he disliked it and, because he disliked it, he did as little of it as possible. But he needed practice to improve. Analysis of his writing reveals how few instances there were even of many of the words which he wrote most often.

M. was a child "deprived of his Seven League Boots" (Merritt 1985 p.20). These are the confidence that children have in themselves, their drive to communicate, their inventiveness and resourcefulness in hypothesising about writing, their cheerful acceptance of irregularities in the language and their own mistakes, and their resilience in the face of set-backs, all features we can observe in children who are progressing well with writing and spelling.

M. seems to me to be one who lost his seven league boots early on and, sadly, well-meaning attempts to get them back for him have taken the form of turning the language from a means of communicating useful information and exciting and interesting ideas into drills and remedial treatments for his defects. At school the support teacher gave him isolated consonant blends and digraphs to practise; at the Dyslexia Centre he was given little games to play for practice with the "magic E" and other "phonic drills"; he was given glasses to correct his vision, then different glasses, then no glasses (although he was still said to be

dyslexic on the same grounds which had given rise to the need for
glasses in the first place); and in the classroom he was given dull,
childish books containing a limited vocabulary to read, because they were
"easy", and invited to pretend to read when he could not.

The adults surrounding him had a pessimistic attitude towards the written
language and towards him, perhaps because they did not understand either
well.

There may have been some deficit in his hearing, perhaps temporarily at
least, but it was not diagnosed in the course of the rather full
investigations his problems were subjected to, only suggested in passing
by a teacher.

The irregular eye-movements which were diagnosed by one psychologist but
not by the other and which vanished so mysteriously without the use of
the spectacles specially prescribed to correct them may not have existed
and, if they did, they are as likely to have been the result of the
reading difficulty as its cause.

His intelligence, as measured, was certainly in the average range and was
probably higher than suggested by his score; all who knew him agreed
that he performed badly under test conditions and that he was very
nervous of answering questions or taking any risks.

In fact the only "abnormality" for which there is any evidence is that M's
achievements were those of a younger child and he was not progressing.
There was nothing "bizarre" about his errors and close observation and
discussion with him showed that he had a sensible, if misguided, rationale
for most of them.

He certainly was confused about the nature and purposes of writing and
very confused and worried about his failure to master it.

M. may have got the answer himself. He drew a diagram of a cross-roads
and put some arrows going straight along the main road to the top of the

page.   "These," he said, "are the other children, but I think 1 went off
down here," drawing a single arrow going off alone down a side road.   It
sounds a likely explanation of the beginnings of the problem though it
fails to explain how he came to go down the wrong road.   It does,
however, raise the question of why it took so long for it to be noticed
where he was going and why it seemed so difficult to bring him back.

M's case does seem to be one where a problem was clearly identified and
allowed to persist and intensify over four formative years, not for lack
of goodwill or concern but for lack of understanding of the linguistic
and psychological factors involved.   Part of the problem lay in the very
procedures which identified his problems and prescribed for their
remediation.   The results were anxiety, pessimistic prognoses and half-
hearted and confused attempts to help him, some of which were ineffective
and some even counter-productive.

A.2.   STUDENT C: A CASE STUDY:

"1 think English is a stupid langwig"

The sources for this account, as in the previous case study, are my
Research Diary for a longer period, 1st. July, 1990 to 4th. July, 1992, a
Tape-Recorded Conversation with C., the Scripts he produced in the course
of our work together and a much earlier Report of the Educational
Psychologist who examined C. and advised on his tuition.   References to
these sources are indicated in brackets by D., T., S. and E.P. respectively
with dates.

HISTORY: C. was born on 8.4.77.   He has one sister three years
younger than him and lives with her and both his parents.   His father
is in the Armed Forces and is sometimes away for several months at a
time.   His mother is a teacher of Science at a different Secondary
school from the one attended by C.

C. started school in a small town and moved there from the Infant to the
separate Junior school.   Later the family moved to a large and
expanding town in the same area and he changed schools again when he
was 8.   At 11 he moved to a recently established Community Secondary
school as one of its third intake.   He has suffered from asthma from
early childhood, although he has now for some time taken responsibility
successfully himself for managing his medication and seems to control
his symptoms well.

From the beginning of his school career C. seems to have had great
difficulty with reading and writing and very soon to have become
conscious of this.

> It is important to note ... the very important fact that C.
> approaches any form of written work with a great deal of
> uncertainty and unhappiness. (E.P. 22/8/86)

C. I had a problem with reading and writing and I didn't enjoy
   school at all because of that.

S. Just because of that?

C. Mm. At L., my first school, they didn't think - they just
    thought I was stupid.

S. Did they? Are you sure?

C. Mm. My mum said the headmistress... I used to get into
   trouble because I couldn't do things and it was because -
   and they thought I was just idle.

S. Idle? Not stupid?

C. Or just didn't want to do it.

S. And can you remember what they did to try and make you do it?

C. Well, I can remember that I used to have a friend and we used to
   always try and get things done really quickly because if you
   finished your work you got to play with these blocks
                                                        (T. 7/12/91)

Further extracts from the Educational Psychologist's report of 22/8/86)
summarise his situation at the age of nine:

   C's class teacher commented; 'C. always participates well, but
   quite often vociferously, in class/group discussions. His ideas
   and observations are always accurate and interesting and concepts
   are clearly expressed and he can argue and discuss rationally; ...

but

... reports ... indicated that C. had great difficulties in dealing
with any work involving literacy skills. However, Mr. H. (his
teacher) did feel that C. had at least average general ability ....

In fact, at the time of that report, when C's chronological age was 8.11
years, his received vocabulary skill was assessed in the range 11.0 to
12.6 years and his verbal reasoning in the range 9.6 to 12.6 years.
The psychologist concluded:

Briefly therefore, one could say that C's special needs as they
exist are not occasioned by a basic poor level of language ability.

This seems to me to be an understatement on the grand scale.

... C. stated on frequent occasions that he is very interested
in the work being covered, but ... there is a 'knock-on effect'
from (his literacy difficulties) in that C. very rapidly appears
to lose interest, become frustrated, or disturbs others after
periods of twenty or so minutes. (This) ... could well be
described as avoidance behaviour on his part.

And

Often C. has shown great frustration, on occasion expressed quite
aggressively, towards other children.

The report also describes how he had previously been referred to the
Educational Psychology Service twice, at his Infant school and after a
term in his second Junior school. The first referral seems not to have
been followed up. The second resulted in his being observed in school
and gave rise to the report quoted and to his being the subject of a
"Statement of Special Need" and entitled to extra tuition.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR TUITION: C. and l eventually began to work together
on 5th. November, 1990. There had been a long delay described in the

previous Case Study.   We met twice a week for 1½ hours, each time
after his school lessons.   One of these sessions took place at a time
when he would otherwise have been following an "Enrichment" course of
his choice and the other when he would have have finished school for the
day and gone home.   This pattern continued until July, 1991.

From September 1991 we met once a week for three hours on Saturday
mornings.   I insisted on the change to Saturday mornings in the second
year because I had always felt our work should be "extra" to C.'s regular
programme, partly to emphasise the seriousness of the undertaking,
partly to give him an incentive to improve and so have more free time
and partly because he wanted to attend the Enrichment Courses and I
thought it was a pity he had to miss them.   I had tried to make such
an arrangement from the beginning, but was unable to persuade those
concerned;   at the end of the first year I was asked to continue with
the work and said I would do so only on those terms.

Teaching C. on Saturday mornings created further administrative problems;
an argument continued throughout the entire period as to which budget
the £2.50, which it apparently cost to have the caretaker unlock and lock
the door of the classroom where we worked, should be charged.   In spite
of this expenditure, the start of the lesson was often delayed by our
finding the door still locked and having to hunt for the person with the
key.   In winter the heating was either turned off and the room was
extremely cold or it was on and very hot indeed;   neither extreme could
be predicted.   Over the two years liaison with his other teachers was
very difficult;   my point of contact was changed three times and two of
the people I was asked to deal with had never taught C. and did not
know him.   I was never able effectively to co-ordinate C.'s work with
me with what he was doing in school.

There were also tedious and time-consuming mistakes over my salary,
ranging from my being greatly overpaid to not being paid at all for
several months.   I was also surprised to find that I was paid as a
part-time member of staff, when I had expected to be paid by the hour.
This meant that my work was extremely expensive for the Authority and

my status was inappropriate; I shared none of the duties with the other staff and marking and preparation for such work is minimal. Moreover, when C. missed his lessons, as he did several times, we could not make them up but I was paid just the same. I pointed this out from the beginning to those who made the arrangements, but they did not seem to understand my complaint or why I had made it.

I think it is relevant to this study for three reasons:

The New Zealand Reading Recovery Programme is being much discussed at present as a promising response to the complaint about low literacy standards. It seems to be generally admired and its introduction in our schools is considered desirable. The only serious disadvantage appears to be its cost which is said to be between £600 and £1,000 per pupil. All except 0.8% apparently are "recovered" within a maximum of 20 weeks. C. made noticeable progress during the period of our work together, but he was by no means "recovered" and discussions were proceeding about concessions for him for his GCSE assessments, but the cost to the Authority, for those five and a half terms only and in addition to his previous extra tuition, was over £3,000.

I became dissatisfied with my dealings with the Authority and with the school and for this reason (and others detailed below) refused to continue with the work in July 1992, although C. was still entitled to individual help by the terms of his statement. There had been gaps in this tuition before my time and much of it had been done, rather unwillingly, by people with no appropriate qualifications. I was told that it was very difficult to find qualified people to do such work. Perhaps it would be less difficult if they were better administered. I was able to wait for two months before starting work and three before receiving any payment and I was eager to take on a pupil like C. in order to make this study, but not everyone is in that position; the school had been unable to find anyone before I presented myself. The situation was a thoroughly discouraging one for the teacher and, if it persists, it may never be easy to find suitable people.

I thought the delays and uncertainty reflected an extremely casual attitude on the part of the school to the whole problem. The disadvantage for C. was that he had a Statement, was being singled out and receiving individual attention so that it was clear to all that he had a problem and it looked as if his difficulties were being attended to; in practice he was getting almost no help and his failure to improve was not surprising, but the circumstances may have made him feel that he was getting real help and would have improved if he had not been a hopeless case. This was a perception I had encountered before among Adult Literacy students who had received similarly "cosmetic" treatment at their schools.

MY ASSESSMENT of C.

The unhappiness referred to by the psychologist, above, was evident from the minute I met him. He was the picture of misery. I was taken to the school by an Advisory Teacher from the Authority's Support Team, who had previously, when he was in his Primary School, provided him with his extra tuition for a short time. She claimed that he was then making good progress fast and she had been disappointed at the standard of his recent work. She said it had deteriorated badly and she was rather shocked when she met him again.

> She summoned him from a class and expected, naturally, to get
> some sort of recognition, if not welcome. He stood there, eyes
> on the ground, looking absolutely miserable and hardly spoke to
> either of us. Never looked at us at all.   (D. 11/9/90)

He continued to avoid looking at me for the rest of that term and he certainly never smiled or spoke except in response to questions from me. He was not rude and did whatever I asked him to, but as quickly and perfunctorily as he dared. He laughed twice in the first six months, once when he wrote, in a short piece about his routines at home, "I am going to have a quck (sic) wash and get caned (meaning "changed")" and "My mum will wack me (meaning "wake")" (S. 26/11/90); I read this out

to him as he had written it and he laughed at the idea of being "caned"
and "whacked" by his mother. The other time,

> "We then read Mel Calman's piece on being evacuated and looked
> at a cartoon in the book which made him laugh" (D. 10/1/91)

On both occasions he was taken by surprise and the laughter was
spontaneous; if he had had time to suppress it I felt sure he would
have.   He hardly ever did more than grunt when we met and parted and I
said Hello and Goodbye and, as I passed him, as he walked and I drove
home, I would wave to him and receive no acknowledgment until one day
after nearly four months,

> "Actually lifted his hand just noticeably as I drove
> past him going home.   Eyes still looking straight ahead, of
> course, but this is progress.   After 3 months!" (D. 28/2/91)

He was very embarrassed about being seen to be having special lessons
and part of his reluctance to speak to me was, I think, because he hoped
that thus no-one would connect me with him; there were always large
numbers of staff and pupils milling about when I arrived, so that that
was quite feasible.   He was very keen that we should work in a large
room where other activities were going on and some pupils talking
individually with teachers.   Although I wanted an empty classroom, I
acceded to this, since I thought I understood how he felt.   However,

> Turned out of big room by a teacher.   Found an empty classroom.
> I did not tell the teacher it was C. who wanted to be
> in the big room and I think he was quite grateful. (D. 7/1/91)

He made several efforts, some successful, to avoid the lessons
altogether.   A week after we started, (D. 12/11/90),

> C. not there.   Told A. (the Head of Special Needs).   She rang
> him up at home and ordered him back.   Arrived quite soon with
> feeble excuses about forgetting.   We were v. pleasant but firm!

and after another week,

> C. not there.   ... Rang C's number.   No answer - has he learned
> from last time not to answer it?   (D. 19/11/90)

and there were four more occasions that term.   Sometimes he said he
was ill and may have been, but he had failed to follow the school rules
about "signing out".   I noticed that all of these absences occurred
when he was due to give me some homework.   There were two further
occasions after Christmas and his mother was informed.   After that

> C. turned up with a polite note apologising for missing the
> lesson on 14/2/91.   Had a long and serious talk and read him
> my report - told him I hadn't shown it to anyone else yet.
> Asked him if we should go on.   He said we should.   I said he
> _must_ practise and he agreed.   Promise of better things.
> I hope they materialise. (D. 25/2/91)

They did, partly.   He never again failed to come to a lesson, but
another important conflict between us was his failure to do any
homework.   I was sure it was vital for him to practise writing, he
always agreed and I think probably had every intention of doing it at
the time, but then 1 think probably forgot about it at once until just
before we were due to meet again.   The excuses were many and various.

> "I forgot which page you told me to read."   (D. 10/1/91)

> C. "lost" the book for his homework - had to give it back after
> a lesson, so couldn't do it.   (D. 24/1/91)

but I had understood that arrangements had been made for him to keep
this book so that, in view of his difficulties, he could have extra time
with it to work on with me.   I think he failed to remind the teacher of
this when she asked for the book to be given in.

> ... left it at home. (D.7/3/91)

>   Had left his HW in Manchester - wd. ask his gran to post it!
>
>   (D. 11/4/91)

It never appeared.

>   Muddle over HW - he hadn't done it!.   Said it was my mistake
>   but it really wasn't. (D. 6/6/91)

and so on.

I continued to try to get him to do it for a long time and frequently
asked his teachers and his parents to remind him to do it, but in the
end I thought it was unwise to continue to argue about it when the
outcomes were always so unsatisfactory.   I was disappointed in his
mother who had made a great effort to get his difficulties acknowledged
and remediated but also to ensure that he remained within the normal
school system.

>   (C's mother) made it quite clear ... that she is not
>   prepared to accept that C. should be moved from his
>   local primary school to receive special help, and would
>   object to any such suggestion made.   (E.P. 22/8/86)

She especially, since his father was often away, was really the only
person who could have insisted that he did his homework and gave it in.

After a few weeks, then, my assessment of C. and his difficulties was
that he was an able boy whose early experiences with literacy had been
unfortunate.   There must have been something wrong for him to have
started so badly with these activities when he seemed to do well with
and enjoy other activities in school, but not necessarily something wrong
with *him*.   He was extremely disorganised in his personal life, always
losing and forgetting things and he also felt strongly that he should be
required to do only what he enjoyed.   He wrote:

>   Writing in school is not always enjoyable. (S. 16/11/91)

This led to a discussion between us. I asked if he thought everything should be enjoyable. He said everything could be made enjoyable; he seemed to feel it was up to teachers to see that he only did things he enjoyed - and enjoyed immediately. So I think that, when he began to find reading and writing so unenjoyable, he may have felt justified, by this philosophy, in avoiding them when possible and he used his considerable ability (coupled, no doubt with his rather formidable personality) to devise ways of doing so.

> Sometimes I used to get away with it because we did it in a
> group and it was whoever had the best handwriting did it. ... I
> did some drawing and l used to tell people what to write mostly.
> ... When we did, like, papers, l was always the editor because
> no-one else wanted to do the talking ... but I was good at it
> and I could do - make it sound like it was in a newspaper, but
> my handwriting wasn't as nice as everyone else's, so - 'cos the
> spellings weren't so much of a difficulty 'cos I could ask my
> friends.   (T. 7/12/91)

He was vehement in his dislike of writing and especially spelling.

> I do not like Spelling - when my techer asks meto spelle I
> right I Drawr sone thing inthe margen   I think English is a
> stupid langwig and I do not like right-ing it   I dont no if
> I would like righting it if the spelling was not hard.
>
>   (S. 25/1/91)

It was true, the margins of his scripts were full of little drawings. Earlier, his problems with reading and writing had made him hate school.

> S. Why did you think English was stupid?
>
> C. Well, I understand it more now - I understand why ~ certain
>   ways of it.   ...It just didn't make sense to me so l just
>   thought, if it didn't make sense, it was stupid.   ...I used
>   to hate coming to school at all.

S. Did you?   Which school was that?   Here?

C. Any school.

S. Any school?   Always?

C. Well, I quite enjoy it now, even if I think I'm not going to
   enjoy myself, I seem to like...   I used to hate English, but
   I enjoy going to English now.

....

S. What did you think was wrong?

C. I didn't know.   I just - er -

S. Did you notice that you were worse at it than other people?

C. Mm.   I just couldn't do it very well.   And I got lessons
   and I didn't like that because -

S. Extra lessons?

C. Mm, because I thought that I didn't need them because I was
   clever, but

I saw him, therefore, as someone who had found reading and writing
baffling and unrewarding activities and also unnecessary; he had
managed very well for a long time doing very little of them and
attempts to help him had laid stress on consoling him for his disability
rather than urging him to overcome it.   At the beginning I talked to
the School Welfare Assistant who had helped him in the two previous
years.   She told me about the kind of work they had done:

    Loves geography and maps.   Played Trivial Pursuits.   Lots of
    Worksheets.   Likes an end to it.   X-words, Rebus work etc.

> Play-reading w. other children.   Scrabble.   Hard to spell and
> write simultaneously.   Not much writing.   (D. 19/10/90)

HEALTH: His general health appeared to me to be good and he was a keen
and quite successful athlete and cyclist.   He still suffered from
asthma and once only in the two years a lesson was cancelled because of
that.   On the occasions, described above, when he missed his lessons
improperly, he said he had been ill but never mentioned asthma; I think
he felt his asthma was a serious matter and should not be used
untruthfully to get him out of difficult situations.   He was sometimes
a little "wheezy", but he used his ventilator when necessary with little
fuss and appeared to have that problem well under control.   Naturally
enough, it had not always been so.

> C. generally has good school attendance, although he does suffer
> quite severely from asthma.   ... He has had a couple of "mild"
> asthma attacks in school ... Inevitably, he often finds these
> attacks rather worrying, but has been O.K. subsequently provided
> he remembers to sit still and relax.   (E.P. 22/8/86)

Sitting still was still difficult for him six years later at 14!   He was
much given to fidgetting and very easily distracted.   It seems clear
from this report that he did miss at least some school at the beginning
and perhaps in odd days which has been shown to have a more
detrimental effect (Clark 1970 p.31) than absence for the equivalent
amount of time all at once.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT: It may be useful, as with the previous Case Study,
to consider the fields of general development as listed by Quin and
Macausian (1986 p. 27.), Hearing, Vision, Perception, Movement, Knowledge
of right and left, Vocabulary, Articulation, Syntax and Sentence
Construction and General Activities.

There is no suggestion anywhere in the previous records, nor in any of
the conversations I had with people who knew him, that C. ever showed
any deviations from normal in any of the first five of these fields.

He is a big, handsome boy, who moves well and is considered a good
athlete. His vocabulary, as assessed by formal tests (see above) was
well above average when he was eight and I seldom found him at a loss
for a word. His articulation was adequate and he had no problems with
syntax and sentence construction, either in speaking or writing. His
scripts, if deciphered and read aloud, are well-constructed and clearly
and correctly composed; it is only the poor "secretarial skills" that
make them look bad. He was still a confident and eloquent speaker as
he had been in his Primary schools and his current teachers confirmed
the picture he gives of himself (see above) of a leader in discussions
and a spokesman for groups. When a School Council was set up, C. was
top of the poll in his year for a place on it.

In fact he performed adequately in every activity and with distinction in
some, as long as they were not dependent upon literacy.

He was quite often in trouble at school. His tutor showed me a file on
him where it was stated that he had "a great many friends - and
enemies!" and I heard (from him because I had asked him) of several
occasions when he was punished for rudeness to teachers and for
disruptive and aggressive behaviour in class and sometimes towards other
pupils. There were also complaints about his refusal to sit still and
his tendency to wander about the classroom in lessons when he should
have been concentrating on the work in front of him at his desk. He
sometimes felt he was picked on unjustly.

> As I write I say what I am writing and some times (sic) when the
> class has to write in slience (sic, "silence") I unconcusly (sic,
> "unconsciously") am saying what I write as I write and I get toled
> (sic) off for tlaking (sic) (S. 16/11/91)

He could not read without mouthing and whispering the words, though he
mostly wrote in silence in our lessons, but it was probably much harder
for him to concentrate in a classroom full of people.

My observations of C.'S abilities are summarised in Tables IV -VI

TABLE IV.   STUDENT C: QUIN AND MACAUSLAN'S ANALYSIS (1986)

HEARING:	Good	VISION:	Good	PERCEPTION:	Good
MOVEMENT:	Good	R. & L:	Good	VOCABULARY:	Good
ARTICULATION:	Good	SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION:	Good	GENERAL ACTIVITIES:	Good

****
Nothing wrong, apparently to explain his poor literacy.

****

TABLE V.   STUDENT C: PETERS' (1967) ANALYSIS

PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ABILITIES

MOTOR:	Good	SENSATION:	Good
PERCEPTION:	Good	IMAGERY:	Good

PREVIOUS EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

OPPORTUNITIES TO WRITE CREATIVELY: Probably

EARLY PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCES: No evidence of any deficit

SPELLING TEACHING: Phonic Analysis? C. could not
                                            remember any spelling teaching

MOTIVATIONAL

A CASUAL ATTITUDE: Very casual Indeed

SELF - IMAGE: Very poor in relation to literacy, otherwise
                        apparently very positive
****
Table V confirms the implication of Table IV that there were apparently no
underlying physical or neurological reasons for C. to fail, but that the
problem is more likely to lie in his personality, attitudes and previous
educational experiences.

TABLE VI.   STUDENT C: PETERS' (1970) ANALYSIS

FACTORS AFFECTING SUCCESS IN SPELLING

VERBAL INTELLIGENCE:	Superior	VISUAL PERCEPTION OF WORD FORM:	Good when attending
CAREFULNESS:	Very careless	SPEED OF HANDWRITING:	Fast

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT A PARTICULAR CHILD

Is he on the way to becoming a good speller?	No, getting worse.
Is he verbally intelligent?	*Yes, very.*
Is his visual perception of words adequate?	Yes, when attending
Is he a careful child?	No.
How much can he copy from one glance at a flash card?	Quite a lot.
Does he see himself as a good speller?	Emphatically not.

****

The practical questions in the second part of this table bring C.'s
problems into focus and place them firmly in the emotional and motivational
sphere.

LITERATE CULTURE IN THE HOME: I visited C.'s home twice, met his father once, his sister twice and his mother on several occasions, most of these quite briefly. Both parents were concerned with science and technology in their work and C. told me that his father did little reading and writing, did not like it and had problems with spelling; however C. thought he was successful in his work and seemed to admire him very much. His ambition was to follow in his footsteps and be an engineer for Rolls Royce, which his father had been once. There were not a great many books around, although his younger sister was "lost" in a book while I was there and C. thought of her as a bookworm. Although it did not strike me as a particularly "literary" household and the emphasis was probably more on practical and sporting interests, C. had certainly had stories read to him as a child, he knew his way around the Public Library (where I took him once) and was certainly not "deprived" of literate culture.

LITERACY: Reading: He hated reading aloud, so l did not ask him to do this but relied for my assessments on asking him questions about passages he had read to himself. I observed him, of course, as he read and noticed that his lips often moved and he quite often said the words under his breath as he read and sometimes pointed to them with his finger. In fact, he read like a small child with his first books, but,

> ... he manages to extract the meaning out of what he reads
> surprisingly successfully. He clearly makes excellent use of
> context, his own experience of language and relevant knowledge
> to support his insecurity with the written code.
>
> (My report on him, December 1990)

But he relied on that ability too much and was surprised and annoyed when he scored low on a reading test. In a piece designed for a test and therefore unrelated to anything before or after or to C.'s personal experience, he did extract much of the meaning and made thoroughly sensible guesses, but could not read every word accurately enough to give the right answers to the comprehension questions.

He looked cross, surprised and thoughtful. Was this the first
time he realised that it might be really important to him after
all to be able to read absolutely accurately? And that he may
not be clever enough, after all, to manage without making a bit
of effort? (D.15/7/91)

Writing: He was very reluctant to write and we often had to discuss and
negotiate for quite a long time before he could decide on a topic.
Having decided, he then wrote quickly and without hesitation or pauses
and came to a stop equally decisively and firmly. He could seldom be
persuaded to write any more. The pieces he produced, read aloud, were
superficial (he was impatient with suggestions that he should explore
any subject further), but well argued, clearly-written and well
expressed; only the spelling, handwriting and punctuation were poor.
C. could always correct the punctuation when required to do so and he
could often identify his own spelling errors, though he could seldom
correct them on his own. He could write neatly when he made a special
effort and remembered to do so, but at other times the size of the
letters varied and he produced ambiguous-looking letters which were
incorrectly closed or joined so that they resembled other letters. This
often occurred with unstressed vowels, A, O and U, where it was hard to
hear the sound and I wondered whether this was a, possibly unconscious,
effort to "hedge his bets" by writing something looking like two
different vowels and hoping, thus, to receive the benefit of the doubt
about whether he had spelled it correctly.

I think I have identified this technique occasionally before in the
course of my work as a teacher of Classics in Secondary schools; it is
certainly very common to mumble the ends of the words in Latin lessons
when one is not sure of the grammar and it is easy to expose that
"ploy" at the time. I think the written equivalent does occur, but it
is harder to prove and argues a degree of understanding of the language
which a failing writer like C. would not really be expected to possess.
I did suggest it to him, but he refused either to confirm or deny it!

His only strategy for spelling words he was unsure of was to try to
hear the sounds of them (he would often mutter them to himself before
he wrote them) and to write down the letters he thought represented
those sounds.   He seemed to me to spell like a normally-developing but
.much younger child.   Analyses of his writing appear in the Appendix.

SPEAKING: C. never introduced a subject of conversation with me and his
replies to my questions were as brief as it was possible to be without
being rude.   On the other hand, it was clear that he was a tremendous
talker among his friends and in class, eloquent and persuasive.   He
seemed to me to have a good vocabulary and spoke clearly and fluently,
ordering his thoughts well, as he did when writing.

TUITION: The aims were, broadly, to help him obtain the best possible
grades in his GCSE in 1993; specifically, to improve his reading and
writing performance and to develop his interest in and confidence with
these tasks.   Some of the work was concerned with reading, study
skills, discussion of his strengths, needs, worries and future plans, but
much the greater part of the time was spent on writing in an attempt to
enable him to write much more fully, fluently, legibly and confidently
than he was able to when we began.

In the course of each lesson C. wrote in his own words on some subject
usually something he had been studying in school but sometimes about
some interest or concern of his own.   The first 21 of the resulting
scripts were all written as "Speed Writing" exercises; he had to choose
a subject and write as many words as he could, without regard for
neatness or accuracy, within a strictly-timed period.   I used this
method because in the past I have found it an effective way of inducing
poor writers to write at all, which they are often very reluctant to do.
C. was very reluctant indeed and I set his time limit at only 5 minutes.
Even so, he found it very hard both to get started and to keep going
and produced very short scripts for his first three efforts (42, 27 and
31 words on 5, 7 and 14/11 respectively).   In fact, for a long time he
often stopped before even that time was up and only twice (on 25/2/91 -
74 words and 11/4/91 - 118 words) was he still writing at the end of

it; those totals were not achieved in 5 minutes but he went on until he felt he had finished what he wanted to say. After that we abandoned the timing rule and he always wrote until he felt he had finished. It is fair to say that all the scripts were written under the same conditions, since, when he was unwilling, he did not keep writing for the full five minutes, whatever the pressure that I put on him, so that the timing became almost irrelevant once it had served its purpose of "getting him going".

I felt that writing and spelling were by far his greatest need. He was preparing for GCSE, mostly course-work in all subjects and 100% course-work in English, which gave him unhoped-for opportunities of producing correctly-written pieces, if he could make himself do the repeated checking and revision needed. I did give him reading assignments, but fewer of these because, although he read very slowly, he could extract the meaning of print effectively; I thought he could "get by" with that.

We also spent a good deal of our time discussing what had gone wrong in the past, his aspirations for the future and how best and most easily to achieve them. I introduced him to some elementary psychology. He needed to understand the paradox between his general high ability, of which he was well aware, and his previous failure with literacy and to be convinced both that he would need to write, not just for school but in his adult life, and that he would be able to do so well enough for his purposes, though I thought it was doubtful that he would ever be a confidently accurate speller and I told him that as well. We agreed that his best course was to aim for early success and a secretary!

He seemed to me to have a very clear, logical mind and he liked systems, so we spent a lot of time on grammar, syntax, parsing and word-study, emphasising the morphemic relations between words. He was pleasantly surprised to find that there was some system in the language which he had believed to be quite anarchic. We concentrated a great deal on the technical language he encountered in his studies. He was more easily successful with some of these words, because they were important to him and he was interested in them, but also because they were new; he had

not confused and disheartened himself by trying to write them and getting them wrong, as he had with the common words.

I read him a poem in every lesson, sometimes the same poem twice, with very little introduction or comment, usually none. I did this partly to "break up" our long teaching sessions, but mainly because I thought it unlikely that he had come across much poetry, traditional poetry anyway which I chose mostly; and I think it is part of the tutor's task to make sure the student is aware of as many as possible of the "uses of literacy"; moreover I remembered some quite moving occasions with Adult Literacy students when we read them poetry and they were surprised that it existed and that they liked it so much (and sometimes wrote some themselves). I did not ask him how he liked them and he did not comment on them except once to indicate that he would like an encore of "Sally in our Alley" (D. 2/5/92)

PROGRESS: A crude, but important, measurement is the number of words written and this is shown on the graph in Appendix VII (A). I have referred earlier to the fact that part of the writing problem is a vicious circle; pupils who do not find writing easy do less and less, get little practice and then find it even harder and more uncongenial and so on. It was astonishing to find how little writing C. actually did. He often came to our lessons without a pen having, apparently, gone through the school day without one. When we changed to working on Saturday mornings he still usually came without his pen but never once without the packet of biscuits he ate while we had our "break"; I pointed out these tendencies and suggested to him that they reflected the relative importance he attached to writing and to biscuits and he took the point; to be fair, he knew that I would have a pen to lend him but that I would not bring the biscuits. Occasionally he told me that he had had to borrow one in the course of the day and his mother complained that she bought him pens and he lost them (Diary 14/12/91).

The graph shows large fluctuations but the trend is distinctly upwards. I was, of course, present and observing as he wrote and noted that his manner of writing became more fluent and confident over the period.

C's mood, too, fluctuated a good deal, as did his interest in the subjects
he wrote about (they were all chosen by him but often after a good deal
of discussion and prompting from me). The longest scripts are on
scientific subjects (his experiments with plants and the danger to the
whale and dolphin population) and about his holidays and home life.
There appears also to be a strong link between his mood and the amount
he wrote. In the Autumn term, 1990, at the time when he was so
reluctant to attend his lessons that he avoided several, he only managed
to write more than 60 words on two occasions. At that point, l decided
to speak very frankly to him and explain that I was anxious not to
waste my time but also that he should not waste his. l told him about
former students of mine who had felt that their problems were incurable
because, in spite of much time at school spent in "special" classes,
they had made no progress; it had often turned out that they had done
very little writing in those classes, so that lack of practice had been
the cause of their continued failure rather than lack of innate ability,
as they thought. I felt there was a danger of his coming to feel the
same about himself and for the same reason. l acknowledged that the
task before him was tedious and formidable, but by that time l was also
able to assure him that I was certain he could do it and do it much
more quickly and easily than he thought - once he really got down to it.
l told him that l would not recommend applying for special concessions
from the examining boards when it came to his GCSE, because l was sure
he did not need them. However, I did also reassure him that this
rather abrasive discussion would be confined to the two of us and that l
would wait and see what decisions he made before speaking to anyone
either at school or at home about it. (D. 21/3/91)

After this "showdown" (about which l had had slight doubts, while
planning it, because he did sometimes seem to me to show symptoms of
depression and, not being a trained psychologist and having given him no
formal tests, I could not be sure that my "hunches" were correct) there
were no more attempts to play truant, he worked less grumpily and more
purposefully and his scripts became longer, now falling only once below
the 60-word level. He still never smiled, but at this time he began to
offer minimal acknowledgement (see above) of me as I drove past him on

my way home.   He relaxed a little, talked more openly and at greater
length and seemed to feel that the whole enterprise might succeed after
all.   He still, however, seldom produced any of the written work that I
had asked him to do between lessons and seemed to feel that turning up
for them was all that he could be expected to contribute to the task.

WIDTH OF VOCABULARY: I used the Alphabetical Spelling List (Arvidson
1977; its use is described below in B.3.(c)), both as a reference list
for C. and to assess his spelling. The graph in Appendix VII (A) gives
an indication of the variety of words which he wrote, correctly or not
but at least all recognisable to me, in his scripts.   There is a
commonly-held view that people will write enthusiastically and at length
if they are not inhibited by a need to spell correctly.   On the
contrary, the experience of many working in the field (and Peters 1967,
p.5) is that being unable to spell a word often inhibits a writer from
using it. `The slight upward trend for Level 2 - 7 words indicates the
gradual inclusion of a greater variety of words in C's scripts.   C's
earliest scripts were very short, slowly and carefully written, and a
very large proportion of them was made up of Level I words, the most
frequently written of all.

When considering spelling it is important to take account of width of
vocabulary.   Ten spelling mistakes reflect something different if they
occur in a short passage of very commonly-written words from those that
occur when the writer is attempting more unfamiliar words (Barr 1983
pp.36-7).   Reluctance to take risks with unfamiliar words is a serious
result of uncertainty with spelling, leading to ever greater uncertainty
as the writable vocabulary gets smaller and less and less practice takes
place.   C's progress on this measure was an important part of his
improved ability to express himself on paper.

LEVEL ONE WORDS: The graph shows the number of Level I words written
in the scripts, in green, and, in red, the number written correctly.

These, the 300 most frequently-written words seem to me to be of the
utmost importance for poor spellers who are trying to improve.   These

are the words that anyone is sure to have to tackle if they ever write
at all and people who are unsure with them are faced with the tedium of
constantly having to look them up or constantly writing them incorrectly.
This is, of itself, discouraging and leads to the notion that one who
cannot cope with "all these little, easy words" will certainly not be
able to cope with the "difficult" ones. Although he did not actually
say this, I thought that C. felt this about himself and it is a view I
have heard expressed often among poor spellers and their teachers.

The graph inspires optimism because the two lines are quite close
together, showing that C. was already, at the start of tuition, spelling
the great majority of the Level I words he tackled correctly. I
thought it was good for his morale to see that and to understand how
often he would need to write these common words which he had already
mastered and how well worth while it would be to master the rest.
Moreover, he was writing fast and with the intention of going over his
work and correcting it and, when he did that, he could very often detect
his own errors and, quite often, could correct them.

However, he only twice wrote all his Level I words correctly and both
these times were early on in the period in very short scripts using a
small vocabulary (27 words overall, 19 of them Level I and 37 words
overall, 23 Level I) (SS. 7/11/90 & 5/12/90). He never reached the
stage of being able to write all these Level I words correctly at once
and when he wrote more copiously and fluently the gap between the two
lines increased: but, again, he could correct many of these mistakes
himself and some seemed to me to be the kinds of "slips of the pen"
which the most competent writer produces when writing fast and which
make re-reading writing a necessary chore for almost everyone.
However, an analysis of his Level I errors reveals that there were some
very common words which were real "demons" for him.

SLIPS AND DEMONS: ANALYSIS OF THE LEVEL I ERRORS: It is possible to
analyse spelling errors in many different ways and when one comes to
speculate on how they came about there are various explanations often
of equal plausibility.

I have used Nelson's analysis (1980, p.478), because it seems important
to see what evidence there is for deciding whether C. suffers from some
inability to perceive correctly or to remember things in sequence, or any
of the other factors which are thought to be responsible for
"developmental dyslexia", or whether his problem is just ignorance of
spelling sequences arising from the fact that he has somehow failed over
the years to learn them. Nelson's test was devised when she was trying
to identify some difference in the kinds of errors made by children who
had been diagnosed as dyslexic and younger children who had not yet
learned to spell. She found no difference and concluded that the
dyslexic's learning was delayed but otherwise no different from that of
"normal" children.

"Order Errors" offer the opportunity to identify the presence of a
sequencing problem. There are only 7 among C's Level 1 words and they
are distributed among only 3 words. An alternative explanation for
TWO/TOW and WHO/HOW, though, is that C. is making the mistake of
spelling these words by phonics, which is the wrong code for them. His
version matches the letters to the sounds more precisely than the
conventional one in each case. If this is so, then the only order error
in all this writing is the one instance of ON/NO, which looks very like a
slip. That script was his third longest and he was writing very fast
and I am inclined to think that most people make an occasional order
error of that kind from time to time. It does not seem that sequencing
is his problem.

Of his 35 phonetically inaccurate errors I have marked 8 as slips.
They were all quickly spotted and corrected on rereading and all were
spelled correctly on other occasions. From my observations of C. and
from discussion with him, I felt sure that he relied overwhelmingly on
phonics when he was spelling and that he was at a loss to understand
how the many non-phonic spellings in English came about. Thus it
seems very likely that most of these errors arose from not knowing how
to spell the word and therefore making the best of his phonic knowledge
to deal with it.

Some of the errors arise from his own pronunciation perhaps, e.g.
FROM/FRAM, CALLED/COLLED, BEEN/BIN (a common pronunciation generally of
that word but also, see Read, 1986 pp. 5-6, perhaps just an example of
his "infant-stage" spelling) DO THE SAME/DO UT SAME (his grandparents
live in the North and he spends many of his holidays there), but many of
these errors could be seen as a combination of an effort to spell
phonically with an ignorance of many orthodox spelling patterns or,
sometimes, a confusion about patterns he has come across in the past.
He often uses a letter-name to express a sound, e.g. MADE/MAD and
EACH/ECH, which is a regular feature of beginning spellers' writing (Read
1986 p.5). MAKE/MACK, TAKE/TACK and LIKE/LICK are other instances of
this, added to a confusion about when to use CK on the end of a word;
he knows about that rule but not certainly enough always to apply it
correctly. There were other times when he wrote all those words
correctly at the first shot.

Many of these mistakes are just the result of an attempt to express the
sounds of the words, using the beginning writer's limited theory of "one
letter-one sound", which gets you off to a good start with one-syllable,
three-letter words but lands you in serious trouble later if you do not
modify and refine it.

Double letters are a bugbear for many, even otherwise quite good,
spellers and they are a problem for C. as in BETTER/BETER, LETTER/LETER
and SUMMER/SUMER.

The orthographically illegal errors are explicable in the same terms,
except for COULD/CAOED, which, along with WHILE/WILEY, seem to be the
only ones of these errors which could possibly be called "bizarre", a
term much used in the literature of "dyslexia" and thought to be an
indicator of the condition. The same kinds of explanations account also
for the "not classified" list, except for 7 which are homophones, about
which, especially these common ones, C. was thoroughly confused and
which are acknowledged to be bugbears of English orthography and which
are the reason that attempting to spell by phonics alone

...is a system which lets you down, just when you need it most

(Peters, Adult Literacy Lecture

1978)

ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO KLEIN AND MILLAR (1990):

Another method of analysis is one offered by Klein and Millar (1990), which seems to be a direct descendant of Peters' analysis (1970 pp.27-30). It uses different terminology and has fewer categories, noticeably omitting the category "Words spelt incorrectly that are unclassifiable" (previously labelled "Bizarre"), which comfortingly provided a home for really unrecognisable words (of which there nearly always turn out to be surprisingly few - poor spellers usually do have startlingly sensible reasons for what they write if they are encouraged, and able, to explain).

C. and I made this analysis together of all the spelling errors (not just the Level 1 words this time) in the first paragraph of a piece he wrote about Whales and Dolphins (13/5/91). There were 12 errors in a paragraph of 72 words. All but one *could* have been placed in the "SPELL IT LIKE IT SOUNDS" category (Peters' "REASONABLE PHONIC ALTERNATIVE"). That one was CINDES (KINDS) and C. had meant it to be phonic but he had forgotten the rule (or may never have learned it) that the I following the C softens it, so we placed it in the "DON'T KNOW RULE" category along with GRONES (GROANS). This certainly was the result of not knowing which rule to apply to this word but, equally certainly, was spelling it "like it sounds" and, incidentally, using the commonest way of representing the long O, suggesting possibly some "knowledge of sequential probability, (Peters 1967 pp.73-6, Seymour 1992, p.54); O-E is commoner than OA, but of course C's choice may have been pure coincidence). We categorised TOW (TWO), which, after a year of tuition, he was still writing thus but also now correcting immediately and unprompted, as "GET LETTERS OUT OF ORDER", (Peters' "SEQUENCING") but, as with the Nelson analysis, above, it is phonically correct, so could well have been in that category as well as the one for not knowing the rule. We were not in agreement about HAIER (HEAR), which C. insisted on placing also in "GET LETTERS OUT OF ORDER", while 1 opted

for "MIX UP SOUNDS", although, of course, it is often pronounced as he
wrote it, although, again, his letter-string is not legitimate in English
(the I should have been a Y). We also disagreed about UN-
NESEREY(UNNECESSARY), which I would have placed in "MISS OUT OR ADD
BITS" (Peters' OMISSIONS AND INSERTIONS), but he insisted on putting in
"SPELL IT LIKE IT SOUNDS" on the grounds (who could ever deny this?)
that it *did* sound like that to him!

This was a useful exercise to do, once at least, and the way in which
the errors were distributed across the five categories certainly
demonstrated to us both that C. had a pronounced tendency to use
phonics as his guiding principle and that, often, he failed because he
did not know the rules; these two really come to the same thing, that
is, you are forced into applying your phonic knowledge if you don't know
the rules. He had little difficulty with sequencing or hearing sounds
correctly, though he could on occasion miss out a sound. As we
discussed these results it became clear that we both knew all that
already, but it may have been helpful to C. to see the tendency in black
and white, neatly categorised, and to have our opinions confirmed.

What was wrong with C. and what was his situation at the end of
tuition?   I taught him individually for two years, observing him
closely, and I had access to part of his educational history as contained
in one psychologist's reports and two reviews of his Statement, written
when he was 9, 12 and 13 respectively.   1 also had limited
opportunities to talk to his present teachers and to his parents and I
visited his home.

The picture that I saw was that of an able boy who had developed
normally in all ways (and very succesfully in some), except that he has
failed to achieve mastery of written language. The beginnings of this
failure were noticed in his Infant School, were eloquently described,
with emphasis on the great "unhappiness" he showed when faced with any
reading or writing tasks and on his feelings of "frustration", which
often expressed themselves in aggression towards other children, but

there was a disappointing shortage of explanations for his failure or of
real effort to reverse it.

There were suggestions for helping him do better, but some of these,
advocating his using "verbal (sic) ways of recording his ideas, ... tapes,
a scribe, perhaps video" (Annual Review of Statement, April 1989) seem
to me to be defeatist.   Nearly all of them seemed to assume
considerable specialised knowledge and experience in the field of
literacy on the part of the teacher(s) to whom it was addressed.   It
seems that very few such teachers are available in the area and, until
C. was nearly 14, it had proved possible to find one only for a very
short time, as she was quickly promoted to an advisory post.   So he was
having "extra help", being singled out from his peers (inevitably,
however tactfully this was done), for three hours each week and making
little progress for most of five years.   He was seldom obliged to
write.   It seems very likely that he came to regard himself as a
"hopeless case" as far as spelling was concerned and he certainly
entertained hopes of avoiding writing altogether.   He explained that
how he thought technology would improve to the point at which he would
always be able to chat to a computer, which would then turn his
conversation into good, written prose.   He consequently concentrated on
avoiding writing and pursuing other activities (many of these) in which
he knew he was successful (Tape 7/12/91 see above).

In the winter of 1990/1991 he frequently appeared depressed in our
lessons; as described above, his shoulders would be hunched, he dragged
his feet and avoided eye-contact with others; he was extremely taciturn
and seemed to regard even the most innocent question with suspicion
("What are you going to do this afternoon?"   Long pause.   "I'm not
sure")   I received the impression that the thought of our lessons was
unbearable and certainly he made many attempts to avoid them in the
early stages, some successful, certainly, but mostly so badly planned and
executed that they seemed to be the result of panic as the time drew
near.   Underlying all these emotions, I felt that I detected real anger
and resentment, either with himself and/or against the entire grown-up
world, which had allowed him to get into this mess, and sometimes

feelings of real despair at the prospect of all the work he would have to do to catch up. I felt, for a long time, that he would hate to be questioned about his feelings so I confined myself to a business-like concentration on the obvious problems before us, but in December 1991, when we had worked together for fifteen months and his attitude seemed to have altered greatly in the direction of confidence, determination and optimism, l asked him if he was willing to talk about his experiences in the past and to have the conversation taped and he, rather cautiously as ever, agreed. In fact, in that conversation, he expressed great admiration for teachers in general, but made the point that there are many teachers and not all of his had served him well. (T. 7/12/91)

There is much evidence of the strength of emotion which this particular kind of failure arouses (Heim 1970 p.57, Bettelheim 1982 p. 130 and many more) and the same studies demonstrate the incapacitating effect of too strong emotion on intellectual activity. It may be worse when it comes to spelling because it is not altogether an intellectual activity; it depends also upon accurate visual memory and there is no sure way of "working out" a spelling if you can't remember it and no way of checking it without a paradigm, so that C. could not apply his formidable intelligence to it as he could with other problems.

Intellectually, C. has always impressed his teachers with his general ability and standard tests have confirmed their view. In discussion with the Support Teacher before I started to work with him I was told his I.Q. had been recorded at a level which is categorised as "Superior")

He enjoyed science and mathematics and wanted to be an engineer and he seemed to me to have a very logical mind. He responded well to some rather traditional grammar and syntax which l taught him which is in line with his earliest view of English spelling that "it didn't make sense" (T. 7/12/91 quoted above). I felt sure he was trying to reduce English spelling to a simple phonic, "one-sound-one-letter" system and could not think what else to do when it failed, so continued down that dead end path.

C., at first trying hard to succeed, but probably hampered by asthma, absences, changes of school and home and distracted by high spirits, difficulty in sitting still and extreme sociability with his peers, "got stuck" completely, came to hate and fear writing and concentrated on avoiding it and pursuing more congenial and rewarding activities.

POSTSCRIPT:

C. took his GCSEs in 1993. He obtained E grades for English Language and Literature, but only an F grade for Mathematics, with which he was supposed to have no problem (and which would surely be important for the engineering course he wished to follow). His highest grade, for Science, always his favourite subject, was C. I am afraid that he never received the support he needed to overcome his difficulties and do justice to his intellect and ambitions. Some of this support would have had to have been in the form of rigorous demands of him to make a regular sustained effort. This seemed to be quite against the ethos of his school, where his teachers were kind to him, flattered him and helped him to avoid work rather than insisting on it. I hope that he was pleased with his English grades, which I thought were a good achievement in the circumstances. But above all, 1 hope that he has come to see that, with an effort, he can learn what he wants and needs to.

A.3. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES:

The impression gained from these studies is that at first M. and C. were victims
of small, common mishaps early in their school careers.   Then, because of
misunderstanding and confusion, they were left with serious problems with
reading and, especially, writing, which continued to dominate and frustrate
their attempts to learn.   They were otherwise successful and had managed so far
to avoid much of the reading and writing they found so unrewarding.   Thus they
had had little experience of it.   They seem to have been at the stage of much
younger children, but prevented from making progress by fear and confusion.
Both showed consistent signs of extreme anxiety, amounting to fear and
justifying Merritt's phrase (1972, p.194)

      a very persistent and severe disability - reading neurosis

They appeared to be in no way fundamentally "disadvantaged".   Both were
generally healthy, intelligent and well-provided for.   There was little, or
only very shaky, evidence of the physical or neurological defects which are
often claimed to cause literacy problems.   Both were apparently loved and
cherished in stable families and in comfortable and orderly homes.   Each had
parents who were successful themselves and were very concerned that they should
succeed.   Each had a younger sister doing well at school.

Both had experienced some common health problems and changes of home and school
in their early infant years;   they had missed school probably fairly frequently
and intermittently and they had probably had several changes of teacher within
one school.   The attachment they showed later to their homes and families and
dislike of change may have meant that they were more distressed by these early
upsets than other children might have been.

However, recognition that they had problems, when it came, had brought them no
relief.   Long periods of discussion, testing and spasmodic efforts at
remediation followed amid anxiety, confusion and conflict.   They were
officially described as having "Special Needs", but these were not explained to
them - or not satisfactorily explained;   that they were failing (they could see
that for themselves) was made clear to them, but why and what was to be done

about it was not. There was no agreed policy; sometimes the aim seemed to be to help them improve but sometimes to excuse them from reading or writing at all, sometimes to acknowledge that they had a problem but sometimes to conceal it. So they were worried about themselves, all the more because they knew that their parents and their teachers were worried and in conflict over them. Above all, their adults clearly did not know what to do about them.

Both were critical of English spelling which seemed to them anarchic; they had only one simple, phonic, technique and stuck to it, however often it failed. Understandably they preferred "dyslexia" to low intelligence or laziness (the other explanations offered) to account for their failure and welcomed the idea that they would not need to read or write at all after school. They had so far encountered little need to do so in school and anticipated even less later.

Their parents and teachers reinforced these effects; they were kind and concerned, but confused about the problems and how, even if, they could be tackled. No-one seemed to doubt the existence of some deficit in the boys. In fact their only observable deficit was their inability to spell correctly; they demonstrated that they had learned and firmly memorised many spellings, both correct and incorrect. It was not their ability to learn which was at fault, but what they had been given (and not given) to learn. By far the greatest part of their deficit was in confidence, self-esteem and, above all, in actual experience of writing.

However, it was their parents, in each case, who instigated the process of remediation by refusing to accept their sons' poor performance and insisting something should be done about it. Although their attitude undoubtedly added to the stress suffered by the boys at the time, it continually reminded everyone concerned about the discrepancy between the boys' general competence and their poor literacy and led at last to a serious attempt to help them.

This account makes the boys sound as though they had much in common. In fact, they differed greatly from one another in many ways, in age, in temperament (M. was nervous, anxious to please and law-abiding, C. was much more assertive, sometimes aggressive and unruly) and in cognitive style (C. liked systems and responded well to logical argument, M. worked in a much less structured and more

intuitive way).   C. seemed to see writing as a form of communication, although he did not aspire to it himself, much more than M, for whom it was only a bewildering school ritual, of which he could not make sense.   They appeared to differ greatly in I.Q, as measured by the WISC test.   But they may have differed less than appears. C. could perform at his best under stress while M. probably always performed at his very worst in tests.   It is likely that M.'s intelligence was seriously underestimated by the tests.

What they had in common, to a surprising degree since they were so unalike themselves and had been educated in different schools, were the mishaps which had befallen them and the way in which these had been handled.

To sum up, these are accounts of two educational experiences which were unfortunate because the adults concerned, although kind, conscientious and well-meaning, nevertheless misunderstood and mismanaged the students.   They assumed that the deficit lay within the students, but the studies suggest that whatever small deficits may have existed at first were hugely exacerbated by the way in which they were taught and managed.

The boys' experiences raise questions under four headings:

Why was English spelling so difficult for them?   How does it work?

How do human minds interact with English spelling, as users and learners?

How do teachers teach spelling?   How should they teach it?

How do the attitudes and expectations which surround the learning and teaching of spelling promote or inhibit its progress?

Part B reviews the research literature to see what light it can throw on these questions.

PART B: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

INTRODUCTION:

The questions raised by the Case Studies will be considered under four main headings:

The task which the boys faced, i.e. mastering English Orthography.

The cognitive processes involved in using and learning the system.

The teaching of writing and spelling.

Attitudes and expectations which surround learners as they work.

Part B considers the light which research may shed on these topics.

1.   The Task: The Writing System: The students in the Case Studies were critical of the English writing system and they are not alone.   Chapter 1(a) considers various writing systems, how they came about and how they work.   1(b) asks how far these systems are helpful to those who use and learn them.   1(c) examines Standard English Orthography and the case for reforming English spelling.

2.   The Cognitive Processes: The students could not use the writing system effectively and had failed to make normal progress in mastering it.   Chapter 2 (a) seeks from the literature an understanding of how successful readers and writers use the writing system and 2(b) how mastery of it develops in young children.

3.   The Medium: Teaching Spelling: Chapter 3 reviews the literature on the teaching of spelling from three points of view: in 3(a) the teaching of individual words; in 3(b) the differences in perceptions and understanding which may arise between long-literate teachers and pre-literate children; and in 3(c) the organisation of the whole spelling task.

4.   Attitudes and Expectations: The attitudes of the boys and those close to them towards themselves and towards their task and the expectations which all concerned held, both of their need to master spelling and of the likelihood of their being able to do so, feature strongly in the Case Studies.   In Chapter 4 the literature is studied for evidence of how these attitudes and expectations arise and what influence they may have on motivation and learning.

B.1.   THE TASK: ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY AND WRITING SYSTEMS IN GENERAL

"Almost an arbitrary symbolism" or "A near-optimal system"?

The Task with which the students M. and C. were confronted was that of mastering
Standard English Orthography.   They had already mastered much else which is part
of writing.   They could decide what they wanted to write, form their ideas into a
logical sequence and divide that into correct sentences.   When reminded about it
(and sometimes unreminded), they could punctuate, using full stops and commas only,
and use capital letters correctly.   They were frequently, however, nonplussed when
it came to the spelling of individual words.

They were critical of English orthography.   They could not perceive in it any
system or pattern and the only technique they possessed for dealing with it, a
rudimentary phonic analysis, turned out to be sometimes right but often
unpredictably wrong, so that they despaired of mastering it.

In order to understand the students' difficulties it will be helpful to consider the
system they needed to master, Standard English Orthography, and to do so in the
context of writing systems in general.

B.1.(a). WRITING SYSTEMS:

I will rely, for this brief account, heavily on WRITING SYSTEMS (Sampson 1985), THE
ORIGIN OF WRITING (Harris 1986) and ORTHOGRAPHIES AND READING (Henderson ed. 1984).
Sampson, after a chapter on "Theoretical Preliminaries" has another, "The Earliest
Writing" on the oldest known writing system, Sumerian Cuneiform.   Its importance
is historical, of course, but, even more important and interesting, when one is
considering the place of Cuneiform in the long and complex story of English
spelling, is Sampson's suggestion that it "evolved from an antecedent cultural
institution that was not 'writing' at all"(p.46).   There is much controversy
surrounding the theory, originally proposed by Amiet (1966, quoted by Sampson p.67)
and especially about some rather bold extensions of it by Schmandt-Besserat (1978,
1979a and b, quoted by Sampson p.57), but Sampson is inclined to take its
fundamental proposal seriously.   It suggests that the first two-dimensional marks
on clay made by the Sumerians were pictorial representations on the outside of a
clay "envelope", a kind of bulla, of small clay models which had been placed inside
those envelopes as tallies accounting for actual goods.   Some of the marks were

made by pressing the models on to the envelope bulla before it hardened but more often a picture of the model was just drawn on the envelope; often the "scribe" turned his stylus round and used the blunt end of it to make marks denoting numbers. Thus, as in our system, there was an entirely separate set of signs for numbers from that for words from the beginning.

Whatever the flaws in that particular theory, Harris (1986 p.26) states firmly that writing is "an extension of drawing not of speech." The idea that speech and writing are separate communication systems (though clearly connected), much less influenced by one another than seems obvious, is fundamental to the argument of this thesis and Amiet's account of "the birth of writing" is a convincing one of important relevance to that argument.

Sampson identifies four kinds of writing divided into two main groups, logographic and phonographic. He devotes at least one chapter to the detailed consideration of each of the four. The only kind of logographic systems are morphemic ones and he describes Chinese as the outstanding example. The phonographic group has three subgroups, syllabic, segmental and featural. Sampson describes Linear B, a purely syllabic system for writing Greek not used since the thirteenth century B.C., and Han'gul, a "featural" (Sampson's own word) language invented personally, it seems, by King Sejong in the fifteenth century. These two languages might seem rather uninformatively remote from twentieth century problems, but both have interesting characteristics relevant to them.

Most modern written languages belong in Sampson's "segmental" group and English is one of that group.

There has been disagreement about how closely related were the beginnings of the logographic and phonographic systems. Gelb (1952 p. 239)) was sure that the alphabet evolved as an "improvement" upon earlier logogaphic writing systems like Egyptian hieroglyphics and Harris (1986, p.3) lists this as one of the six "ingredients of a conventional wisdom ... long accepted in the Western intellectual tradition" which " ... were to provide the entire conceptual framework for inquiry into the origin of writing for the next 2,000 years or more." The others were:

That speech existed before writing
That written messages were originally communicational substitutes for spoken messages
That writing began as an attempt at pictorial representation
That the alphabet is based on a quite different principle from that of "picture writing"
That alphabetic symbols are attempts to indicate sounds

Some of these assumptions are correct, some doubtful and some incorrect. What is significant about them is that they have usually been held with absolute and unenquiring certainty and it seems likely that they have had a dominating influence on attitudes to writing and spelling, to the ways in which they are learned and taught and to the desirability and difficulty of learning them.

It is certain that speech existed before writing; it often exists without writing. Harris (1986 p.15) asserts that fewer than one in ten of languages have ever developed an indigenous written form, although everyone who is not disabled talks in some language. If the Sumerian story is true then the first writing was an attempt at pictorial representation, but not representation of speech and its

messages were not substitutes for spoken messages; nor were most of the similar lists of goods which were the content of most of the writing in Linear B. The whole point of depicting them must have been to "fix" them in a way that speech, and people's usually conflicting memories of speech, never can for certain. The discoverers and translators of Linear B were disappointed to find that their texts were only lists and bills of lading, when they were hoping for something more literary and revealing of the writers' thoughts, but it seems likely that the Minoans never considered their writing as a means of conveying thought or ideas or of entertainment. Their sophisticated and elegant civilisation flourished in many fields, but writing was never part of it except in this limited, practical and hum-drum form. One cannot agree with the anthropologist quoted by Gelb (1952 p.221) who said, "As language distinguishes man from animal, so writing distinguishes civilised man from barbarian". There are many people in our world, whom we would surely all call civilised but who cannot, or do not, write and the Minoans have not been the only civilised society not to write; the Japanese had no writing until comparatively late and there are many other examples of this phenomenon.

Did the alphabet develop out of picture-writing or is it based on quite a different principle? This is a very complicated question. Certainly all kinds of picture-writing sooner or later come up against the problem of representing sounds which do not mean anything in particular (to the picture-writer). The Sumerians had many such in their proper nouns because they were immigrants into Sumer and they took over the names of places which their predecessors in the land had given them; these had had meanings but did not mean anything to the Sumerians. If the name means nothing to you but you have to write it down, the only thing you can do is depict its sound in some way. This the Sumerians did and they also used some existing graphs for words. for which they had no symbols, choosing graphs of words which sounded the same. Thus they introduced a phonographic principle (Driver 1954 pp.56ff.), which is the principle on which the alphabet is based, and the Akkadians, who later used the Sumerian script but for a very different kind of language, extended the practice. But that was not an alphabet since the graphs denoted whole syllables and the true alphabetic principle of "letters" which can be rearranged ad infinitum to represent meanings, both which exist in the language already and which may come to exist in it at some future time, was absent.

The link, if it exists, seems to have been in Egyptian Hieroglyphics. These were pictures, but some of them were used also to depict single consonants, the consonants in question being the first sound of the word which the pictogram represented; thus "cat" is for "c", not "c" is for "cat" (Harris 1986, uses the example "'Archer' is for 'A'", but, of course the Semites did not write vowels). The Semites, who certainly invented and used the first proper alphabet, seem to have used some Egyptian Hieroglyphs in this way (they were in constant cultural contact with the Egyptians) but they also used many graphs which were unrelated to the Egyptian script. Sampson (1985 p.78) thinks that they probably took the idea of writing from the Egyptians and that they probably also saw the acrophonic principle as essential to it, but it was they who invented the alphabet and a system of writing fundamentally unrelated to anything which had gone before. Other authorities, notably Diringer (1968 p.168) and Gelb (1952 pp.140-41), thought that the Semitic inventors of the alphabet did it the other way round; they drew an abstract design to represent a sound and then thought of some object which looked rather like it and called it by that object's name. We shall probably never know. Either way it was a great achievement and merits the description Harris (1981 p.204) gives to language use as a "continuum of creative activity".

There have been arguments about whether different alphabets developed separately,
but all the most respected authorities seem to agree that all kinds of alphabetic
writing developed out of the first Semitic alphabet.   Diringer says, "The Alphabet
has been invented only once", quoting Dunand, "C'est la une invention qu'on ne peut
faire deux fois" and adds, "It is essentially the same script which we use now."
(Diringer 1949 p.566)   He adds that we owe it to "two fortunate coincidences"
because the Semitic-Hamitic group of languages are the only ones which are based
on consonantal sounds;   the other lucky development was their frequent contacts
with the Greeks who needed the vowels and were creative and ingenious enough to
add them.   More work has, of course, been done on its history since he wrote that
and his conclusion seems even more certain, though there is still some doubt about
the Indian alphabets (Sampson 1985,p.77).

The Semites spoke a language whose features probably pre-disposed them towards
the alphabetic writing they devised.   The most outstanding feature of their
script was that it had no signs for vowels.   They did not need them because the
language is such that the consonant sounds are what convey the meaning of the
words, the lexical features, and the contrasts in vowel sounds indicate grammar,
which can often be deduced from the context of the sentence.   Moreover no words
began with vowels and, therefore, if they were using the acrophonic principle
described above, no vowel letters could have emerged.   It is not an entirely
satisfactory system as there are some words which are differentiated from one
another by their vowel sounds and Semitic languages did develop systems for
indicating vowels but

> Vowel-less Semitic writing is widely used in the 20th.c. world,
> being the normal form of writing in many nations ...
>   (Sampson (1985 p.82).

The great, original, important feature of this script is the adoptiom of a very
limited number of signs which represent sounds and each of which has its own name
and which can be rearranged to form any number of different words.   They were
the first letters.

Linear B surprised its discoverers and interpreters by turning out to be a method
of writing Greek.   Even so the Greeks "lost" it and the art of writing completely
and acquired it again, in Semitic alphabetic form, about 500 years later probably
from the Phoenicians (they called it "Phoenician Letters") and probably in the
course of trade (in mythology their ancient hero Cadmus, King of Thebes, had the
credit for bringing letters from the East and teaching them the art of writing).
Greek was a very different language from the group of Semitic languages for which
the system had been devised and, in particular, it demanded differential symbols
for its vowel sounds.   The Greeks introduced these, using six existing letters of
the Semitic alphabet of which all but one no longer expressed any sound.

From this consonantal Semitic alphabet, augmented by the Greek addition of vowels,
developed the Roman alphabet and the Cyrillic alphabet, an off-shoot of the Greek
one and not so very different from it.   Ours is, of course, the Roman alphabet and
it is used by most European languages with slight variations in the numbers of
letters actually used and some diacritical marks peculiar to individual languages.

Chinese is an entirely different system from any of these described above.

> A graph of the Chinese writing system stands not for a unit
> of pronunciation but for a morpheme, a minimal meaningful unit
> of the Chinese language   (Sampson 1985 p.145)

so, of course, it has an enormous number of these graphs (about 50,000), as opposed
to our 26. Sampson (p.146) points to four features of the Chinese language which
make this system of writing well suited to it but which also constitute important
differences between it and English. Briefly, these are the facts that the
syllables are clearly demarcated, each morpheme is one syllable long, its
"isolating" grammar works by stringing words together, not by modifying the words
and the visual unit is the morpheme, so that, although some words contain more
than one morpheme, "there is no clear notion of a 'word' as a unit larger than the
morpheme". He also notes that there is a phonetic element in Chinese writing but
that the basis for the system is logographic, but not, as has often been thought,
semasiographic. Synonyms, separate words but with identical meanings (Sampson,
p.149, cites four words for "red") have separate and dissimilar characters. Thus
the writing does represent words which are also spoken, not merely "ideas".

Sampson also has a chapter on Japanese, which is of particular interest. He calls
it a "mixed system" (cf. Halliday 1989 p.26), because it uses Chinese characters,
called in Japanese "kanji", for some words and a syllabic system, "kana", for others.

> Roughly speaking the kanji characters represent the base forms
> of nouns, verbs and adjectives, while kana characters are used
> for the grammatical morphemes and for imported words for which
> there is no kanji character.
>   (Morton and Sasanuma in Henderson ed. 1984 p.25)

Thus every written sentence is almost certain to contain both kinds of characters
and furthermore kana divides into two differing forms according to its two
differing functions; so that the result is what Sampson describes as "a quite
astonishingly complicated method of making language visible" (1985 p.172)

The Japanese did not choose this system because it particularly suited their
language, which does has quite different characteristics from those listed above.
Chinese writing was introduced to Japan by the Koreans who, themselves, had adopted
Chinese characters for their writing system. Although some scholars argue that
Japanese is related to Korean, this is not accepted by everyone and this certainly
does not seem to be the reason for adopting the same script. It was just that it
was the only script which the Koreans knew at that time and the Japanese had no
way of writing so they learnt from the Koreans to use the only method of writing
they had ever come across. There were also, certainly to begin with, social
reasons why the complications of their script seemed to them to be positively an
advantage; the people who wrote had a great deal of spare time to fill.

There seem to me to be some important features which emerge from this rather
cursory account of these different writing systems, ancient and modern.

All writing systems are based on codes of arbitrary linguistic signs (Saussure tr.
Harris 1983 p. 67). You could not possibly guess what the signs were and what
they meant, except, perhaps, for a few of the earliest Chinese and Egyptian
pictograms. Therefore everyone who wants to read and write must learn to use the
code existing writers use for the language in question. Communication depends on
the observance of its conventions.

Although some written codes have been custom-built, as it were, for the languages they represent, many have been adopted and adapted to represent other languages with quite different features. Some of these seem to have been particularly unsuited to their adopting spoken language, but they have persisted, suggesting that they work well enough for practical purposes.

While the writing systems of all languages seem to fall clearly into one (occasionally, like Japanese, two) of the four categories, logographic, syllabic, featural and segmental, the categories are blurred at the edges, they overlap and do not adhere always to all their own rules.

It seems very likely that some parts of each system evolved empirically with scribes adopting graphs which they found readers liked and could read easily - and then these graphs became "correct" items of the code.

There are some writing systems which have quite a regular correspondence between the sounds of the language and their written symbols, but none where this correspondence is perfect and Chinese, which has almost no such correspondence, has been until recently the most written language in the world, over a period which goes back so far that its beginnings cannot be traced. One cannot help feeling that a system with such a history must have appeared reasonably satisfactory to the majority of its users.

In conclusion it seems clear that, although writing systems represent spoken language, the relationship between them and the speech of those languages is not nearly as close or direct as is, I believe, generally assumed. They also represent much else besides, especially meaning.

This story is full of examples of human resourcefulness and adaptability and human determination to record and communicate. Starting with the Sumerians' reversal of their writing tools when they needed to represent a different concept, number, people seem to have made creative use of what was available and succeeded in adapting systems invented by others for very different languages to work effectively for their own. "A continuum of creative activity" indeed!

The next section considers how these systems work in practice and how useful and convenient they are for readers and writers.

B.1.(b). AN EVALUATION OF WRITING SYSTEMS:

> Good writing systems preserve linguistic details that are
> useful to the reader, and good readers exploit the structures
> that they find in writing systems. (Smith et al. 1984 p.103)

How helpful are these different languages with their contrasting systems of orthography to those who use them?

The sight of a passage of written Chinese tends to fill us with awe. So many tiny, complicated little symbols, all different from each other and apparently offering no clue to either their pronunciation or their meaning. But Chinese is not difficult to read and, indeed, there was an interesting study (in Smith 1973 pp.105-1150) in which a group of children, who had difficulty in reading English, mastered the reading of Chinese characters quickly and easily. It must be said

that they did not master many characters; the experimenters severely limited the
number of those.   Moreover, there was no question of their having learned any
Chinese in the sense that they could not pronounce any of the words they learned,
nor any other Chinese words; they were using the symbols purely as a code and
decoded them into English words with which they were already familiar and they
remained as innocent of any real knowledge and understanding of Chinese as they
had ever been.   But they did learn to recognise the written symbols and to "read"
simple stories written with them without experiencing any of the difficulties which
they had encountered with the written form of their own language.

One important reason for this intriguing success and for the readability of written
Chinese is that it harnesses two of the most salient of human abilities, our sharp
visual perception (especially sharp when trained) and our seemingly unlimited
visual memory.   There are about 400 basic characters which either stand on their
own or are combined with others to make about 50,000 different graphs.   Even when
they are written very small as in most print, they can easily be recognised and
distinguished from one another because they are very diverse in form and have many
salient features.   It may seem a lot to expect people to learn 50,000 little
pictures, and probably no-one does quite that, but nobody knows all the words of
their own language (nobody needs to) and Sampson (1985 p.162) strongly rejects
Goody's and Watts' (1963 p.313) argument that the Chinese script necessarily
restricts literacy.   He admits that precise figures are hard to come by, but
argues from the Japanese figures; there the literacy rate is very high and, since
Japanese is written in a combination of Chinese (not designed for the very
different kind of language that Japanese is) and a syllabary, two completely
different sytstems, between which they have to switch, clearly the writing system
is not holding them up.   In places where mutually incomprehensible Chinese
dialects are spoken it is commonplace to see two Chinese people getting into
difficulties in their conversation, seizing a pencil and paper and resorting to
writing down the items in question and this "lingua franca" of written Chinese
across the many dialects is one of its most useful functions.   Of course Chinese
takes a long time to learn and there is no possibility of "working out" the words
phonically as with an alphabetic system, but once it is learned it seems to be a
user-friendly system for the reader.

Chinese writing is in sharp contrast with the Korean Han'gul script and with
Hebrew.   In both of these writing systems there are few graphs (fifteen and
twenty-three respectively as opposed to the 400 "basic" Chinese characters) and
they are of rather regular shapes with few striking features.   Neither has the
huge diversity of shapes and of number and configuration of strokes which Chinese
characters have, nor the distinctive ascenders and descenders of the Roman
alphabet, both of which make the shapes of words distinctive (Navon and Shimron
1984 p.97).   Sampson (1985 p.94) gives an example of a passage of English which
contains 70 words comprising 407 letters, contrasted with a passage of Hebrew
which contains 60 words comprising 285 letters and points out that this means that
each Hebrew letter is half as important again as each English letter, which makes
it harder for a reader of Hebrew to skim a passage.   This makes Hebrew and
Han'gul easy to learn but not nearly so easy to read and the legibility of Hebrew
letters is described as poor (Sampson 1985 p.95).

Frank Smith (1971 pp.19-23) gives a clear and comprehensive account of the
different kinds of redundancy which readers make use of.   No doubt readers of
Hebrew and Han'gul have the same opportunities as readers of English to make use
of grammatical and contextual redundancy, but they do not get so much orthographic

information from their script as readers of English do and this fact must be a
strong candidate for the reason why it takes longer to read Hebrew.   An
experiment comparing Cloze procedures in the two languages would be interesting;
one might imagine that Cloze would be extremely difficult for readers of Hebrew.
On the other hand it is claimed that some writers of Arabic approach the speed of
shorthand (Sampson 1985 p.96).

It does seem that, in considering orthographies and their usefulness, we have to
accept that there is a "trade-off" between the interests of the writer and those of
the reader; and probably between the interests of the learner and those of the
skilled and experienced reader.   It is surely right to say that English
orthography is a hard code to break into but very satisfactory for those who have
managed to get in.   There are always more of those who are already in the system
than of those who are not but wish to be.   Moreover there are more readers than
writers and surely always will be.   Everything that is written is composed only
once (allowing for editing, revisions etc.) but most written texts are read far more
often.   Even peole who write for a living read more than they write and there are
many people who do a lot of reading and almost never write.   In spite of well-
publicised and worrying figures for reading and writing failure, there are still a
great many more English-speaking people who do learn to read and write than those
who fail to do so.

Democratic principles, therefore, as well as practical policies, must lead us to
favour the interests of the reader over those of the writer and perhaps that is
reason enough not to try to change our orthography - even if we could.

For the printers might not allow us to change it.   English spelling was
standardised by 1650 in print but people continued to spell according to their own
whims and tastes in their own handwriting (Scragg 1974 p.82).   It was not until
the 18th. century, when dictionaries began to be made, mass literacy began to seem
an achievable goal and mass printing had arrived to stay that the notion of an
unalterable "correct" spelling for each word began to take hold.   English was
spoken and written in other countries then, but since that time it has become the
dominant world language, particularly the dominant written language.   There would
have to be an enormous upheaval in the printing, publishing, academic and
journalistic worlds if English were radically to change its spelling.   Most people
seem to think that the combination of powerful vested interests, which would
undoubtedly oppose such a change, combined with the force of inertia, would make
change quite unthinkable now even if it were desirable.

All the same Sampson points out (1985 p.207) that spelling reforms do take place
even now in other languages and that English and French are unusual in not making
changes now and then (recently there have been reports that French spelling *might*
be altered).   He thinks that, in spite of all the upheaval involved, English
spelling could be changed; it would be as it was before the 18th. century: people
would write with the spelling they had already learned and soon learn to read the
new orthography with the same adaptability they already show in their ability to
read the different "codes" of the present one.

Only the children and their teachers would need to learn the new system.   The
printers and publishers would find it worth their while to instal the new machinery
and "thirty years after the changeover began, the old spelling would linger on
only in a few self-consciously quaint periodicals".   The reason that this does not
happen is most likely to be that not many of us really want it and the reason we

do not is probably because we (possibly unconsciously) realise that it would not be an improvement.   Those who call for reform are concerned with the difficulty they have encountered themselves with learning and applying the system or the difficulty with which they have seen others, slow or confused learners or foreign students, struggling.   Everyone must hope for success to come to such people and for it to come as easily and painlessly as possible.   But on the evidence it seems clear that this is likely to be achieved by improving our knowledge and understanding of the orthography and of the ways in which it is used by readers, writers and learners and by encouraging teachers to take a confident and optimistic view of their pupils' ability to learn it and of their own ability to teach it. To do that they must first understand how it works.

CHAPTER B.1 (c):   The Nature and Characteristics of the English Spelling System.

One of the "long accepted" assumptions listed by Harris and quoted above is that

> ...alphabetic symbols are attempts to indicate sounds (1986 p.3)

and few until comparatively recently, seem to have questioned the notion that English orthography was phonetically based; its purpose was, it seemed obvious, to represent the sounds of the spoken language and the written language was nothing more than the spoken language in visible form on paper.

> Writing is merely a way of recording language
> (Bloomfield 1935, p.26)

and it is clear that spoken language was meant.

Impressive feats of research on writing systems and the history of the alphabet have come from scholars.   Diringer's The Alphabet (1949) is packed with information about the alphabet but also about the many different writing systems which preceded it; in fact he does not arrive at alphabetic systems until he reaches Volume II.   Many of his comments underline his certainty that alphabetic writing represents only sound.   He complains:

> The English Alphabet, that is the spelling, differs so much from
> pronunciation that in many words it is almost an arbitrary symbolism.
> (p.555)

He blames this state of affairs on the influence of French orthography and the replacement, in the Middle Ages, of English by French as the language of officialdom and social prestige, which he describes as "disastrous" for English spelling.   Several writers, particularly Scragg (1974), who is the authority on the history of English Spelling and whom the others usually cite, make this kind of comment and point out that before the Norman Conquest English orthography was as "regular" in its sound-spelling relationship as German and the Scandinavian languages are now.   Latin also is to blame.   Scragg says that the revival of Classical learning in the Renaissance complicated both English and French orthography because learned people, conscious of the etymology of words, took to incorporating that learning into their writing; so we have DEBT and SCISSORS, which were previously DETTE and SISOURES but were "reformed" by a "back-to-roots" movement, to preserve the memory of their Latin roots.

Diringer also points out the great changes in English speech over the centuries and the much slower rate of change in spelling. His book ends by raising briefly the problems inherent in creating an International Phonetic Alphabet , but he does not doubt the need for such a universal *phonetic* writing system (p.559).

This International Phonetic Alphabet does now exist and is useful in, among other things, demonstrating the discrepancy between the number of sounds in English (arguable, but at least 40) and the number of letters available (unarguably 26) to represent them.

Diringer (1949 p.555) seems to deviate momentarily from his view when he uses the word "etymological" about modern English spelling (p.555) but he immediately adds that it represents 16th. Century speech, so that "etymological" seems to refer only to the history of the sound of words. His book is subtitled "A History of Mankind" and he does acknowledge "the richness" of English which derives from

> ... fused compounds out of its Anglo-Saxon and Norman native
> roots and endings

and

> ... the later enrichment by the most hospitable inclusion of a
> host, increasing daily, of borrowed words from all sorts of
> languages which reflect our history (p.558).

He turns away from spelling reform but only on the grounds that it would "discount" English history.

Gelb (1952 p.241) also takes the view that writing represents sound and utters the same plea for an international phonetic alphabet. Jensen (1970) is another writer who focusses on sound; in his final chapter, "Conclusions" he says,

> We shall, without doubt, regard as relatively the most perfect all
> those scripts which we are accustomed to describe as alphabetical,
> in which, at least in principle, one script-sign corresponds to
> each sound of the language. (p.583)

He has suggestions for improving it and these are aimed entirely at regularising the sound-symbol correspondence; only this seems to have been important to him.

These were wonderfully learned scholars and painstaking researchers, but they were working a long time ago now and were, it must be admitted, primarily concerned with the history of various kinds of writing and how the alphabet came into being; their comments on English spelling were really in the nature of "obiter dicta". It is natural that, understanding so well, as they did, that the system was founded upon phonological principles, they should simply look at it phonologically and find it unsatisfactory, especially as there are languages like Spanish and Finnish which are much more sucessful at the unambiguous representation of sound. Their unquestioning and unquestioned assumption that this is all that writing is concerned with is shared by many others and has had important implications for the learning and teaching of spelling.

Saussure (1959 p.24) says:

> A language and its written form constitute two separate
> systems of signs. The sole reason for the existence of the
> latter is to represent the former

and it seems likely that his influence is to a great extent responsible for the
fact that the study of writing has been almost in abeyance in this century, until
very recently when it has become a popular study and has made great advances.
Minkoff (1975) put it bluntly:

> Language is basically speech, and writing is of no theoretical
> interest (p.194)

and Derrida (1967) calls the study of writing

> ... the wandering outcast of linguistics (p. 44)

Sampson (1985, p.11) says that only the Prague school of linguists took it
seriously and they were outside the mainstream of Western linguistic studies so
that they could have little influence here.   His explanation is that this ignoring
of writing was a reaction against the emphasis upon it in the nineteenth century
when it was considered all-important and "correct" speech was required to be
modelled on it.   Saussure (1959) complained:

> ... writing assumes an authority to which it has no right (p.26)

Certainly there has been a pernicious effect of complaints about "incorrect" speech
and devaluing of rich and complex dialects because they do not correspond with
"superior" written forms.

> ...the prescriptive tradition has fostered in the public mind
> a deep ignorance of the nature of human language
>   (Milroy and Milroy 1985 p.80)

But Harris says that Saussure himself treats the orthographic sign as basic when
he assumes that speech comprises a linear sequence of discrete sounds which is an
extrapolation from the familiar structure of the written word.   It *is* difficult to
cast off one's own deeply ingrained literacy.

Saussure led the reaction against the strict grammarians of the nineteenth century
and his influence appears to have been enormous; he has been named with Freud and
Durkheim (Culler 1976 p.7) as having had a crucial influence on thinking and
attitudes in this century and he probably had as great an influence as anyone in
making the spoken language the primary, almost the exclusive, study of linguistics
for a long time.   He was reacting, probably justifiably, against the scholarly,
often pedantic, preoccupation of the nineteenth century with written, literary
language and with the slavish respect for Latin, which resulted in the distortion
of English grammar by grammarians and pedagogues in a doomed attempt to make it
fit into a Latin framework; the pendulum had swung far too far in that direction
and it undoubtdly needed to be swung back again, but the pendulun always seems to
swing too far and the recent swing back by scholars towards consideration of the
written language and its teaching and learning is welcome.   Some of their work is
now changing our view of our writing system.

Historically, the fact that so many writing systems, even alphabetic ones, have been invented by the speakers of one language and then adopted by speakers of others, often containing very different sounds, should perhaps have suggested earlier to scholars that the sound-symbol correspondence need not be the only, or even, perhaps, the most important feature of a writing system. Our own alphabet has come a very long way and has a pedigree stretching back through Roman, Greek, Phoenician and earlier Semitic systems. It is certainly not exclusively "ours", not particularly English, being used, with small differences, by an enormous number of other languages, which we find hard to pronounce and usually never learn to pronounce perfectly; and, when we do learn other languages, we have to learn to adopt different pronunciations for familiar letters and letter-strings. We often recognise an English word, identical with our word, by sight, but find we have to pronounce it in an entirely unfamiliar way. The symbols are the same, as often the meaning is, but they have to be decoded differently to sound.

Japanese is interesting in this respect. Although some scholars (Morton and Sasanuma 1984 p.42) feel that so far very little is known about exactly how Japanese is read and written, it is certain that the orthography is very complicated. Japan seems to have an enviably high general standard of literacy (even though literacy rates are acknowledged to be hard to obtain and even harder to compare with confidence across countries) and yet it is a system not originally designed for Japanese and so unsuited to representing it that two separate auxiliary systems have had to be devised and incorporated into it. Such an example does suggest that idiosyncracies of the orthography cannot necessarily account for reading and writing failure.

The historical studies of the alphabet and writing systems look at writing from the point of view of the *inventor* of the system and of the *writer* rather than from that of the reader. Psychologists, especially recently, have helped us to see how writing systems are used by readers and it seems likely that their investigations have been given a greater sense of urgency and purpose by the disappointing failure of most, if not all, developed countries to achieve universal literacy in spite of the fact that they have, for a long time now, had systems of universal education. I think it was generally assumed, before education for all was a possibility, that the opportunity only had to be provided for everyone to become literate. The persistent and unexplained (or, rather, the frequently but not convincingly explained) failure of a significant minority to achieve this goal, while the majority seem to achieve it with little effort and often much enjoyment, has produced an enormous amount of research into the psychology of reading and writing. Sampson (1985 p.207) calls it "an explosive growth" which has shed light on the English spelling system, so often regarded as the chief culprit, on the way and, in turn, has helped us to look at the alphabet and the orthography from a new point of view, the point of view of the reader and the learner, and to see them as infinitely richer and more complex than we ever imagined; and, above all, much more "user-friendly". Little has emerged which suggests that radical spelling reform would be desirable. Even if it were, we are waiting for someone

> to propose a principled system sufficiently exhaustive and
> detailed to survive detailed analysis and experimentation by
> linguists, psychologists and educators. (Sterling 1992, p.283)

It would need to emerge as clearly better, Sterling adds, and proposers would also have to deal with the practicalities of introducing it. It seems a long way away.

If it were reformed, no doubt the silent E would be one of the first features to be streamlined out of it but Smith (in Frith 1980 pp.35-36) lists six uses of it which his subjects, asked to criticise the system and suggest improvements, found helpful; it preserves certain spelling patterns, distinguishes English words from foreign imports (in two different ways), helps with pronunciation, predicts stress and distinguishes homophones. Smith says

> It can be seen that the same grapheme, E, can convey very varied
> information ranging from "deep" to "surface" level. (p.36)

and

> ... The fact that it is silent certainly does not mean that it
> is unimportant (ibid.)

His subjects were not language specialists and were not necessarily conscious of the linguistic knowledge they displayed in their performance, but he claims that

> a large proportion of literate speakers of English are aware that
> the English spelling system is heterogeneous, and that different
> rules apply to different parts of the system.

Such people, apparently, when obliged to choose, opt for complexity.

Such a letter, silent but imparting so much information by being silent, is surely an example of what Saussure meant by calling language a system of signs. The complexity that many people (unconsciously) find so useful and many others (consciously) find so bewildering very often provides the expression of meaning.

This is particularly clear in the homophones of which there are a great many in English. Here the different spellings are all that do distinguish words which, if spoken in isolation, must be ambiguous, such as PARE/PEAR/PAIR and RIGHT/RITE/WRITE/WRIGHT. Stubbs (1986 p.227) draws attention to the more complex way in which spelling overrides sound to preserve meaning in words like MEDICAL/MEDICINE and SIGN/SIGNAL and also makes the point that, as these are usually words which are not encountered in the early stages of learning to write, this feature of their spelling is easily overlooked; both learners and teachers are likely to be concentrating on the subject matter of writing and on features of the "tapestry of transcription" (Frank Smith 1982 p. 139) other than spelling.

English spelling also represents grammar and syntax. The prime example, again highly valued but so unobtrusive that most people are surprised when it is pointed out to them, is the - ED suffix which is pronounced in three different ways, WALKED, WARNED, WAITED. (Baker 1980 pp. 57-58). There are also many prefixes, some of which do change to reflect sound, e.g. ILLEGIBLE, ATTRACTION.

Standard English Orthography, then, does certainly represent sound, but not only sound. It represents also meaning, grammar, syntax, the mixed derivation of the language, the provenance of imported words and, sometimes, stress. Thus there is more to learn than in a more phonetically regular language, but a public relations officer for it (which it needs) would surely claim, justifiably, that you get much valuable and interesting information in return for your learning.

But there are features of our orthography, or perhaps rather of fashionable ways of presenting it, which are not user-friendly and especially not friendly to the young learner. Our modern alphabet may be essentially the same as the first complete one created by the Greeks, but there is one difference between them which may seem trivial but is significant in the context of reading and writing difficulties. The Greek alphabet has no mutually reversible letters (except, perhaps, upper-case Sigma and Mu, Σ and M). Orientation of the letters was not significant and in many Greek inscriptions the letters are twisted to fit into available spaces. Some Latin letters, also, faced different ways at different periods. But the modern English alphabet contains several that are identical and distinguished from one another only by their orientation, b/d/p, m/w, and n/u, and most young children do reverse them; understandably, since there are no other human activities where an object acquires a different name and a different function solely because it has acquired a different orientation, and it, therefore, takes time and perseverance for some children to absorb this new principle of writing which contradicts their previous experience.

Another unfortunate fashion, especially prevalent in books for young children, is for printing letters so that they look as uniform as possible, short risers and descenders, all curves alike, all idiosyncracies of shape ironed out. Such books are usually also printed in a "sans-serif" type; and all these features, which do make the pages very pleasant to look at, actually make the words harder to identify and analyse for the beginning reader who needs the salient features, in which our orthography is rich, more than anyone.

One particularly convenient feature, for printers certainly, of Standard English Orthography, unlike other European languages, is that it contains no diacritical marks; only the twenty-six letters which can be permutated to produce more than 2,000 different sound representations (Stevenson 1985 p.110).

To describe English spelling as a "near-optimal system" Chomsky and Halle (1968 p.49) would seem amazingly perverse to many, but it certainly has its felicities , although these require some attention and study before they can be appreciated. It certainly does not deserve the wholesale condemnation of the student, C; it is anything but a "stupid langwig", and even he came to soften his view after more experience with it. Although there is more to learn than for some other languages, most of us do learn it. We need to look elsewhere for the causes of spelling failure.

B. 2. USING AND LEARNING THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM

> We must seek psychological models that do justice to the
> sophistication of the readers and spellers we are studying.
>
> (Smith, 1980 p.49)

Chapter 1 looked at writing systems and the particular spelling system, Standard
English Orthography, which the learner has to master.   It concludes that it is a
hard system to break into, but rewarding once learned and unlikely to change much.
This chapter examines how it is used by those who have mastered it and learned by
young children doing their earliest writing.   People who have mastered it may
hesitate over their subject-matter, the organisation of their narrative or argument
and their choice of words but they write those words; once chosen, easily and
fluently, their minds free to work on the content; the writing flows from the end
of the pen as the words occur to them.

B.2.(a). THE CORRECT SPELLER

A boy of 13, as C. was when my tuition and study of him began, should be in that
position, able to concentrate on the content of his writing having by now a secure
grasp of spelling, although there are likely to be still many words which he will
need to check in a dicticnary.   For C. spelling was still a stumbling block making
him deeply reluctant to write at all.   Although M. was younger, if he continued in
his similar writing habits, he too had little hope of achieving the status of a
"correct" speller (Gentry 1982 p.198).   What are the accomplishments of a
"correct" speller?   They are not yet those described by Peters above, but they are
on the way there.   Gentry lists eight:

1. The speller's knowledge of the English orthographic system and its basic rules
is firmly established.
2. The correct speller extends his/her knowledge of word environment constraints,
i.e. graphemic environment in the word, position in the word and stress.
3. Extended knowledge of word structures, prefixes etc.   Distinguishes homonyms.
4. Growing accuracy with silent consonants and doubling consonants.
5. Can think of alternative spellings and use visual identification to correct

errors.

6. Continues to master alternatives (e.g. "ei"/"ie") and irregularities.
7. Continues to master Latinate and other forms.
8. Accumulates a large corpus of learned words.

Gentry does not suggest that they are conscious of knowing and doing all these things and the collection of papers edited by Uta Frith (1980) contains examples of the depths of knowledge and the complex cognitive processes which are available to ordinarily competent writers of English and of which they are often unconscious. Smith (p.34) speaks of three types of information which we receive and transmit in written language, graphemic, phonetic and semantic and calls them "cognitively rich structures." His subjects were not language specialists, merely "literate speakers of English", some of them children, and yet the amount of their knowledge which his studies elicited is impressive.

Henderson and Chard (ibid. pp.112-3) speak of "single-letter positional frequency", "sequential frequency" and "orthographic neighbourhoods" of which their subjects were aware and made good use. Elsewhere Peters (1992 p.221) agrees:

> Spelling is a kind of grammar for letter sequences that generates permissible combinations *without regard to sound*. As in word sequences (grammar) there is a scale of probability range from letters that can occur in sequence to those that cannot.

One everyday experience of these is that of crossword puzzle solvers, who often complete a word from the "orthographic neighbourhood" created by the letters already in place; they seem to know instinctively what could and what could not fit and often they look at the clue only to check their guess. This is the kind of knowledge described by Gentry and is part of that which Mitchell et. al. (1994) have investigated in the wider field of Knowledge About Language.

Cohen's subjects on a proof-reading task, which was designed to test spelling knowledge and skill, showed "enormous flexibility" (1980 p.152).

> Strategies are selected according to the demands of the task, and the contribution of orthographic, phonological and semantic analyses shift and change as the reader exercises his cognitive ability to fulfil these demands.

This description of humans' use of the written language echoes the flexible, resourceful and pragmatic way in which they invented it, (see Chapter 1).

Gentry does not mention rules and Sloboda (1980 p.247) concludes that his study excludes the notion that

> proficient spelling is a rule-governed procedure. ... One might say that whilst average spellers spell by rule, good spellers spell by rote.

Good spellers just have, as in Gentry's item 8, "a large corpus of learned words". How do they acquire them?

Baron (in Frith pp.159-194) divided his subjects into "Phoenician" and "Chinese" strategists when it comes to reading and spelling. The "Phoenicians" were

significantly better at applying rules and they were the more successful spellers,
which seems to contradict Sloboda.   The "Chinese" employed a more holistic
approach (Look and Say) to written language and, in particular, had difficulty with
segmentation of syllables.   Baron's experiments drew him to the conclusion that it
was this difficulty with perceiving and distinguishing syllables which hindered the
"Chinese" spellers, not their lesser regard for rules (syllables of course are not a
useful concept in real Chinese).   This finding supports the important conclusion of
Bryant and Bradley (1985, pp.52-58) that this is the only disability among pre-
school children which reliably predicts later difficulty with written language.
However, it is dangerous to assume, as often happens, that this inability to
segment an orally-presented word is a hearing problem.   It may be a problem of
perception.   The distinction is important because those two diagnoses of the
difficulty lead to different prescriptions it and it seems likely that the popular
emphasis on rhymes and oral language games, while helpful, is not enough.
Fernald, as long ago as 1943, advocated a multisensory approach and Peters (1992
p.222) is still reaffirming the importance of the visuo-motor element in spelling.
It does seem only common sense to bring sight, easily our most powerful and
accurate sense, and touch to bear on any task if we suspect a deficiency in hearing
or in auditory perception.   Perhaps that is why children who write early make good
progress later in reading (Chomsky 1971, Clay 1975, Ellis and Cataldo 1990)

Peters (Lecture to Adult Literacy Scheme 1977) claims that very few people know
any spelling rules, except "I before E except after C" and I have found the same in
myself, among professional colleagues and among several hundred voluntary tutors
of the Adult Literacy Scheme.   The reasons surely are that we really need that
rule (digraphs in the middle of a word are notorious traps) and it is succinctly
and clearly expressed, is truly helpful and works in the overwhelming majority of
cases;   the others have complicated and often ambiguous wording and too many
exceptions.   An example given by Peters (1967 p.46) is

> Monosyllables and words of more than one syllable with the accent
> on the last syllable, which end in a single consonant preceded by
> a single vowel, double the final consonant when adding a suffix
> beginning with a vowel

One cannot imagine many people finding such an explanation helpful!

People *do*, however, know the patterns of letter-strings which are based on the
rules;   when we administered "spelling tests" of nonsense words to our trainee
Adult Literacy Tutors they, almost all, not only chose the spelling, but also
justified it, by analogy with real, known words which resembled the target word.

Tenney's results (in Frith pp.227-9) support most of Gentry's items, especially the
fifth, the ability to evoke alternative spellings and to use visual identification
to decide which is correct.

It all adds up to an impressive range and depth of knowledge and skill on the part
of all those, whatever their level of education, who can spell correctly most of the
time and it seems to me unarguable that one important factor in successful
spelling is sufficient experience of the language and of manipulating it yourself.
It simply would not be possible to acquire so much knowledge and skill without it.
This certainly seems to be the conclusion of Marsh et al. (1980 p.353)

TABLE VII:

NUMBER OF WORDS READ IN WEEKLY OBSERVATIONS
(First Year at School - medium case of each quartile group)

Progress Group	Words Read	Estimate of Words Read per Year
HIGH	3,570	20,000
H - M	2,601	15,000
L - M	1,680	10,000
LOW	757	5,000

From Clay M.M. (1972 p.102)

However there does appear to be a major developmental shift in strategies between the second and fifth grades in both reading (Marsh et al. 1977) and spelling. This shift is towards a strategy of spelling an unknown word by analogy to a known word. In order to use this strategy productively the child must have a sufficient number of visual word forms in storage to use as analogues. It apparently takes a number of years of experience with reading and spelling to build up a sufficient visual store.

Clay (1972 p.102) observed the numbers of words read by children of differing progress groups in their first year in school. See Table VII for her results.

The differences between such groups in the amount of written language encountered, in the number of times the learner meets each word and in the opportunities to study and manipulate words and sentences, over several years when the slow and reluctant learners have been allowed to continue "at their own pace", must be vast.

Peters (1967, pp.25-28) speaks of "previous educational experience" as being an important factor in success with spelling. Baker (in Frith 1980 p.54) says

> all but the most fortunate of English spellers have first-hand familiarity with the existence and persistence of spelling difficulties irrespective of our level of reading attainment

and asks

> whether the second-order, high-level regularities of English spelling, which may be patent (in both senses; perhaps) to linguists, represent anything other than an obstacle course for the average speller.

Baker was investigating the "orthographic awareness" of undergraduates who should be sophisticated and experienced spellers, though some academics (Stubbs 1986 p.229) complain about their inadequate grasp of the system. Baker says

> Certainly the knowledge of spelling possessed by highly literate adults is likely to be a heterogeneous collection of generalisations picked up during the acquisition of reading and writing skills, when the spelling of words was learned through the familiarity with alphabetic symbols and their associated 'soundings', memorisation of whole word shapes, word by word analogies and perhaps a handful of mnemonic rules ... (p.62)

This "picked up" sounds like "spelling caught" (Peters 1967) and "fortunate" suggests that a big component of good spelling is luck. Perhaps that is why it so often goes wrong. There is a good deal of agreement about what good spellers can do and the complexity of their behaviour. But there are areas of disagreement, particularly about the part phonology plays in spelling (Barron 1980 p.212-3, Tenney 1980 p.227-9), the order in which the different skills are used and whether some of them are used at all (Morton 1980 p.125 and 131-133).

What does emerge from all these studies is the unsurprising conclusion that good spellers have had a great deal of experience of manipulating written language and that, even if they have never consciously thought about it, they know enough to enable them to follow patterns without consciously knowing the rules underlying

them and to predict letter-strings from a store of characteristic English letter-
strings and from analogy with known words. They have the codes of the system at
their finger-tips, they make instant judgments about which to obseerve and shift
among them skilfully and easily. That so many people have learned to do all this
without being aware of the processes suggests an impressive amount of activity
going on in the brain whenever we write and that people who write a great deal are
unconsciously refining and adding to their knowledge and skill all the time.

The boys in the Case studies could do very little of what is described here. They
had only their one, phonic code, they could not make analogies between words nor
think of alternative spellings. Their stock of words which they could spell was
small and some which they thought they could spell were incorrect. Their
performance was the opposite of the confident fluent writers depicted here.

There are now some interesting and valuable descriptions and analyses of children
learning to spell to increase our understanding of how people come to achieve the
high level of knowledge and skill portrayed here.

B.2.(b). LEARNING TO SPELL:

"Correct" spellers, then, have acquired a formidable amount of skill and knowledge
all of which interact among themselves and with the written language in complex
ways which suggest that an enormous amount of cognitive activity goes on
beforehand. I claimed in the Case Studies that the boys M. and C. were, in their
spelling, performing at the level of much younger children, which was natural since
they had avoided writing so often and had done so little. This section seeks to
establish whether there are definable levels, to identify them and their sequence
and to investigate the processes involved in learning to spell.

The recent improved understanding of our interaction with the written language is
not confined to the processes involved in skilled performance. We now also have
interesting and convincing models of stages by which the ability to spell correctly
develops in children. There is agreement on the overall pattern of development
but not about the number of stages nor about where the stages begin and end.

Frith (1985) suggests that, in learning to read and write, children go through
three stages. First logographic; the child recognises whole words and produces
some features of them as if they were pictures of the words. Then alphabetic;
the child begins to understand that there is a relationship between the sound of
the word and the letters which express it on paper. Finally, in the orthographic
stage, the child has disccvered some conventional spelling patterns and continues
to add to these through further experience with reading and writing. The second
stage is the only one which is phonological, the other two depend on the storing of
visual patterns. An interesting and important feature of Frith's theory for
students of spelling is her claim that it is at the moment when children start to
write that, having no visual paradigm available for a particular word, they are
brought to attend to sound-letter relationships. This in turn leads them to apply
the alphabetical principle to reading, for which they have so far used only a
visual memory for whole words. Such a theory gives strong support to claims that
spelling "drives" reading rather than the converse, claims which had begun to be
made before Frith produced her theory (Chomsky 1971, 1979, Clay 1975, "What Did I
Write?",) and are getting stronger (Ellis 1990, pp.1-28) and suggests that policies,
which have been prevalent, of emphasis on reading with little attention to spelling

have been detrimental even to reading. It also supports the claim that children
find out about the written language for themselves by interacting with it, though
they need to be helped to do this.

Bryant and Bradley (1980, p.362) agree with Frith's model of separate and then
interacting strategies for reading and spelling but they do not postulate that
earliest logographic stage for spelling. This may be because the child's first
"writing" hardly seems to be that, but rather an extension of drawing, and one
needs to be alert and perceptive to see how the drawing is turning into writing.
Moreover they were studying a particular phenomenon rather than trying to
construct a general theory. But they agree that children use separate strategies
for reading and writing to begin with and in that study they "caught" some children
just before they combined their strategies; these children could write some words
which they could not read and vice-versa. Interestingly their results suggested
that the children did not so much lack the strategies but that they had them but
had not yet learned how and when to apply them and needed help to do so (p.370).

Gentry again (1982, 192-200) gives a clear and logical account of the stages of
learning to spell. He takes Bissex's account (1980) of her son's progress from his
first marks on paper to "correct spelling", GNYS AT WRK: A CHILD LEARNS TO WRITE
AND READ, as his example and provides a convincing theoretical analysis of each
stage of the child's mastery of the process. He divides learning to spell into
five stages. Read (1986, pp.36-38) summarises studies of kindergarten children
passing through similar stages, although there are slight variations in the number
and demarcation of them. They and Read himself support Gentry's classification
and I think it is useful to use that here.

Gentry calls the first stage PRECOMMUNICATIVE, because the child makes marks on
paper which have no meaning and therefore do not communicate anything, "exploring
with a pencil" (Clay 1982 p.202). But they are not just scribbles, as they were
earlier when marks were merely the haphazard result of exploring the
characteristics of paper and pencil. The important point is that they have some
of the features of writing. There may be some shapes which look like some of the
letters of the alphabet; there may also be some numbers but the child may not yet
realise that these are part of a different system from the letters and may use
both indiscriminately. The letters may be lower or upper case or a mixture.
Often the child "writes" from left to right or in other directions but the writing
is linear. Above all, to the child it is writing.

To the casual, uninformed eye, this may not seem a very impressive performance, but
it represents, in fact, a "great leap forward", because it demonstrates that the
child has acquired a good deal of knowledge about the writing system, i.e. that
there are particular shapes which must be used, that writing must go always in the
same direction (the child will have been drawing for some time and tackling
pictures in any order; this is a different process). He or she also knows that
there is meaning involved in it though not, at first, understanding how it gets
there. "What did I write?" the child asks (Clay 1975), perhaps rather like an
ancient Greek poet seeing the writer as merely the "empty vessel" or instrument
through which the meaning is breathed into the magic letters by a higher authority.
Paul Bissex's (the "genius" of his mother's study) writing, at the age of 4, shows
these characteristics, several straightish strokes but some letter- and number-
shapes in a definite pattern of horizontal lines; but certainly not readable and
probably not recognisable as writing to the casual observer. The important thing

is that he has come to uncerstand the kind of activity he is engaged in (Donaldson 1978, pp.23-4) and has demonstrated that by observing some of the rules of writing.

This does seem very like Frith's "logographic" phase; sound does not seem to influence the writing at all. "Logographic" is surely the word for the results of Ferreiro's observations of young children's understanding of writing (1985 pp.83-94), where GALLO (COCK) must have more letters than GALLINA (HEN) because the cock is bigger; the concept was what mattered to them, not the spoken word.

In the second of Gentry's stages, the SEMIPHONETIC, the child has now grasped the notion of letters and that they have names and represent sounds. Paul, at five, writes "RUDF" for "Are you deaf?" when his mother fails to attend to one of his questions. The names of the letters are used indiscriminately, when convenient, with their sounds and, like the ancient Semites, Paul does not bother much with vowels. He writes "KR" for "CAR" and "BZR" for "BUZZER", but he does also, during this period, have "TLEFNMBER" for "TELEPHONE NUMBER". He seems not to have a concept of separate words and the spaces in his writing may come anywhere or nowhere. It is, after all, only with the written language that the separation of words becomes apparent or important. We notice the divisions between words in speech because we have also seen them written down. We cannot hear them and, therefore of course, the preliterate child, cannot be aware of many of them.

At the third stage the child has reached PHONETIC spelling. Paul had achieved "total mapping of letter-sound correspondence" (Gentry 1982 p.192). He had abandoned using R for "ARE" etc. and now used it only for the R-sound and he seemed to know the sounds that all the letters are supposed to represent. But he was merely following his ear; he had no notion of spelling conventions of any but the strict letter-to-sound kind. He had, however, begun to leave spaces between the words and often to observe correctly where syllables divided, the important alphabetic skill of segmentation (Bryant and Bradley (1985, p. 74).

In his fourth, TRANSITIONAL stage, Paul has realised that the simple phonic principle is not enough and he begins to use visual and morphological strategies for more and more of the appropriate words. He has, after all, by now seen more words and seen them more often in his reading. By the age of nine he has reached the final stage and become a "correct speller"; He has acquired the eight important accomplishments listed above (B.2.(a)).

This is the stage at which he is extremely unlikely to develop spelling difficulties, so long as he does not sustain some kind of brain damage as a result of accident or illness. He is "over the hump" of spelling, full of well-founded confidence. The "Correct Speller" does not yet spell every word correctly, but has mastered the essential principles and strategies to be sure, with further experience, of adding steadily to the store of correctly spelled words and of being able to write with ever-increasing fluency and accuracy.

There are remarkable similarities between the way in which this skill and understanding develops in a few years in young children and the way in which the writing systems themselves developed over centuries as described in Chapter 1.

Paul Bissex clearly started his career as a genius in very favourable conditions. These sorts of conditions were studied by Taylor in Family Literacy (1983). Her subjects were pre-school children but she selected them on the criterion that they were the younger children in families where at least one child was already doing

well at school.   Even these highly literate and educationally aspiring families
themselves were astonished to find how much "writing" their youngest member was
doing in odd moments, on scraps of paper (and on the furniture).   It is a picture
of children teaching themselves about writing and becoming well-prepared for more
formal writing at school.   That cannot go on in every home and there must be a
big difference in the pre-school experiences of such children and those of others
from less literary families.

Gentry's sequence of events can be compared with the performance of children at
home and at school by anyone who knows and has opportunities to observe, say, 4-
to 11-year-old children and there are other studies which confirm it (Ferreiro and
Teberosky 1983 and Payton 1984)   It also gains credibility from a comparison
with children's early drawing.

I recently had a conversation with my granddaughter, aged 4:

CHILD: I'm doing a drawing for you.

GRANDMOTHER: How lovely.   What is it?

CHILD (indignantly): Well, I don't know yet!

I also remember my daughter, at about the same age, saying, "Look, I've written a
letter.   What does it say?"   I replied, "It doesn't say anything.   It's just a
scribble."   She remembers the incident too because her feelings were hurt by it.
She seems to have thought that the "letters" would bring their own meaning with
them and she was shocked that they did not or that I could not "read" them.

There is a close parallel with children's acquisition of spoken language.

> They do not learn language through imitation but construct their own
> rule systems which they test and revise depending upon environmental
> feedback and their own developmental patterns. (Zutell 1978 p.846)

Zutell (ibid.) also points out that this theory fits well with Piaget's theory of
learning by assimilation and accommodation.   Ferreiro, too, claims that her work is
based on Piagetian theory.   Read (1986 pp.111-115) discusses the Piagetian model
in relation to developing spelling, but thinks its weakness is that it is too
biologically based and does not allow for environmental factors like the type of
instruction received (cf. Peters' emphasis on "previous educational experience",
1967 p.25) and the child's observations of people reading and writing.   Zutell's
experiments also revealed a pay-off between the sophistication of spelling
strategies and the complexity of words; his subjects reverted to less
sophisticated strategies when they had to tackle more "complex" words.   The
question of what makes a word "complex", from the point of view of someone
learning to spell it, is discussed below in B.3.(c).

A feature of this hypothesis-testing progress, likely to be important for teachers
to remember, is that of the reluctance which inventing spellers seem to feel to
change their hypotheses (Read 1986 p.117).   He quotes Gerritz' experience that
only 3 out of 49 standard spellings appeared in her subjects' spelling after being
introduced in their reading and even these three took between one and two-and-a-
half months to do so!.   He also reports (p.116) that

When creative spellers are confronted with the contrast between their
spelling and the standard form ... they typically see nothing wrong with
either; they simply do not assume that the two must be alike.

There is a parallel with toddlers' immature speech here. You cannot get them to
correct it however hard you try, though later they come to use the correct forms
spontaneously. It is also a salutary reminder of how much a literate person
takes for granted because of long experience of the system. Those who wrote
before the standardisation of spelling in the 18th century would not (did not)
assume that the same word must always be written in the same way.

The important point is that children do not hear the speech of adults and gradually
come to imitate it ever more closely nor to associate particular sounds with
particular objects or events, as older theories have sometimes suggested. Rather
they hypothesise about the sounds they make, try them out in various situations
and draw conclusions from the results they obtain. This must be why they are so
quick to learn to say BISCUIT and so slow to learn to say PLEASE without being
prompted. BISCUIT produces either a biscuit or at least a refusal which confirms
that the sound you made has been understood and often confirms too, by its
vehemence, that biscuits are very desirable. It must be well worth trying out on
many occasions. But if you are not just imitating, you would not think of saying
PLEASE, although you do not at all mind saying it when you are reminded, especially
as it is often the password to the biscuit. And they hardly ever say THANK-YOU,
once they have it? What would be the point?

A valid comparison has been made between learning about literacy and children's
general experience of life. The difficulty so many have with the orientation of
letters probably arises from the fact that in no other human activity does the
name and function of anything change as a result of its merely being turned around
to face a different way. In the same way people wear different clothes but
remain the same people; why should not words change their appearance from time to
time but still be the same? Social conventions are often puzzling to children and
finding out which ones really matter must take time.

For most children the process of learning to speak is so swift; apparently painless
and, above all, successful, that it is not surprising that they should practise the
same techniques when it comes to learning to write; nor that repeated failure,
along with little real incentive, where that is the case, should discourage some
from writing. Underconfident people, and those whose remarks receive little
response, may not talk much either.

Gentry's precommunicative stage corresponds to those noises which babies make
which are clearly meant to be reciprocated (and which are usually impossible not to
respond to), but which do not actually tell one anything very precise and are
certainly not words. (On reflection, PRECOMMUNICATIVE does not seem to be the
best word for it because both the baby noises and even the scribble-writing do
communicate wordlessly and, on the social level, rather effectively. Could that
stage be called PROTOWRITING or PRE-WRITING, as the babble is sometimes called
PRE-SPEECH?) The semi-phonetic stage seems very like the stage of one- and two-
word sentences and the broad categorisations (every four-legged creature a DOG for
instance) of children's first speech.

The phonetic stage corresponds with the stage of over-generalisation of
grammatical rules which evokes, for a period, errors in words once spoken correctly

(COMED for CAME and so on).   The transitional stage corrects this tendency,
reflecting now an awareness of adult language and a desire to conform with it, and
finds the child learning and experimenting fast and bringing all his varied
experience to his efforts to express himself so that his mastery of the spoken
language by about the age of 5 is generally agreed to be something of a miracle.
Gentry's analysis with its testing of hypotheses, a stage of clinging to one
strategy only, followed by an understanding that there are more than one set of
rules is very like the well-established chain of events of the acquisition of
speech;   though, of course, spelling comes later, takes longer to acquire and has
attached to it difficulties and obstacles which only rarely occur for speech.

Indeed it seems likely that the process of becoming literate may be going on for
much longer than we think and be completed much later.   Perhaps it is never
completed.   In Japan people accept that they are learning to write all their lives;
they clearly are because their writing is a matter of learning to write each new
word ab initio and no-one ever gets to the end of the task of learning to write
all the Japanese words which exist;   nor do we in English but, even if experienced
writers have not written particular words before they have almost certainly written
all the components of them many times and are only rearranging them for the new
words.   They can compose them for themselves without a paradigm and with an
excellent chance of success.   But, on the way,

>   ... Children have shown us that they need to reconstruct the
>   written system in order to make it their own.   Let us allow them
>   the time and the opportunities for such a tremendous task.
>   (Ferreiro 1985 p.94)

M. and C., the boys studied in Part A, seem to have "got stuck" at the third,
Phonetic, stage of learning to spell.   Their approach to it was unchanging.   They
could never suggest an alternative way to spell a word, because they only knew of
one way and they could never think of analogies, even when they knew an analogous
word.   They even sometimes still regressed to the previous, Pre-phonetic, stage
omitting vowels and using letters to represent the sounds made by the letters'
names, for example:

from M: FLAMES/FLAMS, STAYED/STAD, WHITE/WIT, WRITE/WRIT.
from C: MEANS/MENS, OWNER/ONER, TEACHER/TECHER, EACH/ECH, MADE/MAD.

They could often identify words they had written incorrectly and could sometimes
correct them, although they both overestimated the number of their mistakes and
they seldom felt certain about which version was right.   They probably had many
confused memories of words and their general pessimism about themselves as
spellers encouraged them to think they were wrong whenever possible.

One problem with this narrow, phonetic approach arises from the very fact that it
works so well at the beginning.   Monosyllabic, CONSONANT-VOWEL-CONSONANT words,
(CAT, DOG, MUM, RAN etc.) are emphasised and pupils can hear their sounds easily in
order and write down the appropriate letters.   But, unless they are prepared for
this undemanding process to become more complicated and to require other
techniques and the use of senses other than hearing, the confident progress can be
suddenly halted and thrown into confusion.   I imagine this happening to M. and C.
and can understand the bewilderment, frustration and resentment they may well have
felt towards a system which could suddenly change and become so treacherous;   and

their unwillingness to trust it any more but to withdraw to an earlier and happier way of working, even though it failed.

It took a long time to persuade them to "try out" spellings, to write them down, look at them and modify them.   There are examples of these efforts in the Appendix, but few because they had only recently started "inventing spellings" when our work stopped and were still suspicious of trying anything new.

The salient features to emerge from this chapter are the extreme complexity of our interactions with the written language and the resourceful and pragmatic way in which we switch between codes and apply our skill and knowledge to the task of expressing ourselves on paper.   To understand learners it seems vital to appreciate the Piagetian, hypothesis-forming and -testing nature of their activities and to have confidence in the general human interest in codes and in cracking them and the general tendency eventually to conform to social conventions, of which spelling is one.

B.3.   TEACHING SPELLING:

The findings from research detailed in the previous chapter are quite recent
and may seem quite revolutionary to many.   If they are well-founded they must
affect the way in which spelling is taught and should surely help teachers
with the understanding of their complex and demanding task.

The policy in the schools attended by the boys in Part A seem to have been
based on the belief that the free flow of writing was the important thing and
that correct spelling was likely to arise naturally out of that, but it would
not matter very much if it did not;   emphasis on correct spelling was pedantic
and would distract and inhibit the pupils, thus impoverishing the
expressiveness of their writing.   I could find no evidence of those boys ever
having received any specific instruction in spelling.

The emphasis on fluency and freedom of expression must be right and it is
certain that many pupils do "catch" (Peters 1967) good spelling, apparently
effortlessly.   There are also those forceful people who are uninhibited by
their inability to spell and write on (usually, admittedly, quite legibly, but
also usually arousing irritation and a disinclination to read on as well as,
if we are honest, a lowering of our esteem for the writer) in spite of it.
But the flaw in the argument lies in the attribution of inhibition, which
appears to arise less often from a demand from others than from oneself for
correctness and from uncertainty and confusion over spelling and which seems
to be progressive, leading to less writing, then, later, no writing and
spreading the inhibition to other school activities (Peters 1967 p.6, Spencer
1983 p.8, Gorman 1987 4.2).

There is a genuine puzzle;   most people do learn to spell most words correctly
whether they are taught to spell or not and whatever the method used to teach
them.   But there is an important minority who do not;   6%, reported in
February 1993 (Brooks et al.), have

>   "severe problems" with spelling at 15, seriously handicapping
>   their ability to communicate in writing.   (Times 12/2/93)

and thus also, inevitably, handicapping their ability to proceed with their
education, if not with other parts of their lives.

Teachers need to be able to forestall this handicap for that minority without
allowing their needs to unbalance the work of the class as a whole.   So far
they have not had much help from research which has given uncertain and mixed
messages.   Stubbs says bluntly that students are given the wrong information
about the orthgraphy (1980, p.310) and things do not seem to have improved
very much since Bennett complained in 1967 (p.28)

>   The great majority of spelling knowledge is acquired without any
>   conscious study;   the conscious study of words in isolation is a
>   somewhat inefficient method of adding to this body of knowledge.

Nevertheless it seems inevitable that a word must be studied in isolation at
least for as long as one is actually concentrating on trying to master its
spelling;   although the word should not come to one's attention in isolation
in the first place.

Here the subject is divided into three sections, the Learning of Individual
Words, Differences in Perception between Teacher and Pupil and the
Organisation of the Task.

B.3.(a). Learning Individual Words

In a tiny, but eminently practical, booklet, which was a lifeline to the early
Adult Literacy Scheme, (Moorhouse 1977) identifies approaches to teaching
spelling as being of four kinds, Rote Writing, Visual, Auditory and Logical
Methods:

1. ROTE: It is written like that; keep practising till you can do it.

2. VISUAL: (a) Look, Cover, Write, Check.   Repeat with each word until
                  it is mastered.
              (b) Break the word up, e.g. DIF-FER-ENT.
              (c) Identify smaller words within it, e.g. IF, RENT.

3. AUDITORY: (a) Count the syllables.
              (b) "Sound out" the word and write down what you hear
              (c) Exaggerated "spelling pronunciation", e.g. WED-NES-DAY.

4. LOGICAL: (a) Teach DIFFER and DIFFERENT together.
              (b) Teach Prefixes and Suffixes, e.g. DIS changing to DIF
                  before F, -ENT is an adjectival ending.
              (c) Teach Latin roots
              (d) Teach FF must be double because the I is short and one F
                  would make I long, i.e. DIFER.

These categories sometimes overlap, of course. 2 (a) is more detailed and
prescriptive than 1, but they have much in common. 2 (b) and 3 (c) look like
the same method on paper but are quite different in practice. 4 (d) is
auditory as well as logical, and so on.

My experience, not least with the Part A boys and the huge majority of Adult
Literacy students, was that 3 (b) is by far the most prevalent method of
deciding on spelling and the only possibility envisaged by many.

Moorhouse was, of course, writing for people in a particular situation, tutors
of individuals or small groups of adults who had already formed learning
habits and were being encouraged to follow their own inclinations in methods
of study.   Teachers in classrooms cannot be eclectic in this way, but the
categorisation is useful for increasing awareness of the variety of
possibilities for teaching and identifying the methods which are in use at any
time.   Moreover, the study of words from all these differing angles would
teach one a great deal about the spelling and the language.

Although so much research has now been done into the psychology of good
spelling, poor spelling and the learning of spelling and although it is
claimed that linguistics has analysed English more exhaustively than any other
language (Mountford, personal communication), the two disciplines have not so
far interacted well enough for all this research to have resulted in much
practical advice for the teacher.   Sometimes one discipline has accepted the
tenets of the other too readily.   Henderson (1984, p.3) points out that

psychologists have been too prone to accept tabulations, like those of Venezky and Wijk, of words as "regular" or "irregular" based on their fidelity to sound-symbol correspondence, without considering whether that was how the reader and writer perceived them. "Regularity" needs defining in this context (Peters 1967, p.8).

The argument does not take account of stages of learning. In knitting, driving and other human activities, one often starts with rules, "right foot down, left foot up, brake off" etc. and then discards them because the routine has become automatic and the attention can now shift from the techniques to the purposes of the activity. Spelling seems to me to be exactly like that. The rules are still there in the background and in order to teach someone else one must be able to recall at least the letter-patterns which are basedon the rules. Now that we know more of how children's spelling proceeds in stages and how they use different techniques at different stages, we can better appreciate the necessary interaction of rule and rote.

There is the same problem with the question of auditory versus visual spelling strategies. There has been a great deal of research on this subject, but much of it has been biassed by the mode in which the target words are presented to the subjects. Usually they are spoken (Barron 1980 pp.205ff., Sterling 1992 p.285); in that case, since the only stimulus is sound it is likely that the subject would respond with an auditory strategy, particularly since many researchers, in an effort to avoid the danger of another obvious bias, viz. that the subject may already know how to spell the word, use nonsense words; in this case the only information available to the testee is auditory and must bias the subject towards using an auditory strategy, although it does not exclude the possibility that the sound heard suggests some other word (with a different spelling, less common than the obvious one) to the subject for quite private and idiosyncratic reasons.

Some researchers have tried to avoid this problem by presenting the target words as pictures. Such a technique might lay them open to a charge of bias towards visual approaches, but, again, there is nothing to prevent the subject from mentally turning the picture into a word and then spelling that word by an auditory strategy (Miles 1991 p.201). There is a lively and continuing debate about whether it is possible to read silently without subvocalising and there is always the danger of the subject finding a different word for the picture from the one intended by the researcher.

These efforts to remove bias seem to me to be doomed. They lead researchers into such strategems as isolating subjects and words, inventing nonsense words which are meant to mean nothing but usually do evoke some meaning, at any rate to some people (and different meanings to different people), of which the researcher may not be aware and can never be sure, and then trying to isolate different human senses and thought processes. They cannot hope to achieve these sterile conditions and, if they could, the resulting activity would be so different from what actually goes on when someone, writing for some purpose (Barr 1983), chooses and forms the letters and arranges their order for a particular word that it could not hope to shed much light on that process.

All these discussions seem to lead back to the richness, complexity, flexibility and resourcefulness of the human mind and of the language system which, after all, the human mind invented.

Early teaching seems to have been dominated by Rote Writing.

My information about the early history of spelling instruction comes mainly from Venezky's paper, From Webster to Rice to Roosevelt, (in Frith 1980 pp. 10-30).

Our ancestors seem once to have been quite sure what to do.   Children learned the names of the letters, their order in the alphabet and then common combinations of them.   They were then given whole words to read and spell. The two activities were firmly linked and, interestingly, Venezky (1980 p.12) says spelling was primary.   He quotes Webster:

> Spelling is the foundation of reading and the greatest
> ornament of writing

We seem to be coming now to agree with him about the first part of this assertion (Ellis 1990, pp.1-28 and Ehri and Wilce 1987, pp.47-65).

But Webster, too, seems to have been more concerned with the choice of words, "correct" pronunciation and spelling reform rather than with techniques for learning and teaching spelling.   His approach was pedantic and nostalgic; he wished

> to call back the language to the purity of former times
> (Venezky 1980 p.24).

But he made an innovation to a system which seems to have continued unchanged for centuries; he grouped words according to similarity of spelling pattern, in a way which is much in favour now.   This is a visual approach, especially if words of the same visual pattern but with different pronunciations are grouped together (it can also be a logical and semantic approach, even if it is not intended to be so, because related words retain similar spelling even when differently pronounced).   This, now common, practice is doubtless based on the strong evidence that successful spellers have a store of correct words in their mental "lexicons" and find among them analogies for words which they are not sure of.   Successful spellers, however, must be experienced and well-practised spellers and it is not at all clear that learners' minds work in the same way.

Those early educationalists, including Webster, seemed to take it for granted that the important relationship was between the sounds of words and their representation by letters and groups of letters.   Spelling was an important activity in schools and a great deal of time was devoted to it - and the "Spelling Bee" remained a popular kind of parlour game for a very long time. This game is often played orally (spelling bees were presented on radio) and players had to "spell out" their words, naming the letters in order without writing them down.   If you ask people how they do this, however, they nearly always say that they "conjure up" a "picture" of the word and read the letters off from that.   They also, when in doubt, long to be able to write it down and look at it.

These homely experiences emphasise the importance of visual approaches to spelling and lend support for Frank Smith's comment that the phonic principle has been over-emphasised (1982 p.185).

A change came in the middle of the 19th..century when Pestalozzi advocated a kind of "direct method" for learning to read of associating words on the page with their meanings rather than with their sounds.   This was a visual approach which sought to exclude hearing but it also depends on semantics and is thus also a logical approach in Moorhouse's terms.   It did influence the teaching of spelling, but Horace Mann, who brought Pestalozzi's ideas to America, was still preoccupied with the choice of words and expected them to be learned by rote memory.

An extremely interesting contribution came from Joseph Mayer Rice, whose methods of research and conclusions from them seem rather up-to-date.   He was a doctor who suddenly turned his attention to education and seems to have been motivated by impatience with its ineffectiveness as he saw it.   Perhaps being a comparative "outsider" and dissatisfied with the status quo are good bases from which to explore and reform an activity.   He was also an early practitioner of Classroom Observation.

> ... Rice also had a simple answer, and one which might be
> beneficial to present-day educational planners;   viz.,observe what
> the most successful teachers can accomplish. (Venezky 1980 p. 22)

He started with a survey which was well-designed enough to expose false results and followed it up by visiting schools and observing lessons.

He then set two tests, one of isolated words and another requiring a written composition.   The results from the compositions were uniformly high, raising the possibility that people spell better when they are writing for a purpose, but also the possibility that they avoid words they are not sure of when they get the chance.

Rice's conclusions (p.23) were that

> ... the variance in spelling achievement is primarily under
> the control of the teacher, that it cannot be attributed to age,
> nationality, heredity, environment or any other background factor.

and, most interestingly, above a certain minimum, time spent on teaching spelling had no effect on scores.

His recommendations "still retain a surprisingly modern ring" (ibid.)

1. Use a variety of teaching methods.
2. Devote no more than 15 minutes per day to the topic.
3. Grade spelling words by orthographic differences and by use.
4. Give precedence to common words.
5. Omit instruction for words ... easily spelled from their sounds.
6. Separate regular and irregular words (what kind of "regularity"?)
7. Stress rules for adding suffixes.
8. Begin drill as early as possible on difficult, small words.

Of course, Nos. 3, 4, 5 and 6 are about the choice of words to be studied and so, really, is No. 8.   It is undoubtedly an important question.

Unfortunately Rice's work made little impact, although (p.24) he

...articulated an approach to spelling instruction in 1895
that was thoroughly modern, rational and pedagogically sound.

After this attention seemed to turn again to spelling reform, particularly in
America, and this is what discussion of spelling instruction seems often to
turn into (Bennett 1967 p.70).

There seems to have been a general assumption that phonic analysis must be the
basis of spelling and, oddly, this conviction seems to have flourished
alongside the general dissatisfaction with the phonic "irregularity" of the
orthography;   this prompted discussion of spelling teaching constantly to veer
off into discussion of reform.   It seems to have occurred to remarkably few
people, people with infuence on practitioners anyway, that, if an auditory
system is unsatisfactory but cannot be changed, it might be wise to
"diversify" by using non-auditory methods as well as hearing.

Montessori, who thought that movement and activity were keys to children's
learning advocated tracing and writing words and letters at the same time as
learning about their sounds and in 1928 Orton, who coined the word
"strephosymbolia", came to the same conclusion but from a different starting-
point.   He postulated a visual-perceptual defect (he was a neurologist) as
the cause of poor reading and spelling and, together with a teacher and a poor
reader, devised a technique called Simultaneous Oral Spelling or the
Gillingham-Stillman method after his collaborators.

Later Fernald (1943 p.195ff.) advocated the "Auditory, Lip-Throat and Hand-
Kinaesthetic", usually called multisensory, method and also stressed the
importance of emotion and attitude in spelling and reading.   Fernald claimed
that there were separate groups of children who depended predominantly on
visual, auditory or kinaesthetic strategies for their learning.   She, of
course, was working specifically with pupils who were "backward", now called
pupils with Specific Learning Difficulty.   Thus, while studying the word the
pupil should write it, look at it and say it simultaneously.   The rationale
is that each sense provides a check and reinforcement for the other two, so
that, if one of them is at all defective, there is "back-up" from the others.
However her method differed from Orton's in that she did not advocate naming
the letters or sounding them out separately.   She called her teaching of
spelling "informal" (p.196);   her pupils used her multisensory method whenever
they needed to write a particular word which they did not know, in the course
of their lessons, but she disapproved of specific spelling lessons.

> From the point of view of psychology, it is absurd to spend half
> an hour a day on a "spelling" lesson and then force a child to
> write words incorrectly through all the other hours of the long
> school day.   According to the laws of habit, if he writes a word
> correctly a few times and incorrectly many times, the incorrect
> writing of the word will become the habit. (p.198)

Certainly there is no doubt, as Peters insists (1967 p.53 and elsewhere), that
sight is our preferred sense and much more reliable than hearing, but she also
echoes Fernald's emphasis on the kinaesthetic factor.   In practice most
people find, often to their great surprise, that they can write rather well
with their eyes shut.   All three senses working together are likely to be
most reliable of all.

As we have three well-developed senses which can be applied to this task it seems foolish not to use them. ·Much of the discussion which rages, particularly over whether spelling is primarily phonically or visually based, seems to assume that one approach should be chosen and preferred over others. But, as Halliday says (1989 p.26),

> There is a tendency for mixed languages to get mixed scripts.
> Japanese is one example; English is another.

Might this not then mean that it requires mixed methods of teaching?

Adherence to one approach, moreover, does not take account of the interesting and illuminating research results of the last decade, which shows children's learning strategies proceeding in stages and changing from reliance on one sense per activity (hearing for spelling, seeing for reading) to a combination of the two.   These discoveries seem to me to be of the utmost importance for teachers of literacy to young children.   The question now is not which sense to emphasise, but when to do so and how to ensure that the others are being brought in appropriately and are being integrated effectively.

It seems likely that one cause of trouble is when learners get stuck with one approach and do not integrate their strategies.   Montessori, Orton and Fernald were all concerned with connections and, without the benefit of our modern knowledge, they hit on this important factor in spelling.

Another feature of the child's learning which has emerged is the Piagetian, hypothesis-testing nature of it described in the preceding chapter and this evokes Moorhouse's category of "Logical" approaches.   The Rote-Writing, Visual and Auditory categories all imply a rather thoughtless kind of "stamping" of movements, sounds and letter patterns on the memory.   This is very likely necessary to children, once they have grasped the system enough to look for paradigms in their reading and other written material; to make the rapid progress they need they must have a reasonably large number of useful words well stamped-in in this way.   But the studies noted in B.2.(a) suggest that, along with the sensory input to the task, both with mature skilled spellers and with learners, goes an impressive amount of knowledge and reasoning about language, much of it unconscious but no less powerful for that.

The role of reading is very important and Frank Smith points out that pupils' reading must be the chief source of their knowledge about writing (1982 p.177).   He also writes about "sensitivity" to words (ibid. p.174) and Peters (1967, p.43) also·stresses the need for pupils to study the words and notice how they are formed, rather than just copying them quickly into their writing and forgetting them;   this is the rationale for the slogan, "Look, Cover, Write, Check" , of which she is the author.   Covering the word and writing it in full from memory, then checking it with the paradigm forces the pupils to study it in a way that quickly copying it, while thinking about something else (the content of the writing), precludes.   As Bacon said (1605):

> The progress of science is the result of interrogating
> Nature, not of staring at her.

There is evidence (Ahlstrom 1964 quoted by Peters 1967, p.80) that reading
aloud is associated with success in spelling.   This is because reading aloud
is slower (it is also associated, along with slow reading, with poorer
comprehension), giving the reader time to look at each word and the need to
pronounce the words obliges the reader to look more closely at their
spellings.   Many poor spellers, who are of course often (but not always) poor
readers, hate reading aloud and, nowadays especially, kindly teachers allow
them to avoid it.   One could not advocate such pupils being submitted to an
ordeal they find so frightening and humiliating, but perhaps we, and they,
should be clear about the value of the practice for their spelling and the
disadvantage they may be laying on themselves by avoiding it and find ways for
them to read aloud in private, into a tape recorder for example, or some other
way to oblige them to slow down and "interrogate" the words.   The paradox is
that reading and writing differ sharply in important ways and need to be
approached differently, but they also interact in important ways which need to
be recognised too.   These considerations underline the delicacy of the
teacher's task, for all these strands in the "tapestry of transcription"
(Smith 1982, p.139), if there is too much concentration on them during
writing, can distract writers from the real purpose of the task, which is not
to produce beautiful, correctly-crafted artifacts but to communicate with
their readers.

Throughout the history of teaching spelling, people have been puzzled by the
inefficacy of all their efforts in some cases, set beside the fact that so
many do learn.   The best advice available now is based much more on the
information about the way children's spelling develops, derived from close
observation, interpreted in the light of linguistic and psychological theory.
Gentry, having analysed those important stages of development, went on, with
Henderson (1978, p.637) to give three simple, practical pieces of advice to
teachers:

     1.   Encourage creative writing.
     2.   De-emphasise standard spelling.
     3.   Learn to respond to non-standard spelling appropriately.

The first is easy enough to understand and it is likely that problems often
arise merely from lack of practice and experience with writing.   But no-one
could act on the last two, one of which sounds absurd since what we hope to
achieve is standard spelling and the other of which begs the question of what
is appropriate, without understanding the reasoning behind them.

          What the child does need is the opportunity to manipulate
          words so that the relationship between spelling, meaning and
          phonology bcomes clear.   ... Abstraction is a crucial step
          toward becoming an accurate speller.   (pp.635-6)

and

          in order to respond to non-standard spelling appropriately,
          the teacher must recognise transition from one developmental
          strategy to the next.   (p. 635)

Thus we are obliged to agree with so many, from Rice onwards, in this account,
that it is teachers who are the crucial factor in the progress towards

confident, accurate standard spelling in children to whom this does not just come naturally.   It is therefore all the more important for them to choose effective methods.   But they cannot do this without first understanding the language and children's interaction with it in their learning.   They need information and then to be able to use this with skill, patience and fine judgment;   it must be one of the most delicate and demanding tasks teachers can face.

We seem almost to have come to the conclusion that, in order to ensure good spelling, one should avoid ever teaching it.   Certainly the regular spelling lessons and learning of lists, of which many primary schools are proud, are unlikely to be the best use of valuable class time.   Apart from the choice of words to be learned, which is difficult to make and will be discussed below, these tasks are often imposed without any advice being offered of *how* the words are to be learned.   Arguments about the relative usefulness of different approaches can be sterile;   the evidence here is surely that a rich mixture involving multi-sensory and cognitive approaches is much the most likely to succeed.   How can teachers teach children to spell, using these techniques but without spelling lessons?

One of the important ingredients of the English syllabus for the National Curriculum is Knowledge About Language.   This may not immediately strike people as being primarily concerned with spelling but that very fact might be its strength as a medium for learning to spell.   It sounds like Moorhouse's Logical approach and a continuation of the hypothesising and reasoning processes described by Ferreiro, Gentry and Henderson.   So much of spelling is part of grammar, syntax and the history of words.   You would expect children who write freely and often and who pause frequently to study their language, the words of which it is composed, how these have developed and how they interact with one another and with readers, writers, speakers and listeners to create meaning to be in the best possible position to "catch" spellings in the mysterious, incidental way good spellers seem to do.

But the spelling of individual words is not the whole of the problem. B.3.(c). considers how to choose words for pupils to study and how to help them organise the seemingly immense task they face.   Before that, however, the following section addresses another potential cause of difficulty.

B. 3. (b). Audibility of English Words: Sources of Misunderstanding

    A child who feels that neither the teacher nor the spelling
    system has any regard for what he can clearly hear may be more
    likely to develop the despair which some adults feel about
    English spelling.   (Read 1986, p.18)

One important difficulty arises from the fact that hearing is not the most acute and well-developed of the senses in human beings.   That sense is sight. There is much rigorous evidence for this conclusion, along with common sense demonstrations of its validity.   We say "seeing is believing" and we very often do not believe things until we see them.   We are much less certain of what we hear and are amused but not surprised at the distortions of messages which arise, say in games like "Chinese Whispers".   When there is a conflict between the evidence of other senses and that of sight, it is what we have

seen that we accept. It would, therefore, have been perverse of us to have
developed a writing system which depended on hearing rather than sight and it
is certainly perverse to encourage people who are learning to use that system
to rely more upon hearing than on sight. Such a strategy can only work in
the most limited way for a very short time. In fact, it has become clear
that learners start with such a strategy but successful learners soon come
also to incorporate visual strategies in their attempts to spell. (Bryant and
Bradley 1980, pp.88-91)

It is also perverse for the reason that English orthography, as we have seen,
depends only partially upon representing sound and it simply does not provide,
as it is spoken (anywhere by anybody), enough accurate, unambiguous
information about the sounds of many words to allow anyone, however perfect
their hearing, to reproduce them accurately on paper.

That teachers and others do encourage learners to try to spell by ear is not,
however, mere perversity. There is no doubt that the alphabet is
phonologically based and there is no way of learning the letters and their
used without reference to sounds (that would be perverse too!)

It seems likely that it is at this phonological stage that some children get
stuck, still spelling by ear, each word individually without noticing any
resemblance to others that they know, and probably still reading by "look-and-
say"; though the latter may continue to be successful, especially if they are
good at predicting the meaning of words from the context. There are many
different routes into reading, whereas spelling is rather grimly "all or
nothing". If you do not know how to spell it, no amount of intelligent
reasoning will help you and even if you have written the word correctly you
cannot be sure of that either. There are, probably as a result of this, a
surprisingly large number of people who learned to read quickly and easily,
who still read a great deal and are "literary" people, but who are often
nonplussed by spelling (Frith 1980 p.495ff.)

Those are the psychological factors which make undue reliance upon hearing an
unsuccessful strategy for learning to spell, but there are corresponding
factors in the orthography too.

There are a large number of monosyllables in English which are easy to hear
and to write down according to the simple "C is for CAT" rules of letter-sound
correspondence. But other monosyllables are common words which notoriously
give trouble by being ambiguous in their meaning when they are spoken in
isolation or by not conforming to the simple rules cited above.

There are also many polysyllables. In a paragraph, (p.186 para 4), chosen at
random of Frank Smith's WRITING AND THE WRITER (1982), written, as it seems to
me, in a formal but also readable style, there are 143 words and of these 89
are monosyllables, so just less than a third are polysyllables.

English is a language in which polysyllables have a heavy stress on one
syllable. This syllable is usually quite clearly pronounced but the rest are
not, although the degree to which they are "swallowed" varies regionally and
with different speakers.

An extreme example is the word ORDINARY. The first syllable has the stress and can be heard. The rest of the word, three syllables, is usually pronounced, by most people including those who speak "correctly" by anybody's standards, in two syllables. It may be possible to hear the consonants, although N and R are notoriously hard to hear, but only the final vowel is pronounced at all clearly; the A disappears altogether and the I might be any vowel it is so indistinct.

Even to write the Y correctly requires more than perfect hearing and careful listening; you need to know the orthographic conventions about when this sound is represented by I and when by Y.

Moreover, even the first, stressed syllable of ORDINARY gives rise to ambiguity for someone who is relying on sound only. Many speakers would not pronounce the R in it at all and there is no one sequence of letters to represent the whole syllable. It could be written AUD, as in GAUDY or AWD, as in BAWDY. When we are faced with writing it we have to draw on a good deal of linguistic knowledge which we may be unaware of possessing. We may recognise it as a Latin-type word with semantic affinities with ORDER and we may reject AUD as being to do with hearing and AWD as being Teutonic and both these as being semantically irrelevant.

We have seen from the research reported in Chapter 2 how much knowledge, skill, resourcefulness and judgment go subconsciously into everyone's reading and writing and this word ORDINARY, which is quite an ordinary word in English, is a fine example. Children in Primary School could not have that amount of knowledge and experience. to learn to write it and the many equally "unhearable" common words of English they must have a paradigm; they must see the word written correctly and have it available to refer to until they have learned its sequence of letters and stored them correctly in their visual memory.

The ambiguity of the first syllable of that word raises the problem of homophones which also pose an intractable problem for anyone relying upon hearing when trying to spell. There are an enormous number of homophones in English and many of them are also the common, monosyllabic words mentioned above as being more amenable to spelling by listening than most. Examples are MEAT/MEET, SUN/SON and everyone can think of many more. In order to deal with these it is necessary to know the meanings of the words and also to know which spelling is attached to which meaning; the sounds are identical.

Another difficulty for the listener, not confined to English but a salient feature of it, is the prevalence of consonant clusters. Bodmer (1944 p.214) says that this is a feature of Aryan languages and is absent from many other groups of languages. In the word STRAIGHT, for example, there are two groups of three consecutive consonants. Two of them are silent, so you could not hope to hear them from anyone, and many people fail to hear the often elusive R especially since it comes immediately after two more audible consonants.

Bryant and Bradley (1985 p.48) identified segments of words as presenting difficulty to pre-literate children and indeed this was the only "deficit" which they found predicted subsequent difficulty with reading and writing. They found that some children could not hear the different sounds in a string of consonants, and especially not in the correct sequence. They needed a

great deal of reinforcement of their learning of these sequences through their other senses, by seeing them and through touch as they manipulated plastic letters.

Teachers and others who have long been literate may not be as sympathetic with this difficulty as they should be because to them the separate sounds and their sequences in those consonant clusters are quite distinct and easy to hear. That is because they have learned to spell them and so can already "see" them in their visual memory. As Miller (1972 p.127) says

> You think about words very differently after you know how to
> write them than before you know how to write them.

In fact Smith and Bloor (1985 passim) make it clear that problems arise from the fact that young, pre-literate children's hearing is too good for that of their teachers. Our hearing is "fagged" (p.11) by our knowledge of spelling so that we mis-hear in a way that pre-literate children do not. They give the example of the word SPIN. The P in this word is actually pronounced like a B. The preceding S brings this about and it cannot be avoided in natural speech. Teachers hear it as P because they can spell it and the P has long been stored in their visual memory. But children, their hearing uncorrupted by literacy, hear the B sound and, having conscientiously learned their alphabet and the sounds which each of the letters of it "stands for", write down B. Teachers then, very kindly no doubt but nonetheless bewilderingly, tell them they have made a mistake, tell them to listen again more carefully this time, and the whole confusing process is repeated. They know what they heard. There are many similar cases in English spelling where adjacent sounds have the effect of altering their neighbours and it is not therefore surprising that many children begin early to lose confidence in the system and in themselves and turn their attention and energy to something they find easier and more congenial. Such children have probably by this time been diagnosed as another case of "auditory dyslexia" or, in less sophisticated circles, "a hearing problem".

If you are conscious of the existence of this problem you can observe the phenomenon for yourself. Many long-literate adults cannot hear sounds accurately when they conflict with spelling but they can perceive the sounds they are making when they speak if they attend to what is going on in their speech organs. You can feel that you are saying B in SPIN even if you cannot hear it and this kind of demonstration can be repeated with a large number of words.

In the course of my work for the Adult Literacy Scheme I conducted many training courses for our tutors and it was possible to demonstrate to them that, when spelling (and when reading) they were doing very different things from those they thought they were doing. One method was to give them a spelling test of English-type "nonsense" words. They thought they could hear the T in SITCHEN and most wrote it with a T but, in discussion, it emerged very clearly that they had done so because they had made an analogy with KITCHEN; they could not they admitted, hear any difference in sound between the TCH in those words and the CH sound in WHICH.

Other words from this "test" were FLOMP and NILED and, as I spoke them, I obscured my mouth so that the audience had only their hearing to rely on.

Many could not hear clearly the consonants, which are among the most indistinctly pronounced by most English speakers, in these words and they often asked me to repeat them with my mouth in full view. Again they used analogy with words they knew to arrive at their spellings and many were surprised to find how much they relied on sight, on visual memory and on lip-reading, to solve such puzzles.

When asked to spell the word SAUSAGE, orally this time, and then asked to explain how they had done it, the overwhelming majority had conjured up a mental image of the word and then "read off the letters in order as they "saw" them (Ehri 1980, p.338). Relying on sound alone they agreed they would probably have spelt it SOSSIJ.

There are many "party tricks" of this kind which can be used to demonstrate to people some of the techniques they subconsciously use in their reading and spelling. Usually these differ significantly from what people think they are doing and they also bring in a a far wider range of skill and knowledge than they are aware of possessing, let alone using. Because they can and do use them they are not in trouble as Bryant's and Bradley's subjects were (1980, p.370), who possessed skill and knowledge, but had to be shown that they possessed them and how to use them effectively, but, if they are trying to teach children how to read and write, the fact that their useful skill and knowledge is subconscious and that, consciously, they think they are doing something different from what they are actually doing may well bring them to mislead their pupils.

Clay (1979) reminds us of other features of print which children need to learn and which we, who learned them long ago and have forgot the process, may forget to teach them; the orientation and direction of reading, distinctions between text and pictures and between letters, words and sentences and so on. But probably the hearing discrepancy is the most pervasive and insidious of the misunderstandings which may arise between pupil and teacher.

B.3.(c). Organising the Task

> You feel you've got to take on the whole English language
> all at once (Adult Literacy Student, 1970s)

Teachers, even when armed with an effective strategy for teaching individual words and conscious of likely differences between their own and their pupils' perceptions, still face the problem of organising the task of learning to spell for their pupils.

This thesis argues for pupils to be encouraged to write freely and often and for the words to be studied to be those which appear in their writing, not chosen by the teacher or from some published list. Thus they may need help with *any* word at all. The dangers of repeated misspellings of words have been pointed out, and there is plenty of evidence for the reluctance many people feel to write words they are unsure of.

> I wanted to write QUIVER but 1 couldn't spell it so I wrote
> SHAKE instead (Adult Literacy Student 1970s)

This can lead to the choice of words becoming ever more limited and then to a reluctance to write anything.   At the same time there are many who feel despair at the thought of all the words they need to learn all at once.

The dictionary is not the answer for a young child nor for a struggling speller on the grounds that "If you need a dictionary you can't use it;   if you can use it you don't need it."   This overstates the case and we certainly hope they will come to use dictionaries, but meanwhile insecure spellers do have difficulty with identifying the first letters of words, with alphabetical order (especially within words) and with finding one word.among so many with all the detailed information that surrounds them.

In fact, although in theory the words they choose to write *could* be any word at all, in practice the huge majority of them are not.   We can tackle the words of the language in manageable amounts and in sensible sequence.

> a typical finding is that 10 words comprise about 25% of all
> children's word usage, 100 words over 60%, 1,000 words over 89%
> and 2,000 words over 95%   These figures agree very closely with
> the proportions found in adult writing.   Moreover, it is found
> that the same words appear to have similar frequencies in the
> everyday writing of both adults and children. (Arvidson 1977, p.13)

These claims are based on studies of children's free writing and of the frequency of words they and adults actually use (Schonell, 1932;   Dolch 1936; Board of Education, New York, 1953;   Freyberg, 1960).   They suggest that these 2,000 are well worth learning as soon as possible.

It was on this assumption that Arvidson produced his Alphabetical Spelling List and divided it into Target Levels, 1-7.   Learning writers who use it can write correctly 95% of the words they choose by finding them easily in the list and the Target Number beside each word informs them of its frequency in general use;   this in turn suggests how often they are likely to need it. Thus, they can copy it into their writing correctly for the present and at the same time know how important and how urgent it is also to learn it.   Level 1 are the 300 very commonest words of all, Level 7 still common but the least common of the list.

In a small unpublished study (Greig 1981) of adult poor spellers I found that their writing produced the same kinds of word-counts as this list, although it was surprising to find that many words, even Level 1, were not written at all by some students.   This seems to provide an even stronger argument for concentrating on the words they *do* choose to write, thus ensuring both that they can write them and that they also get plenty of practice with them.

My study suggested strongly that one of the most discouraging and damaging influences on those students' attempts to write was the fact that they continually misspelled very common words.   They felt these were "little, easy words" and that it was particularly stupid of them not to be able to spell them and a sign that they would never be able·to master the rest.

Many of these words are little perhaps, but they are certainly not easy, particularly for anyone "hooked on" phonics, as so many failing spellers seem to be.   It is likely that the most irregular words in any language would be

the commonest because they are of course used all the time by everyone,
however well or badly educated and whether they use Received Pronunciation or
speak in Dialect; and they are.   So, in learning to write and spell, you do
not have to take on the whole language at once but you do have to take on at
once some of its most oddly-written words.

Another way of organising the task and the one most frequently chosen is to
arrange the words to be learned in order of difficulty.   Those who have done
this seem to have had curious ideas of what constituted difficulty and
certainly found difficulty in agreeing on the subject with one another.

Moseley (in Wade and Wedell 1974) identified characteristics which he thought
made words difficult to spell and gave, as an extreme example, MYRISTICIVOROUS
because it is long, rare and has unstressed vowels which make it impossible to
hear and decide what the graphemes to express them should be.   He also
mentions "vocabulary level" as an important factor.

Vocabulary Level lists are unsatisfactory too.   One spelling test much used
for many years was Schonell's (1932), where the word CANARY comes early in the
list and the word SATELLITE towards the end, on the grounds that they were
respectively more and less familiar.   Canaries were common in 1932, but were
soon replaced by budgerigars (who never got into the lists); satellites,
though, rarely spoken of then, are now, of course, on everyone's lips,
especially children's.   Words are highly susceptible to fashion, another good
reason for the writer choosing his own.   And "vocabulary level" turns out to
be in effect frequency of use, only based on hunch rather than word counts.

In the course of my study, quoted above, I compared various materials which
had been produced with the specific aim of facilitating the learning of
spelling.   They all contained word lists and advocated learning words in
order of difficulty, easy words first, difficulty increasing as one worked
through the lists.   Many choices were bizarre:

     ECHOES, HEROES, MOTTOES, POTATOES, TOMATOES
     FLASHES, LEASHES, SPLASHES, RADISHES, RUSHES

come in Part (a) of a list of

     the easier examples suitable for younger or more backward
     children (Leonard 1972)

He has MOSQUITOES as "a word of average difficulty".   Blackwell's Spelling
Workshop (1975), on the other hand, also has MOSQUITOES, but right at the end
of its final test as a very difficult word. . PAINFUL ABSCESSES turned up
twice, in the first set of exercises in Leonard (ibid.) but under "More Tricky
Words" in Wright. (1975).   There were many similar examples in the ten
different sets of spelling materials in the study.   Remarkably few of the
words listed appeared in the Arvidson List suggesting, as does common sense,
that they are not written very often by anyone.   I found many of these
materials quite irrelevant to the students' needs.

The example from Leonard above demonstrates another principle on which many
spelling materials are based, that of placing words with similar letter-
strings together, a practice advocated long ago by Webster (B.3.a. above).

This practice has a sound rationale in that the research, as well as practical
experience, has shown that successful spellers use analogy with words they
already know to decide the spelling of those they are unsure of.   However, it
has been argued here on the evidence that spelling by analogy is a late stage
in the process of learning, partly because the early learner and the
struggling learner simply have not come across and scrutinised enough words to
be able to notice the patterns of letter-strings within them and to make the
analogies.   It may be argued that grouping the words like this encourages
them towards using analogies.   I have not found any evidence for or against
this proposition.

But even if it did encourage this practice it still does not answer the need
of the beginning pupil who is setting out to write a story.   Such a child
often wants to write about something real or imaginary which has happened to
him or her.   Often there is a friend involved.   My adult students wrote
FRIEND as often as they wrote WHICH, WOULD, BUT, FROM, GOT etc.   This word
FRIEND, with its highly "irregular" spelling, demonstrates well the
advantages of forgetting about difficulty and settling for frequency of use as
the criterion for introducing words early.

I made a detailed comparison of the organisation of the Blackwell's Spelling
Workshop and the Alphabetical Spelling List and considered the plight of
someone who wanted to write FRIEND in a story.   It is a phonically irregular
word and has to be specially learned from a paradigm.   In Arvidson the word
is Level 1, so that the system demands that it be learned at once.   In
Blackwell it occurs on Card 15 of Phase 3.   This means that pupils must work
through 806 worksheets before they come to it.   Since there is such strong
evidence of the undesirability of allowing pupils to keep on writing words
incorrectly, one cannot help feeling that FRIEND needs to be on the agenda a
great deal earlier than that - straight away in fact.   Of the 112 most
frequently written words in that study, all but five were Level 1 in Arvidson;
36 appeared in the first phase in Blackwell but 46 did not appear at all and
the rest were so far on in the programme that the students who worked with it
never reached them.   Of the 5 higher Level, frequently-written words all were
Level 2 except for HOSPITAL (Level 3), a significant finding, I thought;
these disadvantaged people had a lot to do with hospitals.

Of course the Blackwell kit, although it is called a "Spelling Workshop",
aims at much more than the Arvidson List; to reinforce the perception of
spelling patterns, to encourage a wider vocabulary and to develop the pupils'
understanding of and ability to use a range of linguistic techniques.   A list
based on frequency of use does none of these, although I did find 30 common
English spelling patterns, including some generally thought to be troublesome
(double consonants, -EIGH-,-OUGH-), among the 300 Level 1 words, so that
teachers who wish to encourage their pupils to group words by spelling
patterns can use these as "anchor" words for the groups.

There are advantages for motivation in organising the task in this way.   It
reduces drastically the number of words to be sought in a dictionary.   The
paradigms in the list provide immediate, objective, rigorous feedback for
pupils on the spelling of individual words and the Target Numbers on their
progress.   They can see for themselves if they have written words correctly
and how they are progressing up the levels.   When they have mastered the
Level 1 words, they know that they have mastered the spelling of more than

half the words they are ever likely to write.   They can also be sure that a
low level word is worth studying because it is likely to occur again and
often.   It encourages independence, since quite young and inexperienced
pupils can use it on their own, and is therefore useful in saving teachers'
time, both in class and in the assessment of pupils' spelling and in the
setting of new targets.   It enables assessment to be accurate, informative and
positive, as a simple count cannot.   For this one must know not just the
number of errors but whether they are repeated, whether previous errors have
been corrected and whether a more adventurous vocabulary is being written -
all of which makes a time-consuming task.

A great advantage for the adult students was that it alerted them to their
errors with the commonest words and those who used it stopped making those
errors;   this in turn gave them satisfaction and confidence to continue with
their studies.   Their experience compared favourably with that of six other
students in the study whose achievement in spelling did not improve over the
13 weeks of the study (although better writing was one of only four objectives
set for them by the course they were following);   in particular they made no
progress at all with the common words;   they continued to spell them
incorrectly, as they had at the beginning, throughout the period.   Their
tutors did not always notice these errors, which is not surprising because
that demands proof-reading techniques quite different from those required for
reading writing for its content.   Busy teachers cannot read every piece of
writing once for content and then again for proof-reading.   Pupils have the
time to do this and proof-reading and correcting their own work, so long as
they have correct paradigms to draw on, is a valuable part of learning to
spell.

It seems to me that programmes based on frequency of use are the only ones
that can provide the opportunity we need to arrange the spelling task
effectively so that free, adventurous writing is encouraged and the principles
advocated earlier for spelling teaching are observed.

B.4.   EMOTION AND ATTITUDES; MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATIONS

> Although the evidence is all around us, we doubt if there
> is enough general understanding of just how deeply wounded
> these inexperienced readers are, and the extent to which
> they believe school fails them (Meek et al. 1983 p.220).

The previous chapters examine the light thrown by existing research on factors
which might have influenced the progress of the pupils studied in Part A.
These factors may be classified as linguistic, psychological and pedagogical and
they all seemed to have played some part in the boys' lack of progress.
However, they cannot account for it entirely because there is no doubt that the
boys were in a tiny minority in their groups; most of the other children were
learning to write and spell, some easily and quickly, others less so but
nevertheless progressing.   It was reasonable for those surrounding them to
think that the problem resided with the boys themselves and that was what they
did think.

So teaching methods are unlikely to be the cause - or not the whole cause.   I
could not find physical or cognitive factors within the pupils themselves to
account for their failure and have also argued against blaming the orthography,
so what did go wrong?

I reported that the outstanding characteristic of both boys was their anxiety
and unhappiness both when working with me but also emerging from the reports and
accounts of them I received from others.   They also despaired both of the
writing system which they seemed unable to come to terms with and of themselves
as students of it.   They lacked motivation to learn; in fact their (strong)
motivation was to avoid their writing tasks.   They did not expect writing and
spelling to become learnable nor themselves to become able to learn them.   I
also reported that they did not think their inability to write mattered too
much, since they said they did not expect to have to do so once they left
school.   I thought that their unhappiness was caused more by their perception
of themselves as lacking an ability which was common to everyone else than by
their actual lack of an accomplishment which they really felt they needed.   And
I thought they were supported in these attitudes and expectations by the
attitudes and expectations of those around them and by the "hidden curriculum"
they imposed.   I complained of the confusion and conflict evident in the aims
and objectives of the efforts which were being made to help them and, finally,
of extremely unsatisfactory administrative arrangements.

This chapter looks at these emotional and sociological aspects of the problem.

B.4.(a).   Emotion and Attitudes:

> If you have a reading problem by the time you are seven you
> have an emotional problem too.
>   (Stevenson, personal communication).

Most people who work intimately with people of all ages who are in difficulties
with literacy are struck by the intensity of the anxiety and misery their
students display, at least when faced with a reading or writing task.   Another
feature common to most of them is their determination to conceal their

difficulties and the lengths to which they will go to do so.   Merritt (1972)
argues for the recognition of a condition, which he calls Reading Neurosis and
which he claims can be quite specific to reading and writing (the sufferer is
unaffected in other areas of life).   His argument comes from learning theory,
especially from experiments with animals (p.192), cats, sheep and the famous
"Pavlov's Dog" and by invoking probability theory (p.190).   He demonstrates
that there is a high rate of unpredictability in the responses from teachers
which children learning to read *perceive* as positive reinforcement and that,
therefore, some unlucky children, already at slight risk because of "one or more
minor handicaps" may

> ... just happen to suffer a pattern of reinforcements which
> fixates a number of errors in critical areas.   Being in any
> case at risk he (sic) suffers more than the average child
> (ibid.).

The influences on the animals' neurosis were the fact that rewards for behaviour
which had previously been consistently rewarded were suddenly witheld and the
progressive narrowing of the differences between the objects to which they were
required to make different responses until they could no longer perceive them
with confidence and respond correctly.

This agrees with Clay's argument (1972 pp.164-5) that there is always a learned
component of reading failure and that failing children

> have stopped producing many appropriate responses.   They have
> specialised rather rigidly in particular kinds of responses.

She says that in learning to read they have to apply appropriately responses
they have already learned in other contexts to this new task and also claims
that there is evidence that their behaviour becomes organised into a complex
system of functioning in the first two years of reading instruction.   If this
system is inefficient and children cling to it without being helped to correct
it soon, the problem persists and the emotional concomitants of failure and
frustration exacerbate it and make it very hard to remediate.

Clay claims, as did Bryant and Bradley (1980),   that the necessary responses are
available but the children do not always use them.

> They need to be shown what they can do. (p.370)

and for Merritt (ibid.) the crucial question is that of which responses to
suppress than of which to evoke.   Clay (ibid.) refers to the difficulty young
children may find in being taught in a group and this was a finding of Clark
(1970) who says (p.3)

> ... one has to distinguish those abilities which are *essential*
> in learning to read from those whose importance is magnified
> by the group situation ... a greater visual acuity is required
> to distinguish visual aids in a classroom than would be
> required for the reading task itself.

Modern printing (Chapter B.1.c.) can sometimes produce the blurring of
distinctions (in this case between letter-shapes or the distinctions between

word and letter) which exacerbates the difficulty of the task, in parallel to
the animals' confusion described above.

From the Case Studies I suggested that small early misfortunes may have started
the students M. and C. on their downward path and then panic and despair made it
impossible for them to change direction.   The list of symptoms evinced by the
animals cited by Merritt (above) include several which I observed in those boys
and, indeed, in many other students of literacy whom I have encountered, for
instance,

> ... resistance to entering the learning situation, ... changes
> in social behaviour ... symptoms of 'suspicion' and
> 'aggressiveness', inability to resist making incorrect
> responses, 'compulsively' stereotyped behaviour, regression
> to earlier patterns of behaviour (p.192)

I have seen people, who five minutes earlier were conversing with apparent
confidence and fluency, shake, sweat, change colour and find it difficult to
speak when asked to write something.   One Adult Literacy Student put his pencil
down.

> I can't think with a pencil in my hand.

Bettelheim and Zelan (1991), who take a psychoanalytic approach to the
understanding of reading difficulty, thought that some of their pupils were not
really failing so much as refusing.   They claim convincingly that these pupils
demonstrated that they did recognise words correctly which they read incorrectly
but that they felt compelled to alter the text for reasons which were convincing
when they were understood (pp. 130ff.)

Most of these reasons were concerned with the children's emotional responses to
the text.   Bettelheim and Zelan are critical of many Primary School reading
materials (pp. 235ff.) and they stress the importance of teachers' empathasising
with their pupils which leads them to take their responses to the text seriously
and to see them as an expression of the children's view and feelings, rather
than merely pointing out errors;   they claim that such empathy will often lead
to the children's revising their reading and producing the correct response
spontaneously because they feel that their personal input to the task is valued
(p. 156) and gain the confidence to face the emotional stress which produced the
error.

This is a phenomenon which I have observed while working with extremely
disturbed boys in a therapeutic boarding school.   They were all capable of
reading well but they were often reluctant to do so because as readers they had
no control over the content of the text and were terrified of coming across
something which would trigger appalling memories of past experiences;   they much
preferred to write because they could then control the content.   When 1 learned
about this I remembered a time when, as a child, 1 first learned about murder
and, for a while, used to scan every page before 1 read it, to see if the
frightening word was there.   It seemed to "leap out of the page" at me and this
seems to be a common experience.   I also once tutored an Adult Literacy student
who fainted when she saw the word BED;   she had epileptic fits which frightened
her and which always occurred in bed and she liked to be forewarned that the
word was coming so as to prepare herself.

The overwhelming influence of emotion on reading and writing achievement is further supported by the apparent rather surprising success of an experiment described by Lawrence (1971 pp.119-24) where counselling only (without tuition) was more effective in improving poor readers' performance than the other interventions tested, even including one (though the difference here was not statistically significant) which combined counselling with "remedial reading".

The counselling sessions with those children revealed that, although they showed no "specific symptoms of emotional maladjustment" and none of them were considered by their teachers to be emotionally disturbed or in need of treatment, they had "higher than average 'o' factor scores on the Cattell Personality Questionnaire which is regarded as an indication of

> troubled, guilt-prone behaviour associated with a poor
> self-image.

A randomly tested group of good readers in the same school all had below average scores on the 'o' factor.

These children were eight-and-a-half years old and raise the question again of whether their poor self-image caused their reading difficulty or was caused by it. If the evidence that awareness of reading failure usually begins at about seven is correct, they had known they were falling behind for about eighteen months and had had increasing, daily reinforcement of the notion that they were inferior to their peers - at least in reading, but reading is a dominant feature of school life and achievement. Significantly (Rutter 1975 p.127), children with reading difficulties in Special Schools with "no competition with normal children" are less likely to have psychiatric problems connected with reading.

However, the accounts of the counselling sessions do reveal that the children also had trouble at home and felt that they were a disappointment to their families; for several this disappointment was connected with being "stupid", but how much this had been so before they started school and how much was connected with their poor reading is very difficult to disentangle. However their reading scores improved dramatically after six months of the counselling (even without tuition) and the Cattell scores went down to average for nearly all of them.

There was a clear link between their negative self-concept and their poor literacy and both improved together.

The self-concept starts to form early but, (Jackson 1968, p.19)

> Unfortunately, most children have little choice about the
> areas in which they must perform, and suffer evaluation. ...
> although every child experiences the pain of failure and the
> joy of success long before he reaches school age, it is only
> when he enters the classroom that his achievements (or lack
> of them) become official in the sense that a public record of
> his progress begins to accumulate and he himself must accept
> that pervasive spirit of evaluation that will dominate his
> school years (1968, p.19)

Presumably, then, for a pupil struggling with the written language, the failure in that area is compounded with the beginning of the perception of evaluation and registered competition with others.   It must be a crucial and potentially distressing period.

Quandt (1983 p.121) makes the point that

> The school has, in fact, a greater impact on self-concepts
> related to writing than it does on those related to speaking,
> because speaking confidence is often largely already
> established when the child enters school.   Confidence in
> one's writing ability, however, is learned mostly at school
> because that is where the majority of the ability is learned.

It is, but there must be a difference between starting altogether to write at school and coming to school with the kind of history of writing activity described by Taylor's study (1983) of pre-school children.   One group of pupils are doing something which only happens at school, while the others are continuing to learn something they are already accustomed to their elders doing and have begun to do themselves at home.

Research asks where the self-concept comes from.   As long ago as 1958 Staines showed how children built up a picture of themselves from the remarks they heard from adults, siblings and peers and Argyle (1967 p.155) puts "the reactions of others" as "probably" the main origin of our self-concepts.   Another question, which receives conflicting answers from the research, is the persistence of the self-concept; how easily can it be altered? (Argyle 1967 p.150, Burns 1982 pp.363ff.).   Whatever one's view of that matter, it is clear that something convincing has to occur to alter it.   Poor spellers usually have little reason to alter their self-concept because they keep on spelling poorly and thus receive the most compelling and objective kind of negative feedback possible. But feedback is the key to more positive self-concepts and better success.   It is precisely because the feedback from spelling is so compelling and unarguably objective that it can be effective in reversing the poor speller's self-concept – but only, of course, once s/he is ceasing to be a poor speller.

Peters (1967 p.33) emphasises the important influence of the self-concept on spelling and thinks that Lecky's astounding assertion is right.   He says (1945 p.104) that the poor speller

> ... misspells words for the same reason that he refuses to be
> a thief.   That is, he must endeavour to behave in a manner
> consistent with his conception of himself.

There is further support from this view from Argyle (1967 p.150)

> ... the self-image, or identity, is one of the central and
> stable features of personality, and a person cannot be fully
> understood unless the contents and structure of his self-image
> are known

Certainly, significant others, even those who generally wished them well, were a great discouragement for many Adult Literacy students.   Families who came upon a relative who was trying to write but who had never put pen to paper

before would comment, not necessarily unkindly but with such astonishment that many were too embarrassed to continue. It is not only about ourselves that we build up concepts which we are then unwilling to alter. So people who become noted for being poor scholars will have difficulty having their achievements acknowledged when they improve - and often, to add to their despair, their first relapse is noticed, remarked on and regarded as merely a continuation of their intrinsic lack of ability, laziness or both.

Once there is a non-achieving self-concept in place, it is claimed that there are four options

> to feel competent
> to hide the lack of ability
> to deny the importance of the activity concerned
> to make it clear that they have not tried to succeed with it
> > Quandt and Selznick (1984 p.4)

and William James long ago (1890):

> With no attempt there can be no failure: with no failure no
> humiliation. so our feeling in this world depends entirely
> on what we back ourselves to be and to do. (p.313)

All these examples are from reading and from rather older research studies, but I have used them because of the value, as I see it, of their insights. They demonstrate the facts that, until the eighties, little research was done on writing and that much of that more recent research has concentrated on the linguistic and cognitive aspects of spelling, rather than orectic factors (Heim 1970 p.15).

If failing students continue to struggle and still do not succeed, they may well feel they have proved that they are incapable. It is natural and sensible to stop trying before that point is reached so preserving the hope that one could succeed if one really tried.

This can be the danger of well-meaning, but ineffectual or insufficient attempts at remediation. Many literacy students felt they were hopeless cases because they had had "special help" but still made no progress; but they could not tell how expert, or even how "special" this help had been.

Burns has an interesting section, too, on the influence of Teachers' self-concepts and self-esteem on their classes' achievements (p.250ff.)

> A large collection of research on 'effective' teachers
> consistently reveals that compared to 'ineffective' teachers,
> the former have higher self-esteem, feel more positive about
> themselves, are free fom self-doubt and anxiety, and have a
> positive impact on pupil self-concept and academic
> performance. (p.269)

The self-concept is not only built up but reinforced from outside. "Illiterate" is now almost the only insult to invoke a disability but still be accepted in our society, which is now much more sensitive to the hurt which casual references to other disabilities may inflict. I am sure this is because

most people take universal literacy for granted and are unaware of the many people who are so dissatisfied with their own degree of literacy that that adjective is painful to them. The reason they do not know is, again, because the condition is so painful to the sufferer that most take great trouble to conceal it. This may explain Meek's assertion at the head of this chapter. It is easy to accept someone's outer show of confidence and underestimate the turmoil within.

But too much kindness and concern, although infinitely preferable, can be unhelpful too. These were touching features of the attitudes shown to the boys in both Case Studies by their teachers and parents which, along with their confusion and anxiety, made them contribute unwittingly to the problem, because they clearly felt it would be unkind to the boys to demand too much. Both, in my opinion, benefited from the much more robust attitude I took to them and the demands I made on them, which were much greater than they had been used to but had the advantage of demonstrating that I, at least, was sure they were capable of learning to spell. It was, of course, easier for an outsider to make these demands; if I had been wrong and they could not do it my demands would have distressed them less than if they had been made by someone with a closer and more permanent relationship with them.

This attitude stems, I believe, partly from the "Theory of Talents" (Wankowski 1980 Lecture to M.Ed. Students, Birmingham), which is perhaps more a matter of folk-lore than the result of well-documented enquiry. We do seem to assume that people are born with innate abilities and take a defeatist attitude to any attempt to alter them; in fact, we seem to feel that someone who succeeds without trying is more admirable than one who has worked for success. Our education system often seems orientated towards selecting natural talent (and natural lack of talent) rather than towards discovering or developing talent.

> ... the institution of the school serves not only to educate
> a portion of the population, but to sort the student
> population as well. (Purves 1992 p.202)

Although we have these compassionate attitudes we also, if we are honest, think less of people who have difficulty in reading and writing and certainly many people are highly critical of poor spelling and "incorrect grammar" when they come across them, as quite perfunctory scanning of letters to newspapers and listening to radio will confirm. The vehemence with which these complaints are made demonstrates again how strongly our emotions are involved in our language (although most of us do not bother to learn anything about it) and how they can cloud our judgment.

Spelling in particular arouses these attitudes and conflict between teachers and parents. Parents worry when teachers do not correct spelling mistakes, although they often have excellent reasons for not doing so. Teachers may be impatient with parents' natural fears. Read (1971 p.31) speaks of "an unfortunate cluster of attitudes prevalent in our society" which may induce in parents

> ... a fear that the children's own efforts will lead to 'bad
> habits' ... and a corresponding reliance on the expertise of
> professional teachers or on sometimes complex educational
> devices that bear the stamp of expert approval

Unfortunately too, it seems that many teachers share such attitudes because they do not understand the orthography nor the child's cognitive processes well enough to be sure what to do. A constant complaint of teachers in this field is that they lack sufficient appropriate training to enable them to teach reading and writing effectively and with confidence (Arnold 1987 pp.2-3). Moreover many may not have been taught to spell nor have learned much about language themselves.

In the wider world and throughout history writing has inspired awe, fear and the segregation of elites from the general population.

It is not surprising. The permanence and unalterability of writing is daunting compared with the fluidity and ambiguity of speech, which is so much easier to repudiate later.

> The moving finger writes; and, having writ,
> Moves on: nor all thy piety nor wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.
> (The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam tr. Fitzgerald 1859, st.51)

Harris (1986 p.16) notices the important place accorded to the rather dull-looking (but doom-laden) letter among Bellerophon's otherwise much more colourful adventures. Muslims say "It is Written" to indicate the impossibility of eluding destiny. Belshazzar trembled at the Writing on the Wall. We "cast a spell" and say "It's there in black and white" and seem to have the most ill-founded tendency to believe the newspapers merely because the information they give us is written. The law, and therefore sometimes our fate, depends upon written and signed documents.

White-collar jobs have greater prestige than manual work. It seems it has long been so.

> Behold, there is no profession free of a boss - except for the scribe: he is the boss ...
> (Donaldson 1978 p.84, quoting The Satire on the Trades c. 2000BC)

The cold formality of writing can put a stop to spontaneous, creative play:

> A man of words and not of deeds
>   is like a garden full of weeds,
> And when the weeds begin to grow
>   it's like a garden full of snow ...

This children's chant continues cheerfully for another seven couplets until ...

> And when the ship begins to sink
>   it's like a bottle full of ink,
> And when the ink begins to write
>   it makes the paper all black and white
> (Lurie 1992 p.226-7)

That is the end; the black ink on the white paper has stopped the fun, broken the spell and ended the game.

Even practised, confident writers are known to suffer from "blocks" and reluctance to write is common.   But those of us who can write and do so regularly may underestimate how daunting, even thoroughly frightening, a requirement to write can be for some people.

For pupils with such negative attitudes towards the language and towards themselves as writers, continuously confirmed by the inadequacy and poor appearance of their productions and by the attitudes to them shown by surrounding adults who have great influence over their lives, it is not surprising that their expectations, and the expectations of those around them, for the future should be negative too.

B.4. (b). Motivation and Expectation:

> Motivation, I have decided, is largely an educational
> red herring, a convenient way of allocating fault.
>
> (Smith 1982 p.174)

Smith argues from the fact that often greatly desired learning does not occur; we learn best incidentally, when we are not worried that we may not be able to. This has echoes of Bennett's finding that there is a high rate of retention loss from spelling lessons and that pupils learn just as well words which they have *not* studied as those they have. (1967 p.23)

Certainly it is puzzling, though common, to find pupils who "don't want to learn" things we think they need to, but who have shown themselves keen and competent at learning many other things. Smith says the missing factor is expectation, rather not expecting not to learn than positively expecting to do so. He also speaks of sensitivity, a kind of state of anticipation and readiness which accompanies experience and causes our brains to "hook on" to some things we encounter, this "hooking" being called by him engagement; we might call it getting interested in the subject.

It is an attractive theory and seems to be supported by the Case Studies in Part A which are full of references to expectations; the boys seem to have started by expecting the spelling system to be regular in its sound-symbol correspondence and then, being nonplussed by the discovery that it was not always so, abandoned any expectation of its being systematic at all. They also did not expect to need to learn it nor to be able to do so; their teachers and parents did not seem to expect them to be able to do so either, certainly not without a struggle. The student M. in A1 seemed not to expect what he read to make sense. All were motivated, that is everyone concerned would have liked them to be able to do it, but the goals seemed unattainable. Not much was said about these expectations, but they became clear through other things that were said and done and the boys had absorbed them, unconsciously at least.

One way in which these expectations were expressed was through the
administrative arrangements for the boys' remediation, which I described and
complained about in Part A.   The delays involved in setting up the tuition, the
reluctance to allow any extra time to be given to it, the failure to make up
lessons which were missed or insist on regular practice and the talk of
requesting "examination concessions" all indicated to me and to everyone else
involved that the tuition was an acknowledgment of a problem and an attempt to
provide some consolation but, although based on a declaration of "special need",
it was not expected to make very much progress towards meeting that need.   The
underlying message was pessimistic.

Another way in which the school's expectations were expressed was through the
tasks the pupils were set, which were mostly reading and writing fiction or
writing their opinions on various topics.   Bettelheim and Zelan complain about
the material which young children are asked to use to learn to read, as does
J.R. Martin about what they are asked to write.   The complaint about the
reading matter is that it is often either meaningless and trivial or it
contradicts the children's own experience (Bettelheim and Zelan 1991 pp.235ff.).
This may be done to limit the vocabulary used and to keep the grammar and syntax
simple, which is supposed to make reading easier but actually often achieves the
opposite since this "simple" language is also too artificial for inexperienced
readers to recognise it easily.   Either way the seriousness and "reality" of
the task is diminished and the pupils are patronised by it.   If most of the
reading material they are offered is like that, they are likely to expect
reading to be an "ego-alien" (ibid. p. 47) experience with little to offer them.

Martin's complaint is also about patronising children this time through what
they are asked to do in their school writing.   He speaks of a "linguistic
conspiracy" to exclude children from learning to use the "grammatical metaphors"
which they need to write convincingly in a way that will influence their readers
(p.32).   He suggests that many teachers are disturbed by the cold impersonal
nature of writing and encourage narrative and poetic writing to counter it
(p.8), but (p.49)

> ... factual writing requires all the creativity and
> imagination we can muster if it is to succeed.   It is
> highly metaphorical.   It may be contentious.   And it
> matters in a way that stories do not.   ... Exposition
> counts, even if it has nothing to do with truth.

The choice of tasks which children are set when they are learning to write is
important for what it tells them about what is expected of them, of what writing
is and can achieve and of the way in which it is used and valued.

I argued from the Case studies that one influence on the boys' attitude to
writing was that they did not expect to have to do it once they left school.   I
felt sure that one reason for this was that nearly all the writing they did was
of the kind that is "voluntary" in grown up life, i.e. stories, poems, essay-
type pieces, none of which one is ever obliged to do once formal education ends.
Part of the reason for my feeling, it is true, is probably that, in the course
of my teaching, I have encountered real resentment on the part of many pupils at
having to produce this kind of writing, comments on the lines of "Nobody's going
to take any notice of our opinions, so why ask us to write them?" and I remember

feeling exactly the same myself at school and greatly disliking "creative writing", although I loved reading that produced by others.

This raises the question of the "audience" for which a piece is written.   Is it significant that this word, related to speech and listening rather than writing and reading, is the one we have chosen?

Teachers who love literature and want to share their pleasure with their pupils and who may enjoy creative writing themselves may not be in a good position to understand the intensity of this dislike, which does not necessarily indicate a lack of creativity on the part of these pupils;   they may well be creative but in other fields.   It seems to me to be similar to the extreme dislike of school games which many people feel.   Some people even hate Art and Drama;   why not?

This is certainly not an argument for demanding no creative work in school, it merely suggests that teachers should be conscious that this is an inhibitor for some pupils and that the tasks which are set in school do form a vital part of the "hidden curriculum", exposing the expectations which teachers have, both of the value of what they are teaching to their pupils for both present and future and of their pupils' abilities.   It is unfortunate if writing tasks fail to emphasise the importance of being able to use one's writing for the practical, humdrum purposes of daily life as well as for imaginitive and creative ones. It is extremely convenient to be able to use the written language quickly, correctly and with confidence whenever one wants or needs to, even if the content of the writing isnot inspiring.

It raises the problem of the artificiality of much of school life and activity, which has been pointed out by many people.

> In school, literacy skills are being exercised against a very
> specific background of expectations and evaluations quite
> different to those that attend the average adult transaction
> entailing reading and writing.   ... school is a complex and
> specialised linguistic arena (Levine 1986 p.8)

The trouble is, (Stubbs 1986 p.225), that "children aren't adults" and

> Certain aspects of written English are ... beyond the needs
> or experience of young children (p.229)

Earlier (1980) he wrote

> The specialized functions, especially of institutional
> writing which is the largest proportion, may partly explain
> why it is so difficult to teach pupils to write.   It is
> rare for people to have to do much writing and many people
> simply have no need to do any at all.   (p.114)

Levine (op. cit. p.17) points out that there are many transactions in society where writing is not used even though it is applicable.   He mentions shop floors.   Schools seem to me to be a prime example.   Improving little texts like "Don't Use Bad Language" and Don't Scribble on Other People's Work" are often to be found beautifully displayed on the walls, but instructions which pupils really need to know like where to get dinner tickets and how to book a

place on the next school trip are nearly always delivered orally by teachers -
often several times and with difficulty against a background of noise and
inattention.   A well-placed notice would save the teacher from this ordeal and,
infinitely more important, would make the point that written language is truly a
means of daily, practical communication which people often find very useful.
If pupils have to find a friend to read the notice to them, this makes the
further important point that they are likely to find it convenient to acquire
the skill.   They might even put up a notice themselves one day.

Stubbs goes on to say that most people who write regularly are professionals and
that they write within well-established conventions laid down by their
disciplines.   These do not exist for the pupil learning to write in school.
And he insists that

> It follows that a major task in teaching literacy must be
> to get children to understand the purposes and conventions
> of written language (ibid. p.115)

but he admits that it is difficult to provide pupils with tasks which have a
genuine, observable purpose.

However, if we cannot manage that, it is unreasonable to be surprised that
pupils who cannot master the techniques are even less motivated to learn to
write than their fellows who can.   The latter probably had the advantage of
"intrinsic" motivation, that is they enjoyed mastering the code and worked at
it for its own sake.   Reid (1992 p.205) emphasises

> ... the motivation children find in sheer mastery.   This
> can be powerfully supportive of code-orientated work.

In fact, it is common for Primary age children to invent their own "secret
codes" for fun.   This pleasure in mastering codes may be why most young
children are so tolerant of the many tedious and banal texts they are offered to
read;   adults are sometimes surprised by the intense concentration they bestow
on deciphering cereal packets, public notices etc. which adults never read
unless they have to.   Pupils who have missed the intrinsic motivation stage and
lost the desire for mastery, and who are persuaded by the tasks required of them
that the activity is valueless, by now have expectations which would deter any
normal person from struggling on.   Reading and writing have become alien tasks,
part of a meaningless school ritual and irrelevant to them and to real life.

The view of early writing which emerges from Chapter B.1.a. suggests that it
started in response to a perceived practical need and was then found to be
useful and/or interesting and worth developing.   Even so, it started with
numbers and invoices and took a long time before it was used for anything
creative or literary.   Only 10% of languages have ever had a written form
(Harris 1986 p.15) so that there must always have been situations in which this
need was not felt or did not persist, not only among tribes or nations but among
classes within the tribe or nation.

> The characteristic conception of literacy in the contemporary
> world links two fundamental ideas, that literacy is a
> universal, basic human right ... and that it is a personal
> and collective economic benefit ... (but) ...   neither notion

has particularly deep roots. For most of recorded European
history, at any rate, there has been a pronounced social
stratification of literacy with entire sections of the
population excluded, a state of affairs long regarded as part
of the natural order, and as a result, politically
uncontentious. (Levine 1986 pp. 155-6)

Children learn to speak by using speech for various purposes not as a course of
study in preparation for later use. So, if pupils do not perceive a need to
write, the best hope is that they will enjoy writing and can be persuaded to do
it for pleasure. To create the need is hard, especially in school, but not so
hard as to arrange for someone to enjoy something if they do not.

Certainly one problem in Adult Literacy was that the students could always do by
other means what anyone else would do by writing. Their lives had been
organised for living without literacy as most of ours are for living without
camels; they did not need it. There must have been strong and persistent
influences at work for the various writing systems to have developed and spread
as they did, but so far they have never spread to everybody.

The Adult Literacy students often spoke of the "irrelevance", as they saw it, of
their school experience to their later experience of life.

I came top of everything at school - except English of course,
as I couldn't read and write - so I thought I would be able to
get a good job and earn a lot quite easily. (Student 1978)

Schools, and the academic world, are frequently accused of failing to provide a
curriculum which their pupils can find relevant to real life. Part of that
problem may be our failure to understand that universal literacy has never been
the norm before in any society and it is against this cultural background, which
we may not think about but which nevertheless probably influences us, that we
try to achieve it.

Several writers comment on the past neglect of sociological aspects of writing
(Goody 1968 p.1, Cook-Gumperz 1986, Levine 1986) and have begun to remedy it but
it is a hugely complicated subject creating the problem of

what areas of potential study can safely be left out rather
than what deserves to be included. (Levine 1986 p.18)

An ambitious attempt to investigate the practices involved in teaching writing
across a variety of schools in fourteen countries is reported in The
International Study of Written Composition, whose results were compiled and
interpreted by Purvis in 1992. The author acknowledges many difficulties and
flaws, which are probably inevitable in undertaking such a study, but there are
some results from it which seemed clear-cut and which seemed also to hold good
across that range of countries, schools and cultures.

An important and interesting conclusion is the (p.196)

... persistent influence of home background on writing achievement
which was dominant, no matter what the institutional structure of the school
system was. It is explained, inter alia, by the findings of Heath (1983), that

the children from the different communities she studied, who seemed to start school showing equal ability, gradually diverged in achievement (at least as assessed at school) and her descriptions of the habits of those communities which demonstrate how the differences in their cultures and conventions brought that divergence about. I was sure that the Case Study boys' parents' refusal to accept their sons' inability to write was a vital influence on their finally beginning to improve.

Another important concept is that of the "Writing Community".

> ... the original concept of a rhetorical community ... is clearly substantiated. ... the construct that we call written composition must be seen in a cultural context and not considered a general cognitive capacity or activity
>
> (p.199)

> We should beware of talking too facilely about concepts like writing performance or writing ability. They are task dependent and culture dependent as well. (p.200)

Spelling has been found to be task dependent (Barr 1983 p.) and Purves also refers to another community, that of language teachers, who share many attitudes and purposes. It is good news if writing achievement depends on the culture and not on innate ability because, although it may be difficult to achieve, schools and teachers can aim to create these rhetorical or writing communities, especially if their attention is drawn to their existence and the need for them, whereas the problems imposed by innate inability would appear to be irremediable. The threat of a society with a rigid hierarchy based on the inexorable results of infallible testing for human potential, as portrayed in The Rise of the Meritocracy, recedes.

There have been consistent findings that differences in reading achievement depend more on the school attended than on differences among individuals. (Morris 1966, Rutter and Yule 1975 p.194, H.M.I. 1990 76.). The "good" schools doubtless use "good" teaching methods and are well organised (HMI 1990, 22), but that can be only part of the way in which they manage to create reading and writing communities which make positive demands and optimistic expectations.

The Part A boys and their parents were part of a community that did write and expected all its members to be able to do so. In another community which did not have these habits and expectations, they might have accepted their sons' failure and allowed it to continue.

One of the instruments used by the International Study was a letter which pupils were asked to write to a younger pupil offering advice on how to succeed in writing tasks in school. This revealed a rather disappointing and pedestrian view held by pupils of what teachers expected from writing assignments. There was an overwhelming emphasis on presentation (p.126), especially spelling and punctuation across all countries and the second highest score for those holding this view came from England. This may be partly because these presentational and technical features of writing are much easier to identify and evaluate, especially for the younger and more inexperienced pupils. Only the most successful writers mentioned aspects like content and style. The least successful concentrated rather on ways of pleasing the teacher, rather than how

actually to write, displaying perhaps a more developed interest in psychology than in writing and also in methods of task avoidance.

A confused understanding of the purposes of writing emerged also from the National Writing Project in Britain.   Pupils' answers to questions about purposes were revealing.

> The finger ...   because if you don't put your finger on the page when you've finished a word, it won't be any good.
>
> filling in forms ... to help us with our exams ... people will think you're thick ... I write for my teacher to prove I can write
> (1985 No. 1 pp.2-3)

These are some of the most worrying of the responses reported here and there were others which came closer to what we would consider desirable, but the report concludes - an understatement -

> ... we may be wrong to assume that when we talk about writing ... our pupils understand what we mean (1986 No. 2 p.4).

Teachers need to be aware of a possible mismatch here between their perceptions and expectations and those of their pupils as has been shown to exist with the audibility of spoken English (see B.3.b.) and other technical features of writing like directionality (Clay 1972 pp.48ff.)

In a society which expects some of its members to be outside its writing communities, because that has always been the case;   in a school which expects to have some pupils who cannot or will not learn to write because that is what everyone remembers as having always happened in the past;   surrounded by parents, teachers and friends who do not expect them to succeed because they have not been able to before and because they know there are always some who do not;   and finally not expecting to succeed themselves because they are confused and bewildered by the task and have a remorseless experience of failing in it so far, it is not surprising if some fulfil those expectations by failing to learn.

It is different when children learn to walk and talk.   They have observed older people them doing these things and they expect to do them too.   When they fall or cannot explain themselves we do not panic or anticipate problems ahead.   We pick them up, try to understand them, laugh and celebrate the progress they have made.   If they really fail to progress we do not accept this, but make every effort possible to find out what is wrong and put it right.   There are, of course, still some people who do not walk or speak effectively, but very few and all have been the subject of expert investigation and some (usually credible) explanation for their disability has been offered, some treatment (or at any rate practical help with mobility or interpretation) suggested and some prognosis made, on the basis of which the sufferer's future can be planned.

Of course writing and spelling are not like that.   They are more artificial, more abstract, less obviously desirable and they need to be taught, as walking and talking do not.   But we must wonder whether, if we held of writing and spelling the attitudes and expectations we do of walking and talking, we might not find ourselves with fewer puzzling (and suffering) failures in classrooms.

PART C: FOURTEEN PUPILS: GOOD PRACTICE:

INTRODUCTION:

After reporting on the two Case Studies in Part A and discussing the theoretical
questions which they raised in Part B, Part C. reports on a further study which I
made on a larger group of children learning to write and spell in a situation which
I describe as successful.

The aim of this study was to identify factors which contributed to this success
and to compare, as far as possible, the experience of these pupils with that of the
boys in Part A and with the findings from the research.   I hoped to identify ways
in which their experiences differed and how these differences might contribute to
an understanding of what made the learning of the fourteen so much more
successful than that of the boys in Part A.

C.1. DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

Data was collected on fourteen children in their last year in Junior School and
their first year in Secondary School.

I had formed the opinion that these schools were "successful" on the grounds
stated above (Introduction, p. 8), certainly in their effective management of
written work with these pupils.   I therefore regard my study of these fourteen
pupils as an example of "good practice" by contrast with the accounts recorded in
the two individual Case Studies of Part A, where I had found many influences which
I regarded as unhelpful to the pupils' learning.

I made a pilot study in another Primary School; I observed lessons, interviewed
teachers and pupils and asked the teachers to complete a questionnaire.

All the children were in one of two top classes (31 pupils in each) in a Junior
School in a small town in the South of England in the school year 1990 - 1991.
They then all moved to the only Secondary School in that town in September 1991.

I observed some lessons in the Junior School and interviewed their teacher about the lessons I had watched and about her policies in general and her views, with special reference to children's written work. She also, at my request, set her class an exercise in which they were asked to write a letter to a younger child in the school giving advice on how to succeed with written work there (see Gubb et al. 1987). She set the exercise and they did it straight away in about half an hour. She did not "prepare" them in any way for it, merely saying that it was to be a letter to a younger child and giving the best advice they could on the subject. They worked individually and it was a "one-draft" exercise, i.e. they wrote in ink straight on to the paper without drafting and redrafting the letter and any editing they did appeared there; it was both the first and final version. The children did not put their names on the scripts.

The resulting scripts were numbered and photocopied and the photocopies handed to me. I analysed them in the way described below and, on the basis of that analysis, assigned each author to one of the following categories:

Good, Middling-Plus, Middling, Middling-Minus, Worrying.

I then took my analysis and the scripts and discussed them with the teacher, who made some comments, which were illuminating about particular children, but agreed with my placements in the categories. We expected the "Good", "Middling-Plus" and "Middling" children to cope with their written work in the Secondary School, but were concerned about two rated "Middling-Minus" and five rated "Worrying".

One child, all of whose work was very poor and who had a Statement of Special Needs, was not included in the study. She had been able to write a few lines only with a great deal of help from her Support Teacher; she did not move on to the same secondary school with her classmates and is now attending a Special School, so she would not have been available for this study.

At this point the teacher attached the names of the children to the numbers she had put on their scripts, so that I could identify them in the Secondary School.

In the Secondary School the children were distributed among 7 groups of 23 or 24 pupils. These groups were mixed in every way. The children from each of the "feeder" schools were distributed evenly among them, making four or five from the class I had observed in each group; boys and girls were distributed almost evenly (10/13 being the largest discrepancy) and the groups were of mixed ability, some previously successful and some unsuccessful in each group.

I had originally intended to study twelve children, but altered the number to fifteen because of the way the children I had previously observed were distributed among the groups. Out of the seven groups three each contained five of those children and in each of these three groups there were at least one who had seemed to me (and to their teacher) in the Junior School to be high achievers, as far as writing was concerned, and at least one who had seemed to be struggling with it. It would have been hard to think of sensible criteria on which to eliminate three of the "middling" children from the study and, since I needed to obtain the co-operation of the children, their teachers and their parents, I felt it would be helpful to be able to say that these fifteen had been selected simply because they had been at both schools; any selection could have aroused concern and encouraged speculation about what I was looking for, which would not have been helpful. It was also useful to have extra subjects available in case someone was "lost" to the

study through moving away, unwillingness to co-operate or other vicissitude.   In the event one girl, categorised as "Worrying", did move away in the Christmas holidays, so the final number studied was fourteen.

Group 1 (13 girls and 11 boys) contained two girls and three boys whom I studied. One girl and one boy were rated "Good" in the Junior School and one boy "Worrying". One girl was rated "Middling-Plus" and one boy "Middling-Minus".

Group 2 (11 girls and 13 boys) contained three girls and two boys.   One girl was rated "Middling-Plus" and two "Worrying" (it was one of these girls who left the school).   Both boys were "Middling".

Group 3 (10 girls and 13 boys) contained two girls and three boys.   One girl was rated "Good", one boy "Middling-Plus", one girl "Middling", one boy "Middling-Minus" and one boy "Worrying".

Table VIII summarises the distribution and categories of the pupils I studied.

****

TABLE VIII:		DISTRIBUTION OF PUPILS TO BE STUDIED								
GROUP	GOOD		MIDDLING+		MIDDLING		MIDDLING-		WORRYING	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
1.	1	1	1				1		1	
2.			1		2					1
3.		1	1			1	1		1	

Total: 14.

****

I observed lessons with each of the groups as follows:

Group 1:   English, Science, Geography and Religious Education.
Group 2:   English, Design/Technology, Geography and Religious Education.
Group 3:   English, Science, Geography and Religious Education.

I had wanted to study English, Science and Geography for each group because these subjects offered a good prospect of covering a range of writing demands. Presumably Science would focus more on transactional writing with an emphasis on reporting and a demand for accuracy and conciseness but not creative and reflective writing, which I expected to find in the English lessons.   I wanted to observe History lessons, but I learned that the history would be taught to all three groups

by a probationary teacher.   The school did not wish to place extra stress on a
new teacher and I wanted to study teachers who were experienced and were used to
carrying out the policies of the school.   This was also the reason why I did not
study Science lessons with Group 2;   they had been assigned to a probationary
teacher for this subject also.   I felt that C.D.T. would make the same sorts of
demands as Science.   Geography can be considered to be a subject which "bridges"
the Arts/Science divide, so I felt those would be useful lessons to observe.

I also asked for the Religious Education lessons because I felt that that subject
would make writing demands similar to those of History in the sense of requiring
the expression of opinion based on written documents and the arguing of cases.
Moreover, the same teacher taught R.E. to all the groups (otherwise there were no
teachers who taught more than one of the groups for any of the subjects under
consideration) and I thought that she might offer an "extra" perspective by knowing
and teaching all the pupils in my study.

My intention was to observe three lessons for each group in each chosen subject,
making thiry-six lessons in all.   The characteristics of the lessons in which I
was interested are described below in C.2, as is the method of analysis.   In the
event I watched thirty-nine lessons.

When the observations were completed, I interviewed all of the teachers concerned.
The objectives for these interviews were to try to elicit from those teachers their
aims as far as their pupils' written work was concerned, their attitudes towards
that work and towards their pupils and their expectations of them, in particular of
the fourteen pupils I was studying.

I asked for, and received, permission to study the pupils' exercise books, after
they had been marked by the teachers.

I asked all the teachers in all the schools (apart from Nursery Schools) in the
town in which the study was made to complete a questionnaire.   These constituted
a part of the investigation of the two schools in the study, but the other three
schools were included because one of them, an Infant School, provided most of the
pupils of the Junior School, and the other two, full Primary Schools, most of the
pupils of the Secondary School in the study.   I wished to find out whether there
were any differences in teachers' views which related to the school in which they
taught or whether the attitudes and expectations which emerged from the
questionnaires were similar throughout that town.

I was given permission to interview the fourteen pupils.   I invited each to bring
a friend because I thought the children would feel happier with a friend there and
I considered that the friend in each case might have some valuable opinions to
express.   A schoolfriend is certainly part of the emotional and motivational
environment of almost any schoolchild and likely to have an influence on the pupils
to be studied.

Finally I interviewed the parents of each of the fourteen children.   Three were
single mothers and the fathers of two others were not available for interview, but
I interviewed the other nine couples together, some with their children present,
others not.

The aim of all these observations and interviews was to shed light on:

What writing activities took place in typical lessons attended by these children.

What explicit demands were made of them and what advice and help they were given.

How they performed when carrying out these tasks.

How their teachers perceived both the writing tasks and the pupils' abilities and achievements.

How the children perceived the tasks and their own abilities and achievements.

How "significant others" perceived the tasks and the children's abilities and achievements.

The expectations of the tasks and of their ability to perform them held by both the pupils themselves and by the "significant others".

All this data was then analysed and studied with the aim of identifying factors which might have influenced these pupils' success in learning to write and spell. The rationale for the choice of questions is given in C.2. below.

C.2. THE RATIONALE FOR THE QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:

1. What written tasks were set?

I recorded, as accurately as possible, what the teacher said when setting the task and consigned it to a category based on those described by Gubb et al. (1987, pp.3-6 & 56), those described in Gorman et al. (1981, 4.11 & 4.31) and those described by Barr (1983, p.5).

The grounds for these comparisons are that different writing tasks can elicit very different standards of writing competence from the same pupil, both in general fluency, accuracy and "correctness of usage" and, specifically, in spelling. Both Gubb and Gorman found that pupils' mastery of language, not only of subject matter but also of aspects of the written code itself, varied according to the requirements of different tasks and Barr (1983, p.176) found a greater difference in the performances of individual spellers working on different tasks than she did between "good" and "poor" spellers on the same task. Some caution has to be applied to this finding because of the difficulty of providing a convincing test of good and poor spelling. Barr herself considers using "decontextualised" words to be an unsatisfactory way of assessing spelling competence but those are at present the material on which spelling tests are based, so that the "goodness" and "poorness" of her spellers were assessed in this way. Nevertheless, the influence of the type of task on her subjects' spelling is a striking and important finding which justifies close attention to the types of task set.

I was allowed to look at the pupils' written work and their teachers' marking of it. One important question was how far the pupils had perceived the task in the way which the teacher intended and whether that was the task they had fulfilled.

Personal experience of talking to teachers and pupils suggest that there is often a misunderstanding of what is to be valued and Gubb (P.56 & Purves p.126) confirms this suggestion. Pupils seemed to be overwhelmingly concerned with presentation, although teachers usually claim to be concerned much more with content and style and Gubb found that this was an even more pronounced tendency among the poorer writers (ibid.)

Categories for tasks were based on Gubb et al. (1987 pp.3 - 6) with the addition of Dictation and Worksheets. These last two are very different kinds of writing from Composition. Barr (1983, p.132) found significant differences in pupils' spelling achievement on dictation tasks from that on other tasks, which makes it important to have a separate category for dictation and it would also be important to know how much work was done on gap-filling, choosing words from a limited list and similar exercises in which the pupils had little opportunity to choose the material or vocabulary and in which they would often be using isolated words. It is important to distinguish between exercises where the pupils have the opportunity to choose the style of writing and, especially, the words to use and those where these are chosen for them; such exercises were not included in the international study, but there the researchers set the tasks which were all composition by the pupils.

The categories of Tasks, therefore, were:
    Composition, divided into Pragmatic, Summary, Description, Narrative,
    Persuasive Writing, Reflective Writing, Free Composition.
    Dictation
    Worksheet/Gap-filling-type Exercises.
    Other

2. How often were they set? How much time did they occupy?

It was important to know the proportion of school time spent in writing. Of course, as I was not observing all the lessons, I had to find out what went on in the lessons at which I was not present. The frequency of writing tasks and the time spemt on them must be an important indicator of the importance which the teachers concerned give to writing. My own experience has often been of great reluctance on the part of some teachers to set written work and even greater reluctance on the part of many pupils to do it. They would also indicate the teachers' views of the amount of time and practice which pupils need in order to gain mastery of the written code. As far as spelling is concerned, my previous work (unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation 1981, p.35) and general experience suggest that some spelling problems evaporate once the pupil starts to write regularly, frequently and for a significant length of time on each occasion.

3. For what purposes (apparently) were they set? Were these purposes explained and, if so, how far and how clearly? Was the concept of an "audience" raised and/or discussed?

For these questions it was important to record, as accurately and fully as possible, what the teacher actually said while setting the work. I interviewed each teacher whose lessons I observed and could, therefore discuss these questions to complement my observations.

There could be a wide range of purposes for which teachers set written work and
one might divide them by Frank Smith's (1982, p.19) distinction of Composition and
Transcription.   This study is concerned with transcription, but I needed to know
how far the teacher's purpose was to increase the pupils' powers of thought,
argument, imagination or creativity and/or the range of their knowledge or was
concerned with the way in which they express themselves and their mastery of the
written code.   Gubb et al. (1987, p.56) have categories labelled Presentation,
Organisation, Content, Process, Style and Tone, Audience and Classroom Tactics, which
they used to analyse their subjects' responses to a task which required them to
advise a younger pupil on the features involved in writing a successful
composition;   thus, although the content of the response came from the pupils, the
naming and differentiation of the categories were those of the researchers.

I used the categories found in Gubb et al. as a basis for my own in this inquiry,
but with some additions, omissions and modifications.   The Presentation category
is sub-divided into Spelling and Punctuation, Appearance (neatness), Length, Format
(title, layout), Grammar and General.   My interest is in Spelling and so it would
be a vital category to be concerned with and would also be considered separately
from Punctuation.   Spelling is, however, intimately connected with Handwriting
(Schonell 1942, p.332, Peters 1967, p.19 & 1992, pp.220-3) and Frith et al. (1980,
p.2) study it in "historical, linguistic and cognitive context", suggesting that much
else, and certainly Grammar, is involved.   Neatness is relevant;   Peters (1975,
p.14) claimed that good spellers come near the beginning of a scale which runs from
"pedantic" through to "careless".   One would expect neatness to be at the pedantic
end of that scale too, but here it could not be considered synonymous with
handwriting, as in Gubb et al. (p.56), because of the familiar phenomenon of very
neat handwriting which is illegible and another of handwriting deliberately made
illegible (I suspect) in order to obscure uncertainty about spelling.

Length is an important category to include because personal experience suggests
that pupils (and others) are often anxious about the amount they are expected to
write and feel more secure (and therefore perhaps better motivated?) if they are
given limits rather than an open-ended task in terms of length.

Gubb has sub-categories under Organisation (p.59), but for my purposes these would
be irrelevant and I felt the need to keep the number of categories to be decided
upon and recorded within manageable limits.   However, it did seem to me to be
necessary to record whether the teacher was concerned in general with the
organisation of the piece of writing when it was set.

Again, it will be important to know how often and how far the teacher was
concerned with Content, but, as with organisation, sub-categories do not seem to me
to be useful.

My categories, under Purpose, then, are:

    Spelling, Punctuation, Handwriting, Neatness, Grammar, Length, Organisation,
    Content, Editing, Lexical Choice, Other

The question of whether the pupils had any idea of writing for an "audience" is
also important.   It is unnatural, at least early in life before one is in the habit
of writing reflectively or discursively, to be asked just "to write" and the
artificiality of much schoolwork, where the pupils write to tell the teacher what
the teacher has already told them has been pointed out.   On the other hand, young

children talk to themselves a good deal and probably are happy to write for themselves (Taylor 1983, passim) but, when they are obliged to write in school, it may be very important for them to know for whom they are supposed to be writing or to be asked to envisage an "audience" for their work.

4. What advice was given about the work? Was the work discussed using metalanguage or otherwise?

I kept as full and accurate a record as possible of what the teacher said. Scribner and Cole (1981 p.134) and Cunningham (1988, p.471) suggest that there may be an important connection between the use of metalanguage and successful performance on written tasks. It has certainly always seemed curious to me that the one area of education in which technical terms are often considered "taboo" is English Language, even more since Brumfit (personal communication) pointed out that highly technical terms are used in the teaching of Literature; this embargo may increase pupils' and teachers' feelings that writing is mysterious and difficult and to be undertaken successfully only by an elite.

The annex in Gubb et al. (1987 pp 162 - 183) gives four accounts of lessons which were intended as preparation for discursive writing tasks to be undertaken by pupils. The accounts include transcriptions of recordings of parts of the lessons and accounts of subsequent discussions of them with both pupils and teachers. These lessons seem to have been almost exclusively concerned with content, with providing the pupils with information and eliciting their own "ideas" through question and answer sessions in whole classes. The authors say:

> However, none of the teachers spent any more than a moment or two
> talking about the particular organisation and format that discursive
> writing entails; it was assumed that once the issues had been set
> out and explored, more or less, through discussion, there was little
> more that could be done to help pupils in the transition to the
> written composition. (p.180)

Thus, they seem to have spent much more time and effort in these "discursive writing lessons" learning about the topic than learning about writing.

It was important to know whether the teacher advised the pupils on how much time to allocate for the work and what kind of preparation, if any, to make for it; if it was set as homework, whether any preparation was done in class beforehand and, if so, exactly what and how; how much choice the pupils had in the way they tackled the task; were the number of pages or number of words to be produced specified? was there any indication of whether quality or quantity of writing would be more highly valued in the assessment of the work? or any other indication given of how it would be assessed?

Some of these questions overlap with earlier ones. The same categories of kind of task and purposes for which it was set would apply, but to answer the present questions I needed to know whether the teacher had not merely stressed the importance of certain features, say, spelling, but had given actual advice on how to achieve success with that feature.

The subsequent interviews which I held with teachers and pupils were important as supplements to the answers to these questions which I obtained from observation.

It would be easy to conclude that something important had been left out of the preparation for writing, when it had, in fact, been fully covered in previous lessons or when the teacher intended to cover it in later lessons. Or the teacher might have a deliberate policy of allowing mistakes to arise first in order to use these as the basis for the next lesson.

5. Was the work compulsory for all pupils?

I think this is an important question because I have received the impression (and, in the case of Student C. in Part A, the certainty) that a lot of written work which is set is just not done by some pupils and there must be some who are quite unable to do it. It seems to me that attitudes and expectations, and consequently effort, must be very different in a classroom where it is taken for granted that there is no escape (apart from absence for certified unavoidable reasons) from any work that is set from those found in a classroom where the teacher, ultimately, cannot insist on the work being done. Barr (1983, p.130) had to leave a small proportion of pupils (11-12-year-olds) out of her study of spelling, although she included several whose spelling made their work indecipherable, because they just could not write at all and the Adult Literacy Scheme is full of people who claim, convincingly, to have got through school without ever doing any writing; this implies to me that there must be a significant number of such pupils in many schools. Chatting to teachers usually elicits the information that they have such pupils in their classes and that they do not insist on their writing because they cannot.

Whether such pupils existed in the classes I observed and how the teacher dealt with them seemed to me to be a very important question. Was this the moment when they were withdrawn for remedial teaching? Or did they have to "try" to do the written work? If so, were they given any "special" help or any help at all? If so, was this by the teacher or by a fellow-pupil or by whom? Were they allowed to "get on with something else" instead? If so, what? Was attention drawn to their non-participation in any way or were they dealt with unobtrusively? Were they grouped with fellow-non-writers or did they work alone? Over time did any pupils become non-writers or change from being non-writers into writers?

Discussion of such pupils with the teacher would be likely to give much insight into the purposes, attitudes and expectations which informed that classroom and the teacher's work.

6. Were the pupils allowed/encouraged to work collaboratively or were they required to work alone?

The pupils interviewed by Gubb et al. (1987, p.180)

> felt that their time would have been more profitably spent in
> talking about the topic themselves, rather than in listening to
> their teacher talking about it.

However they made it clear that among themselves they would still have been talking about the *content* rather than the actual writing of it, which suggests that, at least in those four schools, the process of writing was seldom, if ever, discussed. Even if discussion is limited to content alone, there would surely

still be more discussion, a greater volume and spread of ideas and a wider active
participation from the pupils if they worked on this preliminary phase in groups
for some of the time at least.

Stubbs (1980, p.99) has commented on the unnaturalness of much written work in the
classroom and the written tasks set by the International Association for the
Evaluation of Educational Achievement have been criticised for their irrelevance to
the kind of tasks pupils are likely to be asked to do in later life.   Many writers
have commented on the fact that the "one-draft examination-type essay" exercise
still seems to dominate writing activity in schools.   It may be hard for most
people to work alone in most circumstances and harder still the younger they are
and the more daunting the task they are facing.   People like teachers, who have
long been literate and who are seldom required to write without having a very
clear and understandable purpose for doing so, may have forgotten how daunting a
task writing in school can be and how comforting and encouraging it can be to have
a friend or friends working with you, at least in the early stages.   Good practice
would seem to demand more "exploratory" types of writing sessions, the class
working collaboratively in pairs or groups and discussing, criticising and editing
one another's work from the literary point of view as well as the content.   They
can then produce a final version on their own.

This group work, as well as being in itself good practice, may well provide some
answer to the problem of the heavy marking load which the setting of frequent
written work brings with it.   That is, if more learning opportunities were created
for pupils on how to write each time they did a writing exercise, by discussing
different aspects of their writing with one another and by working together to
produce pieces of work, teachers could mark only the final product of much useful
work.   The very discussion of marking and of the criteria of "correctness",
elegance and appropriate style by the teacher with the class would be very much
part of the learning process and would probably result in less volume of writing in
final drafts, but also in scripts which were more purposefully and succinctly
written and, therefore, easier and quicker to mark.

On the other hand, writing has to be, finally, the work of one person.   Even if
there has been collaboration in the composition of the content of it, the final act
of writing cannot, physically, be done collaboratively and there are powerful
arguments for pupils' taking responsibility (along with the credit) for the final
result.   There is an example in Part A of the student C. contributing to
discussion and composition, but never doing the writing; he was usually the
Chairman of the group and took care to appoint someone else as "the scribe".   This
habit and the way in which it was allowed to persist must have had a strong
influence on his steadily growing reluctance, and then inability, to write at all.
Both collaborative and individual writing are necessary and can usefully occur in
the same piece of work at different stages of it.

7.   Were the pupils allowed/encouraged to draft and redraft their work or were
they required to produce one draft only?

The artificiality of the "first-draft is the final-draft" exercise has often been
pointed out.   Shakespeare is said never to have "blotted a line", but he often
wrote in a hurry, certainly made some mistakes and was, in any case, unusually
gifted.   Most people writing a piece to which they attach importance expect to
make several rough drafts and to do a good deal of editing before producing a
final fair copy with which they are satisfied.   This applies to many experienced

and accomplished writers and one would expect it to apply even more to young and inexperienced pupils whose present task is to produce a good piece of writing and who are supposed to be learning the skill at the same time.

In many schools, by contrast, children are asked to write in ink and in an exercise book.   They cannot, therefore, erase what they have just written, except by ugly lines through the words (modern "tippex-type" erasers are a great improvement, but still not perfect) and they have little room for corrections; if they do do much correcting the work will be cramped and untidy and, very likely, illegible. Tearing pages out of your exercise book is usually greatly disapproved of in schools and it is hard to do that neatly.   The exercise, then, often becomes one in which the most that one can do is make a few notes on a "rough" piece of paper and each sentence, if possible each paragraph, must be finally composed in one's head before it is committed to paper.

This question is closely connected to the previous one about working collaboratively and to the question about metalanguage.   Purely arithmetically, in a class which spends significant amounts of time trying out ways of expressing their thoughts and discussing them using (as they surely must) some kind of technical language) in small groups each pupil is likely to be confronted with a great deal more "input" about language than in one where there is only two-way discussion between the teacher and a few members of the class, even when that discussion is concerned with how rather than what to write.

8. How was the work as a whole assessed and marked?

I was able to examine written exercises and their marking and to find out what the usual practice is about marking for these teachers and classes.   I wanted to know
     Did the assessment focus on both content and manner of writing?   Was one of these emphasised more than the other?   Was it clear whether marks and/or comments referred to content or manner?
     Which features of the manner of writing were marked and commented upon?
     Was the marking all or mainly negative, i.e. spelling and grammatical errors noted, but correctness and felicities of expression ignored?
     Were grades awarded?   If so, one grade for the whole piece or separate grades for content and manner?
     How were matters of taste dealt with?   Was there a clear distinction between the marking of such features (style, choice of vocabulary etc.) and items which were unarguably correct or incorrect (spelling, verb tenses etc.)

9. Was the work discussed?

Did the teacher merely "give back" the work to the class?   If so, were there detailed comments written on the scripts by the teacher?

Did the teacher discuss the pupils' work generally with the whole class and refer to frequently recurring strengths and weaknesses in it?
Did s/he quote passages from particular pupils' work and, if so, were these pupils identified?
Did s/he discuss pupils' work with them individually, and in how much detail?

Was the work referred to or used again in any way? Was it kept? How far was
it seen to be valued or used as a basis for further work or for comparison with
previous or future written work?

10. How was the spelling assessed and marked?

    Were spelling errors indicated in any way?
    Were they underlined, crossed through, noted in the margin or otherwise?
    Were they indicated in red or otherwise?
    Was the correct spelling given?
    Was any credit given for words correctly spelled?
    Was any credit given for correct spelling of previously misspelled words?
    What comments were made about the spelling?

11. Was the spelling discussed?

    With the whole class?
    With individuals?
    How much emphasis was placed on discussion of the spelling compared with
other features of the writing?

Some teachers do not indicate spelling mistakes at all, either because they are
unsure of the spelling themselves or because they are looking at other features of
the writing or because they have a settled policy of ignoring spelling. I believe
this ignoring of spelling mistakes, for whatever reason, to be very unhelpful. It
seems to me quite reasonable for a pupil who has handed in a piece of writing and
has received it back with no mark or comment on the spelling to assume that the
spelling is correct. Many of my erstwhile Adult Literacy students had had this
experience and had only discovered how incorrect their spelling was when they were
called upon to do "real" writing at work or in their social life. They had felt
shocked, embarrassed and resentful that they were not informed at school.

At the same time it is often argued, quite rightly in my view, that to scatter red
ink all over a piece of writing which someone has laboured over and which may be
very successful as far as features other than spelling are concerned is deeply
discouraging and conveys a false impression of the worth and value of the
achievement - and also of what is important about writing.

There is, however, a middle way between these undesirable extremes and it seems to
me vital that the pupil should be informed that the word is not spelled like that
and of how it is spelled and that the provision of this information need not
disfigure the script nor detract from any praise accorded to it. My favoured
method is to write the correct word above the misspelled one in pencil, but there
are doubtless other equally helpful and unexceptionable methods. I also think it
important that any comments should be as unemotional as possible and, in
particular, free of moral opprobrium, which sometimes seems to creep into comments
on pupils' spelling and which, I am sure, causes resentment or at least heightens
emotion in a situation where it is very unhelpful. Brumfit (1980 pp.9-13) gives
excellent advice on this subject.

12. How are words selected for special study?

Peters (1967,pp.36-39) and Arvidson (1963, p.15) have stressed the importance of choosing words for pupils to study which they have chosen to use themselves in their own writing and which they are likely to need often.   My own study with adults (1981) confirmed this view.   Otherwise the task seems enormous, chaotic and unmanageable and, above all, pupils do not get the reinforcement of constant practice with those same words and are likely to forget even those they were once sure of.   This question was discussed in B.3.c. above.

Spelling lists which are commonly given to children have been found very often to contain words which seldom do actually appear in writing, or at least in children's writing - often they have been compiled from reading matter and no account has been taken of the fact that reading and writing vocabularies are very different for learners.   As Arvidson shows (ibid.), they seldom offer pupils the words they need at the time when they need them.

I believe that recurrent misspelling of the "small", common, "irregular", grammatical words ("would", "which", "their"/"there") is an indication of a serious spelling problem and is very demoralising for the pupil.   It is easy for a reader to overlook these words - indeed it is likely that this is a common reason for their being so often misspelled.   Relearning them correctly is very hard, dull work. For all these reasons it is better that such mistakes should be "picked up" early.

Many spelling lists claim to grade words according to "difficulty".   An example is the placing of the word, FRIEND, in Blackwell's Spelling Workshop, which is discussed above in B.3.c., where it is concluded that it comes much too late in the sequence to be useful to the learner.   Focussing on these common words has an added motivational advantage that the pupils know, because they will use them often, that they are well worth learning and that they will use them.

Some of the reluctance to teach spelling may arise from a revulsion against the traditional practice of insisting on every word misspelled being written correctly three times.   The temptation for pupils faced with such a task must be to write less and to be careful to write only words they are sure of.   Indeed girls have the reputation of being better spellers than boys, but Barr found that her girls did indeed make fewer mistakes than her boys, but only by frequently reusing the same words;   the boys took risks with a wider vocabulary and made more mistakes.

The choice of words to be studied then should be made carefully in a principled way which can be understood and accepted by pupils and which encourages them to be adventurous in choosing words as well as careful about spelling them.

13.   How were the pupils taught to learn the words chosen?

Methods of learning individual words are discussed in B.3.a. above.   The important thing seems to be to draw the pupil's attention to the different codes, to emphasise patterns, similarities and contrasts and, above all, to persuade the pupil to look attentively at the words and to get interested in them.   I observed and recorded advice given to the pupils on how to study and learn words and discussed the question with them, their teachers and their parents.

14.   What were the consequences for the pupils of producing good/poor/no written work as set?

This seemed to me important because of my experience, quoted above, with Adult Literacy students who had grown up unaware of the importance of reading and writing and with the avoidance tactics described in Part A. I think it is difficult for literate people to understand that the value of literacy is not obvious to everybody, especially not to preliterate children. I feel that teachers are sometimes moved by kindness not to insist on writing from pupils who seem reluctant or incapable and who they suspect may have some physical or psychological deficit which makes the work especially hard for them. Moreover teachers do not have the authority, ultimately, to insist upon work being completed, unless they are supported by the parents.

C.3. THE RATIONALE FOR THE ITEMS IN THE TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE:

The topics for the Teachers' Questionnaire were chosen because experience or perusal of the research literature suggested that the teachers' attitudes to and perceptions of them would influence their views on spelling and how to teach it.

The Questionnaire is found in the Appendix but, for convenience, the questions are repeated below:

PART I: THE PUPILS Below are nine factors within pupils themselves which may be thought to affect their ability to write and spell. How important do you feel these are? Respondents were asked to rate them on a scale of 1 - 5, Unimportant - Crucial.

(a) Eyesight; (b) Hearing; (c) Articulation; (d) Neurological Function/Dyslexia; (e) Memory; (f) Intelligence; (g) Understanding of the Task; (h) A "Gift" for Spelling; (i) Amount of Reading Practice.

Is there anything else which should have been included in this list?

(a) Eyesight: Controversy about the importance of vision in difficulty with written language is summarised by STEIN (1991, p. 31ff.) and the physiological aspects of the problem are presented by QUIN and MACAUSLAN (p.51ff.). Common sense suggests that eyesight and hearing should be checked in a child who is finding reading or spelling difficult, but it seems much easier to check acuity than perception, defects in which are often claimed to have passed unnoticed.

(b) Hearing: This seems to me to be a particularly interesting topic. Great emphasis is often laid on hearing for two reasons; because anyone who believes in the overriding importance of phonics, as many seem to, must of course be concerned that pupils can hear accurately what the sounds are in order to be able to express them in alphabetic symbols; and because an inability to distinguish sounds in toddlers has so far been the only reliable predictor of difficulty with written language (Bryant and Bradley 1985, p.123). Although the research is authoratative, the inferences drawn from it are sometimes unfortunate, because the response seems often to focus on training the defective hearing. My experience with adults showed that this was very hard to do and it is one of the ways in which adult perceptions differ from those of the pre-literate (the adults can often "see" the words in their mind's eye) (see Chapter B.3.b.). A great many people found it difficult to hear sounds accurately (often the question also arose whether they had been pronounced accurately) without having their hearing supported by a visual stimulus. Bryant and Bradley themselves advocate the use of movable plastic letters to reinforce hearing (a multi-sensory approach, bringing in touch as well) (ibid.). The respondents' views on hearing would, I felt, be particularly revealing.

(c) Articulation: Concern about people's own speech in connection with spelling is related to hearing and seems to be widespread. It was certainly a pre-occupation of many tutors of the Adult Literacy Scheme in the seventies and of some teachers in the pilot study. They felt that if people spoke "incorrectly" it would make it more difficult for them to spell correctly. The inevitable implication of such an opinion is that, in order to improve someone's spelling, one would have first to "correct" their speech. We have learned to eschew notions of "correctness" in speech (Milroy & Milroy (1985, p.80) and, in any case such an attempt would be doomed. Moreover no dialect relates regularly to conventional spelling; the influence seems rather to be in the other direction, i.e., spelling influences pronunciation (Ehri 1980, pp.335-6).

(d) Neurological function/dyslexia: Dyslexia was mentioned as an explanation of the poor achievement of the boys in Part A, although no attempt was made to define the disorder and likely cause. No suggestion of malfunction appeared in the psychologists' reports on them and I could find nothing to suggest abnormal functioning. There is a vast literature on the subject and many anecdotes and myths, but for many people it seems to mean simply a difficulty with handling written language which we cannot explain. However, teachers' views of dyslexia, what it is, how it affects learning, if and how it can be remediated must make a difference to the way in which they deal with failing spellers who puzzle them.

(e) Memory: I included this item because of pupils I have come across, and about whom I have been told, who seem to learn things well but cannot remember

them.   It often seems to be perceived as a discrete factor applicable to all activities and one teacher interviewed in my pilot study was emphatic about this.   She thought it was a single faculty, inborn and unalterable, a notion which seems to me to have sombre implications for teaching and learning.   I have received the impression that memory failure is strongly related to fear and think of it in connection with the Reading Neurosis postulated by Merritt (1972, p.191).

(f)   Intelligence: One explanation offered for the problems of the student M. in Part A was that he was "not very bright".   This seemed to me quite implausible for two reasons;   he was bright enough to do everything else required of him at school and was particularly admired for his thoughtful contributions to discussions;   although he was established as an underachiever in test conditions, his IQ when tested was recorded in the Average range. Although there is general concern about large numbers of poor readers, no-one suggests that the average pupil cannot read.   This question is related to the earlier one about dyslexia because dyslexia is officially diagnosed by a discrepancy between a person's "reading achievement and intelligence", the implication being that an intelligent person should be able to read well. This diagnosis is criticised by Stanovich (1991, pp.125ff.), who calls it

> the genesis of so many of the conceptual paradoxes that
> plague the concept of dyslexia (p.126)

He finds listening comprehension much more closely correlated with reading difficulty (p.134).

Intelligence was mentioned as an overwhelmingly influential factor, early on and frequently, in every interview and conversation l held in the pilot study.

(g)   Understanding of the writing task seems often to be taken for granted by literate people, but the boys in Part A did not understand it and several Adult Literacy students claimed not to have "seen the point" of writing when they were at school.   The problem is discussed in B.4.b. above.

(h)   A "Gift."   I have encountered among many people, in general conversation as well as in discussions about spelling, an almost superstitious feeling that the ability to spell correctly is a kind of "God-given" talent and that those who lack it can do little to help themselves.   This view seems to be held by no less a person than a recent past Chairman of the National Association for the Teaching of English, Bob Bibby who writes

> ... some people are "cursed" with poor spelling.   I am
> one of these disadvantaged few ... (T.E.S. 23/11/90)

Experience suggests that many people feel that it is a characteristic which "runs in families".   This is an unhelpful belief because it releases all concerned from any feeling of responsibility for trying to improve a sufferer's spelling.

(i)   Reading Practice is frequently thought to be an important factor in the learning of spelling and poor spellers are exhorted to do more reading. Certainly writers need paradigms and their reading is a good place to find them.   But quick, bright readers, who are also poor spellers, are a fairly

common phenomenon investigated by Frith (1980 P.495ff.) and it seems that the reading techniques employed are as important as the amount of reading done; the use of partial clues, which is the hallmark of the fast, efficient reader, is not conducive to good spelling. I think it is quite likely that a moderate difficulty with reading in the early stages, succesfully overcome, is helpful to learning to spell because it forces the pupil to scrutinise the words. But trying to help a failing speller by urging more reading is likely to lead to faster reading where the words will be scrutinised less and less.

The supplementary question offered respondents an opportunity to suggest other factors they thought important or to comment on the questions.

PART II: THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM

1. How far do you feel that inconsistencies in the English spelling system are responsible for some pupils' spelling difficulties? Respondents were asked to choose from: Not at all; Partly; Largely.

I thought it important to ask this question because of the prevalence (and sometimes virulence) of complaints about English spelling. Venezky (in Frith 1980, pp.24-29 traces a rich history of "the organised assault on English spelling". Others, (ibid. Smith p.33ff., Baker p.51ff.) contribute to the debate in the same book. The student C. in A2 wrote: "I think English is a stupid langwig." This comment seems to sum up Popular Opinion, as encountered by me, formally and informally, over the years.

Those who complain do so on the assumption, which they do not question, that English orthography is intended to represent speech sounds but fails to do so and my experience is that this assumption is widely held among academics and teachers, as well as laymen, and is responsible for much dissatisfaction with it.

This feeling cannot be helpful. I wanted to know how far these teachers shared it, because it might affect the enthusiasm and conviction with which they approached the teaching of spelling.

2. What are the characteristics which make some words difficult to spell?

The question of "difficulty" is discussed in B.3.c. above. It is argued there that it is hard to establish what constitutes difficulty in spelling and that, in any case, it is not worth considering from the practical point of view, since many words which anyone would surely consider difficult, or certainly irregular, have to be used early (and therefore learned early) because they appear very frequently in all writing and cannot be avoided.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the sources of "difficulty" in spelling are so varied and, often, so personal to the individual that it is not a useful concept on which to base practical help for learners, but I needed to know how these teachers felt about the question..

3. Should our spelling be reformed?

So much criticism of English spelling must raise the question whether those who complain about it would like it reformed. Presumably teachers are as conscious as anyone of difficulties inherent in English orthography and I wanted to know their views on reform.

PART III: TEACHING WRITING AND SPELLING.

1. Nine features of written work are listed below. How much importance do you attach to each of them, both when you prepare pupils for written work and when you mark it? Respondents were asked to rate items on a scale of 1 - 5, Unimportant - Crucial.

Choice of Words; Content; Grammar; Handwriting; Layout; Neatness; Organisation: Punctuation: Spelling.

Is there anything else which should have been included in this list?

These choices were placed in alphabetical order to avoid suggesting bias towards particular features.

It seemed to me that seven of these features were mostly "secretarial" skills, or Transcription as distinguished by Smith (1982, p.19) from Composition. But he places Grammar as part of the responsibilities of the Author (p.20), whom he distinguishes from the Secretary (even if they are the same person). It seems to me that the grammar is the responsibility of the author, but is also part of the transcription. Smith's other two responsibilities for the author were Getting Ideas and Selecting Words, represented in my list by Content and Choice of words. In fact, Smith's placing draws attention to the fact that the choice of words and grammar can, and often do, influence one another.

I hoped that my respondents would choose Content as much the most important part of a piece of writing and place Choice of Words very highly too, on the principle which informs this thesis that spelling is an ancilliary skill to the production of writing for communication or expression, never an end in itself, and that principle applies to the other transcriptional skills.

If grammar spills over into the creative part of writing it also seems to me to be firmly on the technical side of it and then to overlap with spelling (see Chapter B1) and, often puctuation. Spelling and handwriting influence one another (Peters 1967, p.19). Apostrophes, capital letters and so on overlap with spelling too. I expected respondents would ascribe similar importance to these three. Again it can be hard to separate handwriting and neatness, but neatness, layout and organisation influence one another. One difficulty for learners and teachers is the fact that it is so easy to take undue notice of presentation and miss the gold beneath the dross of blots and spelling errors. Pupils probably need to be made aware of this, but they are more likely to work to improve the presentation if they feel that the content of what they write is appreciated.

I thought this would be a hard question to answer with conviction, but the question does not insist on the respondent's preferring one feature to another and I hoped the choices forced on respondents would elicit how they felt and

what their priorities were in analysing and assessing pupils' writing. I hoped the supplementary question would give them the opportunity to comment further and raise other matters they thought important.

2.   Please describe briefly what you do to help your pupils with their *spelling*, both in the preparation for written work and in responding to their writing.

This question was intended as an open-ended one, to give respondents a further opportunity to express any views not already covered by previous questions.

A final question: Have you any further comments?   This was another open-ended opportunity as above but of more general application.   It was also an invitation to comment on the questionnaire if anyone wished to do so.

C.4.   FINDINGS:

Three sets of findings are recorded below.   Those from the observations which I made of lessons in the two schools and the interviews with the teachers are in C.4. (a).   Those from the questionnaires are in C.4. (b).   The findings from my interviews with pupils and parents and from the Junior School pupils' letters of advice on writing are included in those sections, where they are relevant, and there are some further findings from interviews in C.4. (c).

References to these different sources are indicated as follows:

LO – Lesson Observation   Pu. I – Interview with Pupil
TI – Teacher Interview   Pa. 1 – Interview with Parent
TM – Teacher's Marking   LA   – Pupil's Letter of Advice on Writing

The sections are based on the questions formulated and discussed in C.2. and C.3.   Copies of the instruments used, i.e. the Lesson Observation Schedule, the Questionnaire and the Interview Schedules are found in the Appendix.

C4. (a). FINDINGS FROM LESSON OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS:

1.   WHAT WRITTEN TASKS WERE SET?

The categories for the lesson observations were: Composition, divided into Pragmatic, Summary, Description, Narrative, Persuasive Writing, Reflective Writing, Free Composition.   Dictation.   Worksheet/Gap-filling.   Other.

In the Junior School I observed five sessions, each of which necessarily included periods of practical work, video, reading and other non-writing activities.   However all but one included writing tasks.

These included Worksheets, copying words from the board to be learned for spelling tests, dictation to test spelling, composing sentences to illustrate the use of particular words, recording results from a mathematical exercise and handwriting practice.   There was also on-going work on a major project

which involved "brainstorming" group work where pupils took turns to be the "scribe", summarising the results individually in neat lists of questions, making rough notes, drafting and redrafting and, finally, the individual writing, illustrating and compiling of a book.

This work covered all the categories of Tasks named above, except for Narrative and Persuasive and Reflective Writing. Narrative was covered at other times. It may be that the two last categories are more appropriate to a later stage of development.

In the Secondary School, the type of task naturally varied with the subject. The work in English, either in the lessons which I observed or in the exercises in the pupils' books which I examined, covered all the categories of task except Persuasive Writing and Worksheet/Gap-filling.

The R.E. work I observed was concerned with a high standard of presentation for display, but earlier there had been an emphasis on Reflection,

> Not simply something you've copied out. Say why you
> chose it. ... Go more deeply into it... (L.O.)

Description, Narrative and Free Composition had all gone into the pieces the pupils were writing.

Design/Technology and Science:

There was naturally a strong emphasis on practical work in these departments and the writing was ancilliary to that. There were Worksheets and Gap-filling exercises, but the recording also involved Pragmatic Writing, Summary, Description, Narrative and, in D/T, Reflective Writing, since the Worksheets required an evaluation of each project. The Science staff claimed that the writing up of experiments induced pupils to think logically and reflect on cause and effect etc. (2 T.ls., Science)

In Geography, Summary, Description, Reflective Writing and Worksheets featured in the lessons I observed and in the exercise books, where there was also Pragmatic Writing (labelling of maps, lists of place-names etc., tables to summarise findings).

2. HOW OFTEN WERE THEY SET? HOW MUCH TIME DID THEY OCCUPY?

In the Junior School there was some written work in almost every session. I happened to watch one which did not contain any, but that was on a Friday afternoon near to Christmas when the pupils were making crackers and the teacher explained that this concentration on one activity was exceptional but the crackers had to be finished. Including that session writing activities occupied 41% of the time of my observations and that excluded small amounts of writing which were done in connection with Mathematics. This suggests that a considerable amount of time was devoted daily to writing in this class and it was taken very seriously, an impression I gained from other sources too.

In the Secondary School, I had emphasised that I wished to watch lessons where there would be writing activities so it is not surprising that the proportion

of time spent on writing was high and that proportion was not typical.
However, I was also allowed to examine the pupils' exercise books in English,
Geography and Science and these revealed the frequency of writing tasks and
the amount of time they occupied.

In the English lessons I observed, an average of 87% of the time was spent
either writing or discussing how to write and the rest was spent
recapitulating on the subject-matter. Again I had asked for writing lessons.
In fact, when I had first come to discuss my work in the school, the English
teachers had told me that they did not do a great deal of writing and advised
me that other departments did more. So the average amount must have been
much less, but examination of the English exercise books revealed that a
substantial written exercise had been set at least once a week and much of the
oral work in class was used as the basis of written work.

There were many more written exercises in the Geography books, but shorter and
with, naturally, a large number of maps, tables etc., but the overall
impression was that the learning and discussion was mostly recorded in writing
and that writing formed a large part of their work in this subject.

In Science there was less and much of it was copied from the blackboard after
the class had discussed and agreed on its content. The exercise books also
contained tasks which tested their knowledge and understanding of the topics
they had covered in class and some opportunities for flights of fancy (Design
a Dragster).

In D/T the written content of the work was completing a standardised worksheet
for each individual project.

There seemed to be less emphasis generally on writing in R.E., but it
dominated the lessons I observed because the pupils were writing commentaries
to accompany their artefacts for a Christmas display.   But there was also
evidence of regular writing in their exercise books.

3.   FOR WHAT PURPOSES WERE THEY SET?   WERE THESE PURPOSES EXPLAINED AND, IF
SO, HOW?   WAS THE CONCEPT OF AN AUDIENCE RAISED AND/OR DISCUSSED?

Categories of Purpose: Spelling, Punctuation, Handwriting, Neatness, Grammar,
Length, Organisation, Content, Editing, Lexical Choice, Other.

In the Junior School all of these except Grammar were referred to specifically
during my observations.   The word was never mentioned and no questions or
problems arose which could have been described as grammatical.

In English in the Secondary School Handwriting was the only category not
mentioned and there were only two references to it in the marking.

     Get all the letters to sit ON the line not bouncing about
     all over the place   (TM English)

This may well have been because much drafting and editing went on before the
pupils wrote in their exercise books and they seemed to treat these books as

special and important.   Moreover, the pupils were in their first term at the school when probably motivation to please is at its highest.

Spelling, Neatness and Organisation were emphasised in the R.E. lessons, but the work had reached its final stage and other concerns like Content and Lexical Choice had already been attended to.   The teacher here said she minded about good presentation and emphasised it, but only for some of the work, since she was anxious that these concerns should not stifle pupils' creativity or thoughtfulness.   (TI)

In D/T there was limited concern for Spelling   (TI), but an overwhelming emphasis on practical work.

> Our writing is to record, not to create.   (TI, D/T)

One Science teacher also felt strongly that the practice and understanding of concepts was the important part of his pupils' work;   in fact he would use an alternative word rather than spend time on language work   (TI).   He occasionally wrote the standard version against a misspelled word in a pupil's exercise book and he insisted on clear headings and labels.   His own writing on the blackboard was very neat and clear.

In Geography Punctuation, Content, Organisation and Lexical Choice were emphasised.   Great importance was attached to answering questions in whole sentences so as to be comprehensible during later revision.   Spelling was also considered important.   One teacher liked to be

> meticulous about writing — the ethos of a Direct-Grant
> School   (TI)

Explanation: My observation was that the purposes of teachers' emphases on these features were very clearly explained to the pupils, not once but were recapitulated.   The importance of writing whole sentences for Geography and the reasons for it had been given at the beginning of the year but when pupils forgot they were reminded.   A Science teacher quoted an example of pupils who had recorded their experiment illegibly and had realised that they could not answer questions because they could not read their notes.   The objectives of each piece of writing and the reasons for emphasising different features of it were often stated by the teacher, sometimes elicited from the pupils

> Why am I getting you to write questions?   (LO)

Audience: The writing in Geography was initially for the teacher but ultimately for the writers themselves and they were kept aware of that.

> I ALWAYS read and mark ALL their written assignments

> I try to mark the books every week   (TIs)

and examination of the books showed this was so.   All the work was marked and it was done in such a way that it was clear that the teachers had read them. They often asked a question

> But how far is it?

Are you sure you answered the questions?   (TM)

It was much the same in Science.   It was made clear that the writing was to
be read, first by the teacher and then by the pupils themselves for revision
and all the work was marked.

The different audiences were apparent in English.   The Thought Journals were
for the pupils themselves, as was some of the early drafting of the writing.
Some drafts were to be read to partners for comment and improvement and the
work in the exercise books was for the teachers.   These teachers' comments
and questions in response to written work must have kept the notion of an
audience in the pupils' minds as they wrote.

The English teachers admitted that they had not time to read all their pupils'
writing, but they used paired writing a great deal so that what was not read
by them was read by a fellow-pupil;   this paired work was set up in such a way
that comment on one's partner's product and discussion of it was inevitable.
Thus, pupils were usually writing for a citical reader.

For the R.E. and D/T work I observed, the audience would be those who looked
at the display and the pupils were aware of this.   I did not have the
opportunity to pursue this question in these subjects generally.

One teacher summed up by saying that teachers must respond to the content.

    Otherwise it's not a communication, is it? (TI)

The Teachers' Marking revealed that most of the writing was responded to with
more than just a grade;   there was almost always some comment and often a
question.

Many of the pupils showed their work to their parents, who often commented,
particularly about matters of presentation and especially spelling, and
occasionally helped with it (Pa.Is).

I asked each pupil whether they would mind if their work was not read.
Several were reluctant to answer and two boys said No, but five were clear
that they would mind and many of them replied that it was always read and
marked (Pu.Is)

Their experience may have made them feel it was a silly question.

4.   WHAT ADVICE WAS GIVEN ABOUT THE WORK?   WAS THE WORK DISCUSSED USING
METALANGUAGE OR OTHERWISE?

The situation, throughout my observations, seemed the exact opposite of that
reported by Gubb et al. (1987 p. 180).   Pupils were set a topic for a writing
task, but the content was expected to come from them, often through a
question-and-answer session with a partner, but clear, detailed advice about
the way the writing was to be produced was given whenever it was set;   how to
elicit ideas, how to organise the piece overall and how to get it into
paragraphs, when to scribble down ideas and when to attend to transcriptional
skills.   Some instructions were very precise:

Put the date in words in best joined-up writing in
black ink.   (LO, Junior School)

Sentences?   No, just notes as long as you can understand
your writing.   But scruffy work is never allowed, NEVER
allowed!   (LO, ibid.)

(On blackboard) 1. Read your friend's work   2. Help them
develop their ideas by writing 3 questions for them to answer.
The questions must be based on their writing.
                                        (LO, English)

Spend 20 minutes on this piece of writing (LO, English)

If (the heading) is not underneath your drawing of the bulb
you need to put 'Light Bulb (Cont.)' (LO, Science)

Stage 2 Paragraphs.   Stage 3 Spelling.   (LO, English)

Metalanguage seemed to be used whenever it cropped up and was not avoided.
In the example above the writing could perhaps have been described as CURSIVE
rather than JOINED-UP but was not.   Other terms I recorded were:

CAPITAL LETTERS, FULL STOPS, PUNCTUATION, QUESTION-MARKS, SPEECH MARKS, PROOF-
READING, DRAFTING, SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS, DICTIONARY, THESAURUS.

None of the pupils questioned these terms or looked at all confused by them,
so I assumed that they were familiar with them, knew what they meant and
expected to hear and respond to such language.

5.   WAS THE WORK COMPULSORY FOR ALL PUPILS?

Yes.   In the Junior School there was a good deal of group work in the
planning of written assignments when often only one or two pupils would act as
"scribe", but in the end all pupils had to produce their own final version.
There were two major projects during my period of observation which were
brought to a very high standard of presentation. Each child produced a large,
illustrated book, the result of half a term's research and preparation, which
was then placed on display in the classroom.   When I interviewed the pupils
the following year several of them remembered these pieces of work, some had
kept them and still looked at them now and then.   They seemed proud of them
(Pu.1s).

The Junior School teacher insisted on work being finished.

    If you haven't finished, you'll have to find your own
    time to-morrow   (LO)

She occasionally relented for a pupil in some special difficulty (TI).
Although there was no formal, compulsory homework, it was quite usual and
accepted that the pupils should work on their writing at home.   They also
used their free time in school to finish work (TI and my own observation).

In the Secondary School all the work was compulsory in all the subjects for all the pupils.   Teachers had their own systems for ensuring it was done.

> ...I give them one more day after a serious moan at them.   If they fail again I treat it as a personal insult to me and give detention.   They're in no doubt about my disapproval I should think.   (TI)

Detention was a formal, school system.

> The School Management Team give every support.   (TI)

but it was seldom in demand, especially for these younger pupils.

> There are very few persistent defaulters - one or two in the fifth year.   The parents co-operate.   Not a big problem here, especially in the first year.   (TI)

Each pupil had a homework diary which was shown to the parents and nearly all the parents imposed rules about homework being done at certain times   (Pa.Is)

> I think the school is very strong on homework.   (TI)

One pupil started failing to produce homework, among other, behavioural, problems.   His parents were informed, visited the school and discussed the problem with the staff.   Not all his problems were resolved by the end of my observation period, but he was doing his homework conscientiously   (TI, Pa.I and Pu.I).

"Compulsory" is a slightly misleading word.   It was more a case of everyone involved accepting that this work was important and must be done as a matter of course and the "compulsion" took the form more of reminders and encouragement.   But it is certain that these fourteen pupils, unless there were some unarguable, exceptional reasons for not doing it,   always did all their written work, in school and at home, and all concerned took it for granted that they would do so.

6.   WERE THE PUPILS ALLOWED/ENCOURAGED TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY OR WERE THEY REQUIRED TO WORK ALONE?

Both arrangements operated.

In the Junior School there was much group work especially in preparation for the two big writing projects, but the final product was the work of an individual and the style and presentation of these books varied a good deal, although, naturally,   much of the content was similar since they had conferred and had access to the same information in its preparation.   Other tasks like spelling tests, dictation and handwriting were done individually.   Worksheets and composing sentences were sometimes done with a partner, sometimes alone.

In the Secondary School the practice varied.

The Religious Education and Design/Technology departments were co-operating in the lessons I observed, with the pupils working in pairs or groups to produce a Christmas display, the practical part of it being done in the Design/Technology lessons and the written element in R.E.   However, in D/T, this work was exceptional.   Normally the written part of their work could not be collaborative because it consisted of each pupil's completing a worksheet to describe the processes of designing an artefact and to evaluate it.

The R.E. teacher had also found that the National Curriculum had altered her practice a little because collaborative work made it hard to assess individuals' achievement, as required by the National Curriculum (TI).

In Science, all the practical work was done collaboratively, then the class worked together with the teacher to record the investigations and results, which were put on the blackboard and copied by pupils into their exercise books.   Non-collaborative writing was mostly done in the form of written exercises, usually for homework.

> ... the individual has to sit and think about what, why,
> what order they've done it in and write it out themselves
>   (TI)

The Geography department used collaboration sparingly.

> It sometimes works very well.   ...I wouldn't impose it
> on a colleague because some it wouldn't suit.   It's often
> good for children to take responsibility for their own work (TI).

> I rarely use collaborative work – it's not my style!   ...
> and my experience is that ... the less able don't get enough
> out of the collaboration (TI).

> Occasionally.   But in practice one always does more, so
> I prefer them to do their own (TI)

In English collaboration was used a great deal, but, in the lessons I observed, it was always in pairs, not groups.   It was used in the middle stages of a piece of writing.

> I encourage the pupils to write experimentally in rough,
> so that the ideas can be drawn out quickly – never mind
> the mess.   ... I can't divide myself into 26 so they
> work with a partner.   ... Each partner
>
> (a) Reads his/her work aloud
> (b) Answers questions asked by the partner ...
> (c) With a pencil 'proof reads'.
>
> In addition they'll discuss with the partner possible
> improvements in content and style.   (TI)

The other two English teachers I observed had similar policies

> ... especially since word-processors.   It's a sounding-
> board.   Also it's pragmatism — the teacher hasn't got time.
> They must take responsibility — a friend is not such a crutch
> as a teacher.
>
> In the end they write it.   They can get a lot out of each
> other.   It takes a long time to learn to ask the right
> question.   ... it becomes a habit to ask questions and
> develop ideas.
>
> In the past I did a lot of group writing, but it's less
> good.   ... Pairs force you to respond.   Results are
> better for pairs   (TIs,)

All these teachers had considered the value of collaborative work and had come
to clear decisions about it.

7.   WERE THE PUPILS ALLOWED/ENCOURAGEWD TO DRAFT AND REDRAFT THEIR WORK OR
WERE THEY REQUIRED TO PRODUCE ONE DRAFT ONLY?

> We may think we've done it, but this is just a rough
> first draft   (LO, English).

In the Junior School, for the big, important projects which resulted in books
made entirely by the pupils, there was much drafting and redrafting of the
writing.

A great deal of drafting and redrafting went on in the English lessons in the
Secondary School.   As the teacher quoted above also said,

> Who can produce well written finished products straight
> off?   I can't   (TI).

The practice was used for important pieces of reflective or expressive work.
The pupils also had rough books, in which they wrote quickly to get their
thoughts down and in which they did their redrafting and they had "Thought
Journals", where they wrote what and as they liked; these were not corrected
and could be private.   There were also exercises in their books, which they
had written as single drafts, but these were exercises on the techniques of
writing English (the Ten Worst Words for Spelling, the Use of the Apostrophe
etc.) where neither creativity nor style were the objective   (TM).

It was also an important part of the R.E./D/T. work I saw for the same reason
that these were "special", important pieces of work to go on display for the
whole school.   Normally the writing done for D/T. was circumscribed by a
worksheet, although those I saw were neatly completed and the pupils may have
done some drafting on rough paper.

It was not a feature of the Geography or Science work that I saw, probably
because the content was circumscribed by the nature of the exercises and
pupils were able to use textbooks and worksheets to help with finding both
answers and ways of expressing them.   Also

No time to draft and redraft.   ... There is a very high
content rate to Geography, and ... drafting is a luxury we
cannot afford!   (TI)

8.   HOW WAS THE WORK AS A WHOLE ASSESSED AND MARKED?

T. ... if it's a piece of work that concentrates on
spelling then I will correct it, the spelling, and I
will make a comment on how successful they have been
as far as spelling is concerned.   ... If it is a
piece of work where I have been looking for creativity,
descriptive work, getting atmosphere, getting feelings,
then I won't be so pernickety about spelling, I'll be
marking with that in mind.

I. Yes, and ... you've made it clear that this is what
you're looking for?

T. ... I will tell them, so long as they know what it
says and I know ...   If that piece of work is to be
presented in best then obviously spelling will have to
be looked at, but that will be looked at separately, ...
it will be marked and commented on for its creativity
                                (T1, Junior School)

This extract sums up the way in which writing in both schools was assessed and
marked, though teachers varied in minor ways in their practice.

Except in English, marks and grades were never given for transcriptional
skills or the presentation of the work, although these features were noted and
commented upon.   The marking concentrated on the content and the way the
particular topic of the set work had been dealt with.

There was a "star" system in the Junior and a "Merit" system in the Secondary
School and they were used for effort as well as for achievement

It helps to reward the less successful   (TI, Geography)

The marking in Geography was very precise

29½/31   (TM)

Don't forget questions 8 and 9 - more marks - so you've
got to write a lot   (LO, setting Worksheet for Homework).

but those all related to content.   Typical comments on transcription were:

Print places in pen.
Sentences needed here.
Do set your work out as asked.   (TMs)

The practice differed a little in Science.   Marks were given for only a few
exercises, but were precise then and were for content.   There were
corrections and comments about transcription and presentation.

For both these subjects labelling, headings and layout were emphasised.

In English presentation and transcription were specifically assessed and
marked, but only when exercises were set specifically to practise these
features.   This was the only time that actual figures appeared in the books
and it was clear how they came about, i.e. 11/15 (Use of the Apostrophe) where
eleven out of 15 examples were right and four were wrong (TM).

Otherwise, the assessment took the form of comment and, often, questions

 Rather brief!   Were you satisfied with this?

 What a wonderful description and picture!

 13/15.   Horribly untidy - but you are getting it right now.
               (TMs)

along with correction of the transcriptional errors.

Grades were given in the Secondary School but they were not put in the books
which I examined, although Merits were.   There was a system of a Report Card
for each pupil and the grades were recorded there.   I observed these being
shown to the pupils and discussed with them in the course of some of the
lessons I attended.   But in the marking of books the emphasis was on the
work, plenty of praise for good work, pointing out of mistakes or of
unsatisfactory work and often comments referring to the future which would, I
felt, encourage pupils to think and to continue to try to do well.

 Good work, C.!   You need to consider shortening your sentences.
          (TM)

No doubt some of these comments may have been addressed indirectly also to the
pupils' parents, most of whom were in the habit of at least looking at their
children's exercise books from time to time and often of commenting on the
presentation, occasionally even insisting on work being redone (Pa.Is).

From my observations of lessons, it was clear that the written comments in the
exercise books were only part of the process of assessing, discussing and
learning from pieces of writing.   Pupils were quite often told 'See me' in
their books and work was often discussed and misunderstandings cleared up in
classtime.

It must be remembered that these pupils were in their first year in the
Secondary School and that an important concern of their teachers was to
initiate them into the school's working routines.   It seems likely that
there would necessarily be much less attention to transcription and
presentation as they moved up the school.

9.   WAS THE WORK DISCUSSED?

> They were very proud of it, they really were.   ... We kept
> the work to begin with just in a folder and I told them before
> half term we'd trim it and mount it and display it and make
> it into a book.   ... I spoke to them all in turn as I bound
> their book for them and we had a chat about what they thought
> about their work, were they pleased with it, could they have
> done better?   ... All of them said they'd enjoyed it and
> they were pleased with what their book looked like ... it
> was better than they'd done before, why, what was better
> about it ... it was neater ... their joined-up writing
> was developing ... they were writing more ... and the other
> thing they liked about it was, because it was a book, it
> looked better than it did just as a piece of work in an
> exercise book.
>
> So they're supposed to know now the next book ... should be
> better than their first one in all the ways they said.
> (Tl, Junior School)

That was a description of the last stage in a big, important, time-consuming
project in the Junior School and on that occasion each pupil had a full,
individual discussion with the teacher about his or her work.

I did not observe any other discussion as individual and full as that, but in
the previous section it was pointed out that the marking of written exercises
was only part of the process of assessment. I saw several lessons where
homework was being given back and there was time devoted to commenting on it,
both to the class in general about points of importance to all and to
individuals; the teacher often went round speaking to individuals about their
work while the rest of the class were engaged in some other task. Pupils
were several times asked to read all or part of their work to the class and
these pieces seemed to have been carefully chosen for some successful feature
of them; the teachers I observed in both schools seemed to make real efforts
to find things to praise.

Most of the parents looked at their children's exercises regularly and took an
interest in their homework and the teachers' comments on it (Pa.Is). The
pupils seemed thoroughly used to discussing their writing with them and with
their teachers (Pu.Is).

10.   HOW WAS THE SPELLING ASSESSED AND MARKED?

In the Junior School regular weekly spelling tests were held and marked in a
straight forward way with a mark for each correct word out of the number
tested. For pieces of writing the teacher varied her practice according to
the purpose for which she had set the work; that is, if she had warned them
that the work was "for best" with presentation as an important part of the
task, she would take the spelling into account when marking it. For other
exercises where she wanted them to concentrate on expressing ideas, feelings
or descriptions, spelling errors would not affect the mark given to the whole
piece. LO and TI)

My observations in the Secondary School happened to take place at a time when the school staff had agreed to adopt an all-school spelling policy formulated by the English Department.   All pupils were issued with small notebooks, into which they entered words which they had misspelled.   Most of these words were selected by the teachers (only 3 - 5 from each exercise, however many errors there were), although the pupils were encouraged to enter words they thought they ought to learn as well. They were then to try to learn these words and would be tested on them from time to time.   Some teachers had doubts about this arrangement but they had all had an opportunity of discussing it in a staff meeting and they approved of having a consistent school policy, so they were prepared to accept and implement this one.   (LOs and TIs)

It was clear that the new policy had changed some teachers' habits.

        Write out 3 times ZINC, BREAD (TM, 4/10/91)
        Write in your spelling book DISSOLVE, SOLID
                                        (TM, same teacher 15/11/91)

All the exercise books I saw contained correct versions of spelling errors written by the teachers and most contained requests to enter some words in the spelling notebooks.   The differences lay in the way in which teachers chose the words they thought should have priority and this is recorded under 12, below.

One Science teacher occasionally wrote the standard spelling by the errors but did not otherwise comment on spelling at all.   He explained (TI) that there was now less time for "everyday book work" because of the demands of the National Curriculum and he gave priority to the Science and the communication of ideas rather than to presentation.

11.   WAS THE SPELLING DISCUSSED?

There was very little discussion about spelling in either school.   It was taken for granted that words should be spelled conventionally and that pupils should attend to the spelling of the words they wrote and try to conform to the standard.   All the teachers to whom I spoke thought that correct spelling was desirable and the only differences among them were the degrees to which they personally felt responsible for bringing this about.

Good and poor spelling on the part of pupils was certainly alluded to and praised or deprecated, but there was no discussion that I observed with them about reasons for their good and poor spelling, only encouragement to persevere and to try to do better.   In interview some teachers did speculate about the possibility of some pupils having special problems and very poor spellers were referred to the Head of Special Needs.   Other teachers seemed to have confidence in that department and took its advice on how to deal with these pupils.

The English teachers occasionally reminded pupils of the LOOK, COVER, WRITE,

CHECK technique, to which they had been introduced in their Primary Schoolsand from time to time various teachers offered pupils mnemonics which they had found helpful or techniques such as pronouncing words as they are spelled. Parents also offered help and all these suggestions are detailed below (Q. 13). Some lessons were devoted to Word Study; although I did not observe any of these, some discussion of the formation of words and links with other words must have occurred then. Pupils were constantly encouraged to use a dictionary or thesaurus, to be critical of their choice of words and to try to think of other, more expressive or unusual ones to use. All these activities must have had the effect of drawing their attention to spelling.

But nothing that I observed could really be described as discussion of spelling.

12.   HOW ARE WORDS SELECTED FOR SPECIAL STUDY?

In the Junior School there were lists of words to be learned each week. These were based on similar patterns of letter-strings and were provided by a published Spelling Scheme which the school had adopted. Words were also chosen from the children's own writing. Good spellers were asked to correct all their few errors and, for those with many errors, a selection was made by the teacher of those she thought were important.

The Secondary School's newly-introduced spelling policy invited all teachers to choose some words which had been misspelled in pupils' written work for special study. So there was an important principle that they were all the pupils' own choice of words and ones which they had tried to write. There were two principles on which they were selected from among these.

Some teachers felt it was best to concentrate on the words which were especially associated with their subjects. In Science and Design/Technology TEMPERATURE, SULPHUR, DISSOLVE, SEWING MACHINE, SCISSORS, TOAST and other such technical words were chosen.

> Science words. When they come across it for the first time,
> if they're taught correctly at the start, they remember it
> correctly. (TI, Science)

She wrote the correct word by the errors but was sparing in those she asked them to put in their spelling books for study.

The Geography Department differed on this question. One teacher emphasised Geographical words, especially the names of places in the locality.

> Some are horrid words but it does them no harm
>   (TI)

Another felt that "common words" should be selected and dealt with the Geographical ones by putting them on the blackboard and drawing attention to them

> I think it sinks in   (TI)

In the English Department one teacher chose

> ... the simplest errors - about three per page - ... and those
> which recur often   (TI)

13.   HOW WERE THE PUPILS TAUGHT TO LEARN THE WORDS CHOSEN?

The outstanding technique which was recommended to pupils throughout in both
the Junior School and the Secondary School was the Look, Cover, Write Check
routine advocated by Peters (1975 p.32).   I sometimes heard teachers
reminding pupils of this routine and it was part of the Secondary School's new
spelling policy, along with keeping a note of troublesome words in the pupils'
spelling notebooks; they were also quite often reminded about it.   Sometimes
the teachers asked the pupils what they should do and "Look, Cover, Write
Check" was the answer.   It was also the answer I got when I asked them what
they did to learn words in my interviews with them (Pu.Is).

I never observed anyone explaining the rationale for this routine, but this is
likely to be because it was so established in the two schools and had probably
been explained to these pupils long before.   But I was not sure that they all
understood the importance of the looking and the checking and I thought there
were occasions when they went through the routine so perfunctorily and
inattentively that it was ineffective.   I could not test this suspicion.

Some amusing mnemonics were used.

  I get in a TEMPER AT U if you spell (TEMPERATURE) wrongly (LO, Science).

and spelling pronunciaticns (SAL-IS-BURY) (TI, Geography)

Above all, pupils were urged to look up words in dictionaries and there were a
large number of these arcund in classrooms, in the Junior School classroom and
especially in the secondary English classrooms.   They were also reminded to
scan the reading books, textbooks and worksheets they were currently using, as
being likely to contain the words they needed when writing, 'and encouraged to
be independent.

>   Will I check it?   No.   There's a dictionary there. (LO, English)

The parents supported the school's encouragement of careful spelling, but
often had their own methods of helping.   Eight pupils were told to use the
dictionary, seven had their parents write the word down for them, four were
told to "work it out" and two to "sound it out" or "break it up."   Some
received one or more of these kinds of assistance.   Five parents drew their
children's attention to spelling errors in their homework.   Five insisted on
the children solving the problem for themselves, although they gave
encouragement.   Three tried to insist on this but sometimes weakened and
wrote it down.   Only three did nothing and, for two of these, it was because
their children found spelling easy and could find new words for themselves.
The other family felt their own standard of education was too poor for them to
be able to help (Pa.Is).

C.4. (b).   FINDINGS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS:

The results are given in the order in which they were presented by the questionnaire.

PART 1:   THE PUPILS: The relative importance of factors within pupils themselves which may be thought to affect their ability to write and spell.

The nine factors are grouped under four main headings:

AUDITORY FACTORS: Hearing;   Pupils' Own Speech.

VISUAL FACTORS: Eyesight;   Amount of Reading Practice.

COGNITIVE FACTORS: Intelligence; Memory; Understanding of the Task.

CONSTITUTIONAL FACTORS: A "Gift" for Spelling;   "Dyslexia".

The ratings are arrived at by multiplying each figure by the maximum for that category (i.e. 5 for Crucial, 1 for Unimportant), adding all the results, dividing them by the maximum possible total, 25, and converting this figure to a percentage.

AUDITORY FACTORS: For the broad groupings, the highest ratings went to the Auditory factors with one staffroom unanimous that the Pupils' Own Speech was crucial for learning to spell (100%).   This was the Infants' School and the finding may reflect those teachers' experience that children at that early stage are primarily dependent on sound for trying to spell words which they are writing for the first time;   they also gave a high rating, 80%, to Hearing.   The Junior School in the Study also gave 80%, to Hearing but only 57% for Speech.   All the other ratings in the Auditory area were high for all the schools.

Perceived defects in the way in which pupils speak were mentioned spontaneously in answer to an open-ended question, about factors which might influence pupils' ability to write and spell, by two of the teachers (TIs) and by two of the parents (see below), but appeared most strongly in the questionnaires, where they were rated the most important factor in two of the staffrooms.

Those who hold this view hold it very strongly.

> Spelling is very, very literal and they speak with a local
> playground accent - quite a shock!   (Pa.I)

> Well, I was always learned in school to spell how you speak -
> I speak terrible!   (Pa.I)

The Visual Factors were rated next highest;   68% was the lowest rating for Eyesight and the Amount of Reading Practice was rated in the seventies by all but two schools.

Cognitive Factors: there was general agreement on the importance of Memory, the scores ranging only over seven percentage points, 74% - 80%.   The teachers also agreed about Intelligence with a range of twelve points, but rating it lower, 53% - 64%.   Understanding of the Task produced the widest range of scores.   The Infant School rated it highly at 80% but one of the Primaries at only 53%.

The two Constitutional Factors were at the extremes of the scores.   No-one gave much credence to the notion of a "Gift" for Spelling, which received the lowest ratings of all, but "Dyslexia" received the highest of all the Individual factors, though with a wide range, 67% - 94%.   Belief in Dyslexia was strongest in the Secondary School by a large margin.

Only seven respondents suggested items to be added to the nine factors; Laziness was mentioned by one teacher in one of the Primary Schools and the rest came from the Secondary School;   they included the emotional environment, the pupil's self image as a speller, parental support and the perception of spelling as a desirable skill.   One felt that writing and spelling were disparate skills and affected by different influences.

PART II: THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM:

1.   Its contribution to spelling difficulties.

From all the schools only two teachers thought that the English Spelling System was not at all to blame for difficulties with spelling.   Two in the Secondary School did not know and one in one of the Primary Schools gave no reply;   but the majority, 68%, blamed the System partly and 23% largely.

2.   Characteristics which make words difficult to learn.

Almost all the replies to the question of what characteristics made words difficult to spell related in one way or another to phonics and complained of "irregularities" and "inconsistencies".

3.   The Case for Spelling Reform.

Only three respondents were in favour of spelling reform, all in the Secondary School and two of these expressed doubts.   48% were categorically against reform and 27% felt that the process of reform would create too many problems for it to be feasible or that it would be impossible to decide what should be reformed and to what.   20% did not reply to this question.   A few liked English spelling and one said 'I value our literary heritage', but that was the only reply which came near to any suggestion of any real merit in it!

In my interviews with the 14 pupils I did not ask them for their views on the language and its spelling system.   Such a question seemed to me to be meaningless for people with no experience of any other language or spelling system.   They had just started to learn their first foreign language, but I felt they had not yet done enough for that to be relevant experience.

I asked the parents how they thought the spelling system worked and how satisfactory they thought it was.   Of the 23 parents interviewed, only three

said it was satisfactory.   Three had no opinion (two had 'never thought about it').   Other comments were:

> Dreadful.   Hard.   Awful.   Very difficult.   It's one
> of the hardest languages to learn but we accept it.   It's all
> right if you talk correctly.

One said it was irregular but

> I think it's beautiful and would be boring if it was regular.
> I like the variety.   I can see it's difficult.

The most emphatic comment came from a parent, a teacher of (mostly spoken) English to foreigners, whose child had no problems and was doing outstandingly well at school:

> It's totally, totally, totally illogical.   There's no way you
> can guess how a word is spelt if you don't know.   It's the only
> language you can say that about.   It's terrible.   I speak with
> authority, having students from many cultures.

PART III: TEACHING WRITING AND SPELLING:

1.   The Relative Importance of Different Features of Written Work.

The teachers were asked to rate nine features of written work in order of importance.   These were, in alphabetical order:

Choice of Words; Content; Grammar; Handwriting; Layout; Neatness; Organisation; Punctuation; Spelling.

Content was rated most important by all the schools.   Otherwise there was a much more uniform response to this question than to the earlier one about the factors within pupils.   The range of variation lay between 8 and 24 points, but on three features, Handwriting, Grammar and Punctuation, the Infant School showed a different result, which must surely reflect the much earlier stage of learning of their children.   Excluding their ratings on those three features the range of ratings covers only 6 to 16 points.

Several made the point that Punctuation and Grammar hardly featured in the youngest children's curriculum; Handwriting, on the other hand was an important part of it and that school rated it much higher than the others.

Several respondents were reluctant to rate one feature higher than another, saying that they felt all were equally important and interacted so strongly that they could not appropriately be separated.   Others pointed out that priorities depended on what kind of task was set.

Items suggested for inclusion were: from the Primary Schools: Style (1); Ability to entertain (1), Presentation (1), Originality (1);

from the Secondary School: Technical words must be spelled correctly (2); Accurate Observation and Copying (1); Clarity (1); Ability to State things Simply (1); Writing in Complete Sentences (1).

One teacher said, "It's a battle just to get some children to write."

The pupils' opinions on what was important about writing came from the letters of advice on the question which they had been asked to write to a younger pupil while they were in the Junior School.: Five items were mentioned:

Punctuation was mentioned by 12 pupils and placed first by 5, second by 4.

Handwriting was mentioned by 10 pupils and placed first by 4, second by 3.

Spelling was mentioned by 10 pupils and placed first by 2, second by 1.

Layout was mentioned by 9 pupils and placed first by 2, second by 1.

Neatness was mentioned by 6 pupils and placed first by 1, second by 3.

One pupil suggested making notes first which may have been a reference to Content, otherwise Content, Choice of Words, Grammar (not even by implication) and Organisation were not mentioned by any of the pupils.

Seven who mentioned spelling suggested using a dictionary, although one of these suggested it only for finding the meanings of words.

Three referred to "different kinds of writing". Two referred to "classroom tactics", one by suggesting the dictionary to avoid bothering the teacher and one advocating listening to instructions carefully and acting on them so as not to "get told off".

2. Many approaches were used to help pupils with spelling. The Secondary School had a whole school policy, described in C.4, above The other responses divided into phonic approaches (the great majority), training the visual memory, careful choice of words for study (the pupils' own vocabulary and words most frequently written), training in use of dictionaries and word games. There was no mention of Creative Spelling or any suggestion of the complex and flexible cognitive processes which, it emerges from the literature, underlie learning to spell.

There were no further comments.

C.4. (c).   FURTHER FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS

Only five pupils said they positively liked writing. Three disliked it, three "didn't mind" and for three it depended on their mood. Six liked it better than in the past, four hadn't changed their attitude and three liked it less than before; one did not know whether he liked it better or not.

All the pupils thought their writing and spelling were improving. Seven said they expected to be able to write well when they grew up, two, more cautiously, said "probably" and three thought they would be "average".

Seven claimed to have trouble with spelling, although one of these appeared to have none at all. This was the boy who said he hated writing, although he wrote exceptionally accurately and neatly. His parents said he had had a very bad beginning to his school career and they had moved him to the Junior

School in the study; there he had been far behind the others but had now caught up and was one of the most able.   However, he loved drawing and much preferred to express himself through that.   I also wondered whether he still had unhappy memories of early efforts to write.   Only two said they were good spellers (they certainly were), two said "better now", one had trouble "with little words".   One said "not too bad" and one did not know.   Except for that one boy, I agreed with their assessments.

One important finding from these interviews was how little experience these pupils had of writing being done, and indeed how little writing did seem to be done, outside school.   Seven mothers definitely liked writing and four of these wrote for pleasure; one used to but had stopped.   Three pupils had sisters who wrote for pleasure.   Only one mother wrote letters.   Two mothers loved crossword puzzles.   Most of the children in these families were expected to write to thank people for presents, but, for other communicative purposes, they telephoned.   Two fathers expressed mild lack of enthusiasm for writing, two positively hated it and the rest disliked it.   Eight pupils said there was at least one family member who wrote regularly; three said no-one did, one said "a bit" and two did not know.   The pupils' and parents' accounts of their families' writing habits supported one another.

Almost all the writing these parents said they did was at work or while the children were at school, so they were very seldom seen by their children writing.   Most of them seemed not even to write shopping lists; they "just remembered" what they needed.

All the parents were absolutely convinced of the need for everybody to be able to write.   So were their children except for one who said it would depend on his job.   He wanted to be a footballer, but realised this might be difficult to achieve and his next choice was a designer; he knew he would have to write for that.   They had all thought about the work they might do when they grew up and had sensible views about how writing would be used in those jobs.

All the teachers thought everyone should and could write, although they also thought it would be difficult for some.   Several of them mentioned one pupil in the school, who seemed quite able otherwise but hardly wrote anything at all.   I had the impression that it was most unusual to find such a pupil in that school and they all seemed worried and puzzled by him.

The parents were all very pleased with the children's secondary school so far; this study was done in their first two terms there, so that their judgments had to be to some extent provisional; moreover there does seem to be a tendency towards euphoria when children first enter a school.   However several of them had older children who had been longer at the school.   One mother was inclined to be critical of schools in general and her praise was qualified.   She felt strongly about her children's spelling and felt it had not been sufficiently rigorously insisted on in the schools.   They were especially pleased with the close co-operation they had had with the school. They all thought their children were progressing and one couple, who had had doubts about their son's motivation, were "pleasantly surprised".

They had almost all been pleased with the Junior School, too, although two families felt more satisfied with the last year their children had been there than in the earlier years.   There was much more criticism of the Infant

Schools which their children had attended.   Five had come from other Infant
or Primary Schools.   Two of these had come from other parts of the country
and three had been moved to the Junior School in the study from other schools
because their parents had been dissatisfied with their education and impressed
by this school;   these parents reported dramatic improvements in their
children's progress on entering the Junior School.

Of three who expressed some dissatisfaction with the local Infant School, the
problem for one related to a particular teacher;   this pupil had also had a
severe hearing problem which was identified rather late, but had now improved
greatly after medical treatment, as had his progress and behaviour.   The
other two had worried that their sons were making slow progress with reading
and writing;   both had older children who were "brighter" or had, at any rate,
seemed to learn faster and this may have influenced their judgment.

All the parents felt that parents could, and should, help with their
children's education, although one couple and one single mother were
reluctant, but only because of the inadequacy, as they perceived it, of their
own educational standard.   Their help mostly took the form of encouragement
and of insisting on homework being done;   several had strict rules about when
it should be done, rationing television and so on.   They appreciated the
Homework Diaries which came home with the children and enabled them to
supervise effectively.   As well as encouraging their children they helped, in
particular, with spelling, punctuation, grammar and the presentation of
written work;   this help is described in greater detail above in C.4.(a).

Part D.   FOUR LITERACY PROGRAMMES

After describing these small-scale operations, it seems useful to examine briefly
some large literacy programmes to try to evaluate their effectiveness and to
identify features which may promote effectiveness or inhibit it.

Three of these are programmes which I have studied and the fourth, outlined in
D.4., is the Adult Literacy Scheme in Oxfordshire between 1976 and 1982, for which
I worked over that period.   I feel compelled to admit that, although it seemed
greatly to enhance the lives of those involved in it, not only of the students but
of those who worked with them, purely as a literacy programme it was much less
effective.

The other three seem to me thoroughly effective operations with sound evidence to
support this judgment.

D.1. describes Japanese Elementary Education, from which there appears to emerge a
highly literate population well placed to continue with their education and
training and whose general high educational standard is thought to play an
important part in Japan's economic success.

D.2. describes the Reading Recovery Programme in New Zealand.   The aim of this
programme is to forestall literacy problems by early, intensive and skilled
intervention for any child who shows signs of failing at the age of six.   It
appears to succeed with all but 1% of all children.

D.3. is an account of the work of the British Army's School of Preliminary
Education, now disbanded, which also claimed great success in turning illiterate
recruits into useful, trainable soldiers.

D.1.   LEARNING TO WRITE IN JAPAN:

Although figures for literacy must always be treated with caution, there is strong
evidence for high rates of literacy in Japan.   It has been claimed that only
0.07% of adults are illiterate in Japan compared to 20% in the United States and
that 96% of Japanese students achieve educational standards which are the
equivalent of our A Levels (White 1987 p. 2).

Such a comparison also demands caution.   The two societies are very different
and recent newspaper articles purport to have uncovered a different picture, an
"underclass" similar to the "Untouchables" in India, who may have been left out of
the literacy count and the existence of "Tokokyohi", school truants (TES 24/1/92),
some of whom stay away because they cannot cope with the work.   Nevertheless it
is very likely that, on any measure, a much higher percentage of the population is
fully literate in Japan than here.

The comparison is interesting because one factor often blamed for low British
literacy rates is the complexity of our writing system.   But Japanese writing is
famously complex.   Moreover it has been deliberately made hard to learn.

        One reason why their written language is so difficult is that they
        choose to make it so.   It is nonetheless remarkable, not only
        that a system of such complexity can be mastered by so large a

population, but also that it can serve as the basis of one of the world's technologically most advanced cultures. Crump (1988, p.140)

It may be that Japanese is easier than English in one respect, that it does not contain strings of consonantal sounds as English does and may be easier to hear and "segment" accurately. But writing is certainly a formidable task.

Reading and writing disorders are said to be rare in Japan (Makita 1968 p599) and where they do occur they obviously are usually overcome; perhaps they are what is represented by the 0.07% who remain illiterate.

How do they master it so successfully?   We must consider some features of Japanese Elementary Education.

The working year in Japanese schools is longer than in Britain or America.

> The relatively short working day in Japan partially offsets the
> long working year, but the overall figure for instruction hours ...
> remains some 22 per cent higher than in Britain and the United
> States. (Lynn 1988, p. 116)

and he also suggests that

> the system of a relatively short working day spread over a
> greater number of days is more efficient, because of smaller
> fatigue effects (ibid.)

Elementary schools in Japan have slightly shorter hours than secondary schools, but still much longer than in the West and the study of their language dominates the curriculum; at age six, a quarter of schooltime, falling to a fifth at age eleven and about one ninth at age fourteen (White 1987 p.69).

On the other hand, expenditure on schools is not especially high compared with that in other countries, the buildings and classrooms are not of a high standard and classes are very large (Lynn 1988 p.110) (White 1987 p.180). The difference is not explained by lavish resources and luxurious working conditions. Nor is it explained by iron discipline. Japanese Elementary classrooms are noisy and rather chaotic and the teachers do not seem to mind this, nor does it seem to impair their success (White 1987 p.114).

The study of Japanese appears on the timetable not as "Japanese" but as "The National Language" and respect for their own language and culture and pride in "Japaneseness" are salient characteristics there. Another factor might be respect for education and the status of teachers, both of which seem higher in Japan. Teachers are the most highly paid of all government employees on entering employment (White 1987 p.84). They are generally respected and entry to the profession is very competitive. Mothers are expected to spend much time helping children with schoolwork and one of the best-selling pieces of furniture in Japan is a child's desk, equipped with a bell so that students may summon their mothers, without leaving their books for a moment, when they want a drink or help (White 1987 p.145)! Education is clearly greatly valued.

We set great store by the individual and competition sets in early. In Japan, by contrast, the overwhelming emphasis is placed on the group and children are

encouraged to strive for its glory rather than for their own.   Children are
certainly encouraged to strive, but for self-improvement and for greater
integration with their families and classmates, not for a prize or any individual
reward or goal.

> The important point is that there is in Japan no conflict between
> the goals of self-fulfilment and the goals of social integration.
>
> (White 1987 p.27)

Another important difference in philosophy concerns children's intellectual (and
any other) potential.   In Japan this is treated as if it were infinite for
everybody.   There is no notion of being able only "to do your best" as we often
say.   Children are exhorted to try hard and to persevere.   There seems not to
be much concept of success of failure, in schoolwork at least, because nobody ever
comes to the end of an effort.   If you are struggling, you are cheered on and
told to persevere and try again; if you are doing well you may never rest on
your laurels, but are told to go on and do even better.   There are no "ceilings",
no innate levels of ability.   Everybody has further progress to make and can
improve and everybody is expected to continue to work hard to do so.

Thus the child goes for a long time in school encouraged to work extremely hard
and expected to do so, not allowed to flag and with no "get-out clauses" of innate
lack of ability or unfavourable circumstances.   There is no escape but also less
obvious fear of failure, no discouraging comparison with other pupils and no idea
that there may be some things from which one will always be debarred by lack of
talent.

Competition does come, fiercely, with "examination hell" (Lynn 1988, p.23), but that
is much later on in children's educational careers than in the West and not until
the children already have a secure grasp of the written language.

D. 2.   READING RECOVERY IN NEW ZEALAND:

> Whatever the origins of reading difficulties they have a large
> learned component.   They limit achievement in school learning.
> They get worse if untreated and many pupils get further behind
> their classmates over time even when they receive available
> treatments. (Clay 1979 p.52)

The New Zealand Reading Recovery Programme appears very promising.   Its first
five years have been evaluated and it claims figures

> showing that very rarely has the percentage of children referred
> to specialists reached the 1% level (Clay 1990)

The rest are left reading and writing well enough to continue with their ordinary
school curriculum unimpeded by difficulties with literacy.   These figures refer
to all the children in the schools; none have been excluded for any reason.   It
is worth our attention, both because of its apparent effectiveness and because it
operates in a comparable situation to our own; notably the common language and a
common culture for many of the people of the two countries but also the fact
that, as in Britain, there are large minority groups of different race and culture
from the majority, for many of whom English is not their mother tongue.   At the
time of writing it is being tried in some British schools.

Reading Recovery is a programme for helping children whose reading and writing
are not developing satisfactorily, to overcome their confusions and faulty
techniques and establish effective habits for dealing with the written language.
Although its title refers only to reading, writing was an important part of it
from the beginning (Clay 1979 pp.32-46).   It is neither a method nor a theory,
though it uses both, but is a carefully planned procedure based on a great deal
of meticulous observation.

It started with Marie Clay's weekly observations of 100 children beginning to
learn to read and write in their first year at school.

> I tried to record, by objective procedures and in minute
> detail, the observable reading 'behaviour'.   Behaviour is
> the key word.   The records described what the children did
> and what they said, with *no prior assumptions* as to how or
> why they did these things   (Clay 1972, p1)

She found that:

> Each child having difficulty will have different things he
> can and cannot do.   Each will differ from the other in what
> is confusing, what gaps there are in knowledge, in ways of
> operating on print.   (Clay 1979 p12)

She lists no less than thirteen different ways in which a minority of children
managed to get into a muddle with their early reading and concludes that:

> A flexible programme which respects individuality at
> first, gradually brings children to the point where group
> instruction can be provided for those with common learning
> needs (ibid. p.12).

In New Zealand children begin school on their fifth birthday and their progress
with reading and writing is tested when they have been in school a year.   This
means that they are all tested at just six, but also that the testing is staggered
throughout the year and can, therefore, be carried out by members of the regular
school staff, who have been specially trained to perform both the testing and the
tuition, but who also deliver the ordinary curriculum.   Those pupils found to be
in difficulty then enter the programme.   Their progress is regularly assessed and
when they have improved enough they leave the programme.   This happens after a
minimum of twelve and and a maximum of twenty weeks' tuition.   They are retested
later in their schooling to ensure that their progress has been maintained.   The
0.8%, who do not recover, ~~and~~ then receive further specialist help outside what the
school can provide

From the childrens' point of view, the tests and the programme take the form of
an ordinary classroom activity.   All the children have individual sessions with a
teacher;   for children in the programme these sessions occur more frequently and
last longer, but there is no evidence that the children are aware of these
discrepancies and it seems very unlikely that, at that age, they would notice them.
Thus they can "recover" without ever having known they had a problem.

The careful timing of the intervention prevents the minor confusions and
misunderstandings, which often arise in the early stages of learning to read and

write, from becoming crystallised into unhelpful habits and hindering progress. By catching the problem early and putting it right quickly, before the children have noticed anything wrong, a damaging loss of confidence and self-esteem is avoided.

At the same time, by delaying the identification of difficulties for a year, it allows for the temporary difficulties of the kind which are likely to occur among children starting school because of overexcitement, shyness, homesickness and so on.   Time and resources are not wasted on problems which will right themselves.

Although it is important for educational researchers to try to identify and understand the causes of difficulty, the immediate problem for the children, their teachers and their parents is simply that there are certain things they do not know and techniques they cannot use effectively;   they block their own progress by continually reinforcing their acquired bad habits.   The pragmatic approach of the trained and observing teacher, armed with Clay's checklist, who identifies these and works on them without wasting time on the things the children can do, is very effective.

Above all, this programme avoids allowing the children to lose confidence in their ability to master the written code and to use it to communicate and express themselves, because that is when progress not only stops but often goes into reverse and the learning power and effort which ought to be going into the reading and writing get switched to working out ways of avoiding those tasks and this is a trend which is difficult, expensive and time-consuming to reverse.

The disadvantage of the Programme is its cost, which is estimated at between £600 and £1,000 per pupil.   The ratio of staff to pupils in the schools must be very high and the specialist teachers must be experienced and meticulously trained. But, if the programme's early results are confirmed it must, overall, be an economy.   It is hard to estimate the costs of literacy difficulties in schools, but any effort to improve them later will certainly be expensive as well as, often, ineffective.   Special Needs tuition seldom manages to solve its students' problems within twenty weeks.

D. 3.   PRELIMINARY EDUCATION IN THE BRITISH ARMY:

My sources for this section are Challenging Adult Literacy by Colin Stevenson (1985) and lectures and seminars given by the staff of the School of Preliminary Education.

> 1. The aim of the School of Preliminary Education will be to
> provide a 10½ week course for those soldiers who require
> tuition to raise them to the educational standard necessary
> to enable them to benefit fully from normal training and
> to fit them to carry out the duties of their Arms or Corps.
>
> 2. By improvement of their skills in reading, writing and
> number, they will be encouraged and given the opportunity to
> reach the highest standards of which they are capable as
> trained soldiers, tradesmen and potential leaders.
> (Charter of the Army School of Preliminary Education)

The SPE had its heyday during the Second World War and afterwards during the period of National Service. It closed in 1981 because the Army, reduced in size and in a time of higher unemployment, was able at last to recruit only men who did not need the tuition described above.

Soldiers were tested by the Personnel Selection Office on entry to the Army and those whose achievements were poor enough, but who also appeared to show potential, were sent to the SPE. When they had completed the course, they were retested. Results were impressive (pp.64 and 160)

> The results of the "t" testing show that on all tests highly
> significant gains were achieved by all groups ... taking
> the SPE course. ... The course was, therefore, of
> considerable value to the Army even if increased academic
> attainment is taken as the sole criterion of its success ... .

SPE graduates also consistently showed higher "survival" rates (pp.64 and 103) than comparative groups whose educational achievement on entering the Army had been sufficiently high not to need it. They stayed longer in the Army which thus got better "value" from them. This might, of course, have been accounted for by the fact that those originally more accomplished men may have had greater confidence and a wider choice of employment than the SPE graduates, who also may have stayed in the Army because of the improvement it had helped them to make in skill and confidence. Whatever the reasons, the SPE was found to be expensive but very "cost-effective".

No-one would claim that the SPE course was a model for education in our schools. It was aimed specifically at making useful and effective soldiers out of men who would otherwise have been untrainable. Even so

> ... the Army can claim to have succeeded as an instrument
> of socialisation where the home had failed (P.102).

A vital part of the course were "free and creative activities designed to relieve inner tensions and conflicts" (p.104) and much of its success was attributed to "improvements in those 'personal' emotions and adjustments that have such close association with academic success and failure" (p.102). Even for the hard-headed Army it was found necessary to devote time and resources to overcoming emotional problems in order to achieve their educational and training objectives. They attended to the men's emotional problems because they found they could not teach them successfully unless they did.

The men were trained in small groups of 17 and an instructor was assigned to each group and given overall responsibility for them throughout the course; he worked closely with them all the time, not only in their academic programme but their drill, PT and football, part of basic Army training which continued throughout the course, and went on expeditions with them. Thus each man knew both his instructor and his fellow-students extremely well by the end of the course and there was mutual support and trust within the groups. Instructors were Army Education Officers, but they had no special training in teaching literacy or basic skills. They were merely sent to the School in the ordinary course of postings, but the Commandant and senior staff had a great deal of experience and methods and materials had been built up over time and were fairly standardised so that there was plenty of professional support.

In a Foreword to the book, Major General E.F. Foxton further claims for the SPE's regime that it

> ... has proved to be of immense value to the civilian
> educational world where much of the teaching practice
> ... has been adopted in state schools.

Stevenson (p.5) adds

> ... very little was known in civilian education about
> the remedial education of adults. No common doctrine
> of general approach or experience of teaching methods
> existed that could be adapted to military requirements.
> There was a dearth of suitable reading material and
> teaching aids, and all these problems had to be solved
> within the school by trial and error.

This certainly seemed to be the case to workers in the early years of the Adult Literacy Scheme in Oxfordshire, who made use of the experience and expertise of the SPE to guide their own work. It may still have relevance to some extent for remedial teaching above the Infant level; Clay (1979 p16) makes it clear that her Reading Recovery Programme is designed for young children and warns against wholesale application of her methods to children older than the 6 - 7 year olds for which they are designed. So it is worth looking at the SPE's work because there were aspects of it that were unique and that are relevant to the teaching of adolescents like M. and C., unfortunates, one might say who, not having been offered a Reading Recovery Programme at the right time, might have benefitted in their adolescence from a regime with some of the characteristics of that offered by the SPE.

The relevant characteristics were:

Limited, clearly-defined objectives; everyone concerned understood that the immediate aim of the course was to provide the men quickly with sufficient knowledge and skill to enable them to pursue their basic Army training sucessfully. The subject-matter of learning materials and exercises was always in a military context so that the objectives were constantly kept before the students and all their current work could be clearly seen to be closely related to their future work.

Rigorous demands; all the work was compulsory for all the men and there was no opportunity for avoiding it.

Clearly set, frequently monitored goals; the students' work was continuously monitored and assessed.

Incentives; these were tangible and practical. The men knew that passing the course would provide them with the opportunity to continue in a secure job with good pay and conditions and opportunities for further training and education; failure would inevitably mean they would leave the Army.

Self-knowledge; the students knew that preliminary testing had suggested that they would be capable of following the course and that others had been tested and had not been selected. They also had counselling sessions in the course of their

work which focussed on helping them to understand themselves and their past
failures and to form realistic self-concepts and aspirations for the future.

A warm and supportive social environment; the groups remained unchanged and
worked and socialised together and with the same officers throughout the period
of the course.   Stevenson's account has moving testimonies to the warmth of
feeling it engendered.

> This is the best thing that ever happened to me.   I'm in
> this lot because I need proper treatment.   ... I wrote my
> first letter.   I only been 'ere three and a half weeks and
> I went to *** school for ten years! (p.20).

D. 4. THE ADULT LITERACY SCHEME IN OXFORDSHIRE:

In 1975, the Government allocated one million pounds to start a national campaign
to combat illiteracy among adults.   In the autumn of that year the BBC joined the
campaign and broadcast programmes designed to encourage those with literacy
problems to seek help and to offer support and training to voluntary tutors who
were the majority of those working for the scheme.   The government contributed a
further two million pounds for the next two years, after which the initiative was
left to the Local Authorities

Levine (1986 p.94ff.) describes the general pattern of local literacy schemes, and
the Nottingham one in particular, but makes the point that they varied according
to local conditions and with time.   In July 1975 I was appointed in Oxfordshire
to report on the first months of the campaign and, in April 1976, County Organiser
for the scheme.   In 1976 we set up and ran a county-wide scheme under the
auspices of the Adult Education Service of the Local Authority.

Adult Education in Oxfordshire was run by professional tutors in independent local
centres, governed by lay management committees.   In order to set up Adult
Literacy schemes in these centres, these committees had to be persuaded of the
value of the work and to appoint a paid tutor-organiser, whose salary was then
subsidised from Local Authority funds.

Referrals of both voluntary tutors and students came from several sources, mostly
at first the BBC, but later, as the service became more widely known, students
were referred by organisations like Social Services and employers and some
referred themselves, but they all came voluntarily and most were self-selected.
About 400 students were in tuition each year and these worked with individual
tutors but within a group which met at their local Adult Education Centre and
was organised and advised by a professional tutor-organiser.   Preliminary and in-
service training for all tutors and co-ordination of the work was provided by the
county with some nationally- and regionally-run courses.   This pattern continued
for at least six years.

It was claimed (Tim Brighouse, Chief Education Officer, lecture to Adult Literacy
Scheme 1980) that it was unique among educational initiatives in the fact that
voluntary staff far outnumbered professionals.   It was felt to be important that
each student should have indiviudal tuition for two reasons; students' needs,
concerns, and attainments so far were personal, often unique, and in this way all
of their tuition could concentrate on precisely what they wanted without
consideration of others' needs and wishes; and this individual attention was

agreed to be the best possible protection against the feelings of failure and inferiority to other learners which had been a feature of most students' schooldays and which most were still experiencing; all could work at their own speed aiming at their own targets and there was no comparison to be made between the work of one student and another.

At the same time the wider group offered each pair support and encouragement and attendance at the centre made contact with the tutor-organiser and the county scheme, as well as obtaining resources, easy. It was recognised from the start that people with literacy difficulties were likely also to suffer from emotional problems such as poor self-concepts, feelings of inferiority and anxiety about their ability to learn and make progress and would need to feel very secure and well protected in order to be able to work and learn effectively. Experience of the scheme and discussion with tutors and students confirmed these views.

Money was always short. The Scheme could offer only two hours tuition a week and it was difficult to give staff enough appropriate training; it would have been difficult in any case because, although some people had experience of teaching reading (usually, of course, infant teachers) and others of teaching adults, very few had experience of both.

These shortages and somewhat haphazard arrangements made it clear that the scheme was not of great importance to the authorities, certainly not a high priority. This was understandable and many argued, perhaps justifiably, that such non-statutory education should be given a lower priority than schools and vocational courses and that our students had already had one opportunity to learn as children. But the work's low status was clearly perceived and is likely to have been a factor in the way it was carried out and the success it achieved.

It may well have appeared to the students that they were being offered two hours tuition a week delivered by tutors who, however conscientious and well-motivated, were often inappropriately qualified and scantily-trained when they felt themselves to suffer from some kind of inhibiting disability and knew that eleven years of full-time education administered by trained, qualified and, often, experienced teachers had not prevented their failure. Such a situation is unlikely to be able to produce that atmosphere of conviction of the vital importance and necessity of mastering the skills and of equal confidence that they can master them which surrounds the three other programmes described here. The student themselves were often vague about their aims in joining the scheme and the goals they were pursuing.

The effectiveness of the Adult Literacy Scheme should not be judged by its students' achievements in literacy, but by the alleviation of their fears about their intelligence or mental stability and by their significant increase in self-confidence and ability to take opportunities which might be offered to them. And it does provide us with a useful comnparison with the success of other initiatives.

An attempt was made (Charnley and Jones, 1978) to evaluate the national scheme and this was found useful by staff and students, but the results were expressed in terms of the personal satisfactions described above, not in rigorous measures of actual gains in literacy and the national experience seems to have reflected that of Oxfordshire. There was certainly no objective, external assessment of

progress and it would have been against the ethos of the Scheme if there had been.

It is for this reason that I feel that, although it was an extremely valuable undertaking and almost everyone involved learned a very great deal that was both interesting and useful, strictly as an attempt to increase the students' ability to handle the written language, it was, in most cases, rather ineffective.

D. 5.   LITERACY SCHEMES: SUMMARY OF THEIR FEATURES:

What were the essential features of these schemes which made three of them effective and the fourth so much less so as literacy schemes?

They were aimed at different targets.   The Japanese system aims at all the young children and takes no account of individual differences.   The New Zealand programme tests all children at the age of six but then deals only with those identified as faltering.   Both the Army SPE and the Adult Literacy Scheme were for adults, all of whom knew well they had failed;   that is why they were there.

Only the Adult Literacy students had volunteered for their scheme;   the children and the soldiers (once they had joined the Army) had no choice.

In the three effective schemes the work was compulsory and there was no chance at all of avoiding it.   There was nothing compulsory in the Literacy Scheme and this meant that voluntary "dropping out", impossible for the children and very rare in the Army scheme, was easy and common.

Goals were clearly set in the three effective schemes.   The New Zealand children cannot be conscious of their goals, but they are meticulously defined for their teachers.   The Japanese children have set lists of characters which must be mastered each year.   The Army course included frequent monitoring of progress and the crucial PSO tests at the end.   In the Literacy Scheme students and tutors negotiated their own goals which were entirely personal ones and often no particular goal was set.

Incentives in the Army were tangible and practical;   assured employment, salary, pension and training for a trade.   The Reading Recovery teachers are expected to bring their pupils up to clearly defined standards.   The Japanese children's incentive is clearly defined achievement for themselves and for their classes, schools and families.   Scme Adult Literacy students had definable incentives and these seemed to me to have been the ones who most often really improved their literacy;   promotion in a job, keeping a job, helping growing children with homework.   But many wanted merely to "better themselves".   This, as (Wankowski (1973 p.7) has shown is too frail and vague a desire to bring, on its own, much chance of success when other factors are unfavourable.   Often their incentives were less concerned with literacy than with self-esteem and confidence.   They differed from those of the Local Authority who set up the Scheme and were hoping for demonstrable improvements in literacy.

An important point is the value placed on the work expressed partly by the time, manpower and money devoted to it.   Japanese is timetabled as "The National Language" and occupies a large part of the school timetable.   The New Zealand scheme demands a daily, individual and intensive session of half an hour.   The Army course was full-time and dedicated to "reading, writing and number";   its

other activities were designed to improve motivation and reduce anxiety, but all as a basis for efficient learning. The Literacy Scheme, by sharp contrast, offered the overwhelming majority of its students very little time. Everyone knew that little real importance was attached to it by those who controlled it.

Japanese teachers and New Zealand Reading Recovery teachers are carefully selected and highly trained and their work is carefully monitored. The Education Officers at the SPE received no special training but they were trained Army Instructors, they worked to a highly-structured curriculum and were thoroughly supervised. The Adult Literacy Scheme, especially in its early days, was an outstanding example of "learning on the job"; all concerned were inexperienced and superficially and erratically trained.

As for the money invested in these programmes, Reading Recovery is acknowledged to be expensive, but is expected to be ultimately a saving, as many fewer pupils need extra help in their later school careers. The Army formed their School of Preliminary Education because they could not train and use these soldiers without first improving their educational standard; it was expensive but they found it good value for money and, once they were able to recruit soldiers who were already literate and numerate, they disbanded it. The Literacy Scheme was poorly and precariously funded; there was a sense in which everyone working in it was a volunteer, since the paid staff worked longer hours than those they were paid for.

All these operations aimed to create a warm and supportive emotional environment. The New Zealand children have a generous allowance of individual attention from the same teacher and the need for them to gain enough confidence to take risks and make mistakes is emphasised. Japanese society and family life, and certainly the schools, emphasise conformity, dependance and social cohesion. The Army kept its groups small and unchanged with the same instructors throughout the course. The Literacy Scheme tried to keep individual tutors and students together and laid great stress on their relationship. Brumfit has said that teaching is "a form of friendship" (lecture, S.U.) and there is no question that some kind of mutual rapport and regard seems to be, at least, a valuable basis for learning.

It looks as though this warmth and emotional support is a necessary condition for learning for people of whatever age who have previously failed or are at risk. But it is not a sufficient one. It is a feature of all these operations but other important features of the effective ones are their rigorous demands and their firm expectations that these will be met. These very demands must convey to the students the notion that the work is important, indeed vital, along with the expectation that the goals are attainable by all the students.

These features seem to be characteristic of the Writing Communities discussed in B.4. As well as warmth, support, rigorous demands, sticks and carrots, above all one needs to create strong social pressures and the confident expectation that everyone involved can and will become a writer along with the rest.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

1. THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM:

From this study there is no evidence that anyone concerned understood the
English Spelling System.   It seemed to be regarded by everyone as phonetic,
but riddled with irregularities.   The possibility that there might be other
principles at work was occasionally touched on but, again, seen rather as
another irregularity.   This meant that most were dissatisfied with it and
that those who were not either cherished it merely for the charm of its
eccentricities or had given it little thought;   otherwise no-one saw anything
positive about it.   They were not in a position to "sell" it or explain it to
their pupils or to encourage them when they found it difficult to learn.

The literature, on the other hand, refers to research which throws relevant
and useful light on the workings of the written language and suggests that it
is rather user-friendly, at least for readers, who are always more numerous
and influential than writers and learners.   This in turn means that it is
unlikely to be radically altered, especially as English is now increasingly a
lingua franca across the world.   Most of this research is fairly recent and
is seen as linguistic rather than educational, so it may not be surprising
that it had not yet reached these classrooms.

Teachers need to know more than these teachers, at least, knew about the
written language.   They need to know that the system is one of mixed
principles and what these are, especially the important relationship between
spelling and meaning;   that standard spellings which may seem like a failure
of the phonic code are more likely to be cases of a semantic or historical
principle taking precedence, in this case, over the phonic one.

We should acknowledge both that English spelling is certainly harder to learn
than some unmixed systems but that there are undoubted rewards for learning it
and serious disadvantages in not doing so.

We hear a great deal these days about the low status and morale of teachers.
Both of these would surely be enhanced by greater expertise and skill with
what is, after all, the medium through which nearly all of their work is done.
This applies especially to Infant and Special Needs teachers, but this study
demonstrates the contribution which the participation of all the teachers made

to the pupils' spelling.   No doubt there would be practical difficulties
attached to adding to the content of training courses, but I believe that most
would find it an interesting and rewarding topic and certainly one which would
greatly enhance the confidence with which they faced their work in the
classroom.

2.   LEARNING TO USE THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM:

Again, much of the most useful research on young children's learning processes
in mastering the written language is recent.   The work of the Junior and
Secondary School teachers with their fourteen pupils seemed very successful
and is much praised here, but it appeared to come about rather through the
teachers' instinctive understanding of the pupils' needs and a kind of
collective will for them to succeed than through a conscious understanding of
how people learn to spell.   Of course the youngest children in the study were
ten, so there is no reason to expect these teachers to be experts in the early
learning of spelling, but they needed to be because they were faced with
spelling problems.

The study supports the view that learning to read and write are complex
processes and, importantly, that these processes may not work well unless the
child has first acquired a good deal of experience with the written language
and some understanding of its characteristics and purposes.

It suggests that the poor attainment of the boys in Part A may have stemmed
originally from quite trivial difficulties and misunderstandings and that the
real damage was done by allowing these to persist over a long period of time,
by the processes involved in obtaining their Statements of Special Needs and
by the way in which they were taught and managed under the terms of their
Statements.   All of this led them to despair of spelling and they were not so
much trying to learn to spell and failing as trying to avoid doing it at all
and, frequently, succeeding.

They certainly did very little writing and spelling compared with the
fourteen, who wrote regularly and frequently.   They were probably at an
earlier stage partly simply because of this lack of experience with the
activity.   The only observable deficiency that I could find in them was in
their spelling and yet they were so greatly hindered in their school progress
that they were regarded as disabled and in need of expensive specialist help.
Nothing emerged from the study to suggest that they were poor learners;
indeed they had learned a great deal, including many spellings which they had
firmly retained, some standard, many not.   The scale of the boys'
disadvantage arising from a single deficit suggests that spelling, trivial and
taken for granted when developing well, can be very important as an inhibitor
of all-round progress when it goes wrong.

The study suggests that the use of the term Dyslexia is unhelpful in cases
like those in Part A, where the term was used but without any explanation
being offered as to what it meant and what it implied for the future.   Its
value, a real one, has been that of releasing poor writers from the fear of
being thought to be stupid or lazy and undoubtedly those who form Dyslexia
Associations and campaign have done much to gain sympathy and help rather than
opprobrium for poor writers.   But it is a question-begging term, defined only

by the discrepancy between a person's general intelligence and competence and
their literacy achievement.   It was no help here.

The teachers of the fourteen mentioned Dyslexia as a possible cause of trouble
but only in private conversations, not to the pupils concerned, and they
seemed to see it as creating a difficulty certainly but never as preventing
writing.   They thought that everyone could, and should, learn to write and
spell while acknowledging that some would find this difficult.

Whatever the activity, there will probably always be a tiny minority who have
such complex or deep-seated problems as to seriously impede their learning.
But these should really be a tiny minority and hope for them should not be
abandoned easily.

A very unhelpful feature of the teaching of reading and spelling is the
vehemence of the arguments which rage over the value of different teaching
methods and materials.   These might be stilled if the significance of the
stages through which learners pass were recognised.   To advocate using all
the methods and a variety of materials is now common and helpful, but it is
important also to appreciate that the choice of method should depend on the
stage of the child's learning and that some, which are ultimately vital,
especially phonic analysis, may do positive harm if introduced too early.

As an important part of this understanding teachers need to appreciate the
great differences which exist between their own perceptions and understanding,
especially of sounds and of writing conventions, and those of a pre-literate
or semi-literate child and to make a positive effort to recognise and remember
how differently what they see and hear may be experienced by their pupils.
They might, then, be less ready to see some early attempts at spelling as
bizarre and as presaging trouble and to suspect mysterious neurological
deficits and better able to suit their practices to their pupils' current
stages of development.   They would also be able to identify real trouble
earlier and tackle it more effectively.

3.   TEACHING SPELLING:

A better understanding of the written language and of how we use and learn it
must, of themselves, enable teachers to teach spelling more effectively, but
there are other considerations as well.

One is the need to make wise decisions about the emphasis to be placed on
spelling.   Paradoxically the study argues that spelling is of vital, but also
only of secondary, importance.   It is important in itself as part of
knowledge about language and also because recent research suggests that
spelling plays a hitherto unrecognised part in facilitating early progress
with reading.   It is also vital for clear, easy communication and for pupils'
further educational progress.   But it is secondary because in practice it
should always be seen as ancilliary to the writing which, itself, is
undertaken for some purpose.   Good spelling should not be a matter of social
status nor seen as a sign of intellectual superiority.   It is just a great
convenience for both writer and reader.

There was a marked contrast in the way in which spelling was dealt with for
the Special Needs boys and for the fourteen.   There was little evidence of

help or advice having been offered to the two boys on tackling spelling and their errors were often allowed to pass without comment or correction; such help and advice as they had been given had resulted in a "one-track", phonic approach which frequently was unsuccessful and then left them helpless. They did not see writing as a normal or useful method of communication, more as a school ritual.

The fourteen, on the other hand, benefited from clear, agreed and co-ordinated school policies. They had been given effective instructions and resources for learning individual words and for finding the spellings of those they needed for a piece of writing. They were never helpless nor forced to reduce their vocabulary to conform with their spelling ability. The ways in which their writing and their errors were dealt with helped them to persevere and improve. These differed slightly from teacher to teacher but all the teachers had reasons for their practices which they had thought about and could explain. Concern for spelling was not confined to the English department in the Secondary School and the different approaches which the pupils encountered helped to confirm for them the importance of spelling and to demonstrate that it was important for different purposes. Above all, the spelling was always firmly placed within the context of writing for a purpose.

Their parents approved of the school system and supported their children's efforts, some more enthusiastically and effectively than others, but their policies, too, within each family, seemed mostly consistent and clear.

Particular difficulties which seemed to affect some individuals were acknowledged sympathetically and some extra help was given to those pupils, but they were not treated as disabled and never excused from any tasks.

The emphasis on purposeful writing meant, in the Secondary School, that the words to be studied were taken from their own writing, which seems to be the best practice, although in the Junior School a published scheme was used. A fundamental activity of teaching is organising the material for the pupils systematically and many spelling courses try to do this. The findings of the study, supported by much previous experience of poor spellers suggest this attempt at early systemisation may be very unhelpful, first because it conflicts with the principle of the choice of words being made by the pupil, but also because it suggests a regular, systematic sound-to-symbol correspondence. This can be sustained for some time with the consonant-vowel-consonant words offered to children for their first spellings and can give the impression that a conscientious following of this simple rule will be all that is required. But it breaks down when real writing for communication begins because the most commonly-needed words are also the least phonically "regular". It is also a poor preparation for the semantic connections betrween spellings which they will encounter later and it fails to take advantage of the young child's ability to learn through whatever comes to hand unhindered by disorder.

Grouping words by analogy also conflicts with the overriding principle of writing for communication and is ineffective because of the pupils' inexperience which gives them too few words from which to draw analogies. It is better to draw on the adaptibility, resourcefulness and resilience of pupils, help them to to learn the words they need most often and leave analogies until they are more experienced. An interesting question is how

much just insisting on a good deal of regular, frequent writing without too much emphasis on spelling, would achieve. The study does suggest a tendency gradually to notice the standard spellings of words and to conform to them in most pupils. Teachers who draw attention to words doubtless encourage this process without necessarily holding specific spelling sessions. Might we treat it more as social development like table manners and polite speech, to which most pupils will sooner or later come to conform with a little encouragement and a few reminders here and there; while, of course, keeping a stern eye on progress and making sure that conformity does come about?

This study certainly raises the question whether the category of Special Needs, as it works at present, is a helpful one for pupils in difficulty with spelling or whether it may simply create additional problems for them and for their schools. It seems to have put the boys in Part A at a real disadvantage.

The name itself, Special Needs, is unhelpful. It implies that it is the pupils who have the Special Needs arising from some defect in them. Of course it is easy to assume that the defect does lie in the pupils because it is undeniable that most do learn to read and write with varying, but acceptable, degrees of fluency and accuracy and that makes a prima facie case for assuming a defect in someone who, in apparently identical conditions, does not. The argument here is that, although conditions may seem identical, they are not because, once pupils have lost confidence in their ability to learn to spell, they are working in different conditions from their peers who have not. We need to be very sure before we assume that it is they and not the teaching which is at fault.

Moreover Special Needs also includes children who really are disabled, physically, intellectually and emotionally, so that failing readers and writers categorised as having Special Needs are grouped with these others.

There are two objections to this identification. For other categories of disabled pupils there are usually clear diagnoses and prescriptions. Usually their disability will be obvious and will attract sympathy rather than stigma. It is not so with the poor readers and writers. Others see no outward sign; they will always have to tell people themselves of their difficulty or allow it to emerge humiliatingly through their bad performance. And it is unlikely that they will have received any clear information about their condition. This is a recipe for embarrassment, confusion and uncertainty of purpose in their management and teaching.

This first objection is probably the main cause of the second. Teachers dislike labelling children, especially when they are very young. This study's conclusions support them in this since they argue that pupils' perception of their own failure is a strong inhibitor of future success. And yet another strong argument is that early intervention is extremely important and in many cases can forestall potential problems. At present there must be a conflict of principle; we cannot intervene without the damaging label and fuss, but we need to intervene to forestall the problem.

If, as has been suggested here, the Special Needs boys of this study are typical of many others, most of the difficulties with reading and writing could be much more effectively, painlessly and cheaply dealt with by early

identification (but not to the pupil) and expert, intensive tuition like that provided by the New Zealand Reading Recovery programme than under the present Special Needs system.

Undoubtedly there would still be some, as in New Zealand (less than 1%), who still could not perform satisfactorily. They would be real cases of Special Need and for that 1% the label would be hard to avoid, since their problem would by then be very obvious to all. But then we might hope to give them enough of the highly expert and time-consuming help they need and to start it early. This would be more likely for the very reason that the system would no longer be jammed with pupils whose problems could be prevented within the ordinary school programme.

4.   EMOTION AND ATTITUDES: MOTIVATION AND EXPECTATION:

Everyone concerned with the fourteen seemed sure that learning to spell was important.   The pupils knew they would need to write and spell correctly in their adult lives and could envisage ways in which it would impinge on them then, as well as understanding its importance for the nearer future at school. By contrast the Special Needs boys thought they would be able to manage without writing or spelling once they had left school.

They were also managing quite well at school without doing much writing or spelling.   Their anxiety and unhappiness was caused by the fact that they appeared to lack a "normal" human ability and were different from their peers and by "induced helplessness", which (Levine 1986, p.21)

> ... turns out, in the long run, to be as much of a handicap
> as the absence of the basic skills themselves

There was nothing they wanted to write, they seemed to be thoroughly frightened of it and were good at avoiding it.   They were also good at other school activities which gave them a further incentive to avoid it.   Since attention was only seldom and erratically drawn to their errors, they were often unaware that they had made errors.   From their experience they were justified in thinking that spelling did not matter and equally justified in their resentment when they found that, after all, it did.

The close co-operation and mutual respect between home and school for the fourteen was also in contrast to the uneasy, often hostile, relations between the Special Needs boys' parents and their teachers.   Attempts to explain their problems included mutual recriminations between parents and teachers. But it was probably ultimately their parents who were the most important influence on their change for the better.

An interesting and, I believe, important finding from the study is that these children observed hardly any writing at all going on outside school.   Some of the parents realised this, with surprise, in the course of being interviewed. This is another perception which may be quite different between adults and teachers, who take writing and its purposes for granted and some children, who experience it only as part of their school routines.   So we cannot take it for granted that pupils understand the importance of writing and its purposes nor the need to adopt its conventions.   They need to be taught these things as well in the course of purposeful writing and surrounded by the confident

expectation that the work will be interesting, enjoyable (for most) and useful
(for all) and that they will be able to do it better and better as they
continue to practise and learn.

There is a critical passage in Part A about the administrative arrangements
for my work with the Special Needs boys.   It is included because it reflected
the attitudes and the expectations which surrounded them and their writing.
The boys were not expected to do any extra work to improve their spelling;   it
had to be included in their ordinary timetable and they missed other
schoolwork for it.   This demonstrated to me, and more importantly to them,
that no real importance, and certainly no urgency, was attached to their
Special Needs sessions and that there was little real expectation that they
would benefit;   they seemed to be much more a means of pacifying the angry
parents and comforting the boys.   The fourteen, by contrast, were given tasks
to do and expected to do them - in their own time if they had been unable to
complete them in school cr for homework.   Their tasks were treated like the
real tasks of daily life.

In comparing the three situations in which these sixteen pupils found
themselves, the crucial observable differences seem to me to be in the
surrounding attitudes and expectations.   The teachers in the three situations
did not seem to differ in knowledge and understanding but they did differ in
the importance they attached to spelling, the emphasis they gave it among the
various features of writing, the co-operation they had established with the
parents, the attitudes they showed towards their pupils and their tasks and
the expectations they had of them.

Such a conclusion might suggest that it is not necessary for anyone to
understand the writing system or the way it is used and learned;   these
helpful attitudes and expectations flourished where they did amid considerable
ignorance on those subjects.   Perhaps for teachers who are so sure of the
necessity to learn to spell, so sure of their charges' ability to do so and so
confident and purposeful in their general approach to teaching it may not be
necessary.   We only need to adjust our attitudes and expectations correctly
and all will be well.

But how can this be achieved for those whose attitudes are defeatist in the
face of the writing system and of the ability of some of their pupils to
master it and who, therefore, hold pessimistic expectations of both?   They
have usually reached this position as a result of compelling personal
experience and will need to be convinced that their failing pupils can do
better.   This can surely only be done by explaining and demonstrating the
system and the learning processes and convincing teachers (and others if
possible) through knowledge, logical argument and demonstration that all but a
very few of their pupils can learn to spell well enough for their own purposes
now and for improvement in the future if they need it.

> I am sure that teachers would appreciate more help in trying
> to understand the learning problems and possible modes of
> treatment of these unfortunates, and would prefer less
> emphasis on factors they could not conceivably control and
> which serve, largely, to justify our own failures.
>
> (Merritt 1972 p.194)

This must involve some study of the writing system and the processes involved in learning it for all teachers and much more for specialists.

In Part A I say that M. had lost his Seven League Boots. The descriptions of the history of writing and of children learning it successfully, both in the Literature and in the Part C study, suggest that, in order to invent a practical writing system or to learn to use it, you need pragmatism, resourcefulness, flexibllity, resilience and, above all, a will to communicate. These are qualities which most children bring to their learning and which enable them to master an enormous syllabus in their early years. They are the Magic Boots and children are born with them. Their parents' and teachers' task is to see that they do not lose them.

EVALUATION OF THE STUDY

This study tries to identify factors which may be involved in pupils' successful or unsuccessful progress in mastering Standard English Orthography. It concludes that attitudes and expectations play a more important part in these outcomes than is often realised, but that these attitudes and expectations themselves may depend on a better understanding of the task of learning to spell and of the processes involved in it. It makes recommendations for changes in teacher training and big changes in the way in which spelling problems are identified and dealt with.

These may seem rather sweeping recommendations to emerge from what is a small and unquestionably subjective study. The amount of material obtained and the numbers of people involved are small, it depends heavily upon observation by one person and cannot offer precisely quantified details in its results.

These are weaknesses but it seems to me that it would be difficult to obtain the information which emerges in any other way, especially that in Part A. It is impossible to believe that any school would have tolerated an observer concentrated on one pupil over even a fraction of the time that 1 worked with each of these boys. By teaching them myself individually and regularly over such long periods, I believe that I had the best possible opportunities to observe, question, understand and record their activities, emotions and thoughts and the surrounding influences.

However, just because I was their tutor, working in their schools and in the employment of the Local Authority, there were constraints on what I could do. The research had to be subordinated to the purpose of helping them overcome their educational difficulties and the information gained could only be what I could get without jeopardising that purpose.   I "chatted" to their teachers and noted their comments afterwards, I talked at length, once for each boy, to their parents, but I could not obtain formal interviews or record them as I later did for the study in Part C.   I had always to bear in mind the pupils' own anxiety and distress and the strained relations which they had with their teachers, and to some extent with their parents, and which were very evident between their parents and their teachers.   Since I was suggesting emotion and self-esteem as an important factor in learning, I could not impose distress on the boys even in the interests of research.   I could not probe and question the people surrounding the pupils and record their comments as I could for Part C.

Paradoxically perhaps, I believe I obtained more information from the boys just because I did not talk much to either their teachers or their parents during the time of their tuition.   Our conversations were confidential and with so much time it was possible to let them come to confide in me slowly and of their own accord, all the more, perhaps, because they knew I would not have much opportunity to pass what they said on to others.

For these reasons the comparison I make between the experience of the pupils in Part A and those in Part C is necessarily unbalanced; in Part A there is a great deal of intimate detail obtained from the pupils themselves, but much of the information about the other people surrounding them is circumstantial and has been deduced from conversations with the boys and from snatches of informal talk and occasional unplanned incidents.   For Part C, on the other hand, there is much less detail about the pupils, but the rest of the information comes from their, and their teachers' and parents', own words spoken in structured interviews and recorded on tape.

In spite of this imbalance, I believe that the comparison can be made and that the information does provide the evidence for it.

I also believe that in educational research, if it is to be of any practical value, we sometimes have to accept rather flimsy evidence on which to base our practice, because in the classroom we have to do something.   It is open to a doctor to tell a patient that a drug is being tested which may help in the future, but too little is known yet for it to be prescribed and therefore no treatment can be offered.   It is not open to teachers to feel that they have a promising method of teaching some topic but that, as the research into it is not yet complete, the pupils must go without the information.   Teachers surely must often have to make decisions on a mixture of unconfirmed, often conflicting, data, hunch and personal judgment, which can be the glory of teaching but would be disgraceful in a more precisely-disciplined profession.

On the other hand, it seems likely that much of the trouble surrounding the learning of spelling may have arisen from precisely this kind of intuitive thinking, and from "common sense".   Much of the evidence from the research conflicts with "common sense; in particular it does seem obvious that, if a pupil fails with a method which works with the great majority of pupils, the problem must lie with the pupil rather than with the teacher or the method. The study elicits confident assertions about spelling and how it is learned from people who are teaching and supporting it well and who are interested and supportive of it but whose assertions are, all the same, mistaken.   Perhaps it is this kind of paradox which makes education and cognitive development so complex and fascinating but also such a delicate undertaking that we must keep scrutinising our practices and keeping in touch with advances in research, while somehow, at the same time, holding on to our creative flair and trust of our own judgment.

The mistrust of flimsy evidence and the search for rigour may be why so much of the research on spelling until recently has been so spectacularly unhelpful.   In the pursuit of precision and rigorous validity for its findings it often produced impressively authenticated results but, because it was done in artificial conditions and using artificial material, these had almost no relevance to what goes on among pupils and teachers in real classrooms.   The strength of research, like that of Clay, which has yielded credible, verifiable data and practical policies which have been evaluated over time and shown to work, lies in the fact that it was based on meticulous

observation of children working in their own real classrooms in the way they regularly did and without any intervention on the part of the researcher. She observed and recorded what the successful pupils did and what the unsuccessful did and compared them, as Rice did so long ago and so effectively (see B.3.(a)). Her results, conclusions and the practices she recommends have been adopted nationwide in New Zealand and now elsewhere and appear to be very successful.

This is the kind of observation which I tried to emulate, within my limitations, for both the Part A and the Part C studies and I believe that they have the validity of faithful reports, although necessarily sometimes subjective, of what these pupils actually did in the normal course of their lessons and what happened to them, the only abnormal feature of these sessions being my presence in the classroom; this I felt was something they accepted without anxiety and soon forgot.

It is not clear that larger numbers of pupils for study would have been more convincing. To be so they would have to have been large enough to be well beyond the scope of one person to study them in the same detail and one would still not be able to claim that what was found was typical of the unsuccessful spellers of the population as a whole. The study does not claim that this kind of experience is what happens to failing spellers. It claims that these things happened to these two failing spellers and asks whether there may not be many more like them in the school population as a whole, failing and suffering in the same sort of way and for the same sort of reasons. Then it looks at the different experience of the fourteen in their situation, which seemed to be so successful and wonders what would have happened to the Special Needs boys if they had had the educational experience of the fourteen; and what would have happened to some of the undoubtedly rather poor spellers among the fourteen if they had been taught and managed as the Special Needs boys were.

Small numbers attract the complaint that the findings cannot be generalised and may just relate to that particular situation. But they can be generalised if they can be replicated and the findings confirmed by the findings of later studies. For this to happen the project must be so fully

and accurately described that readers may be clear enough about what was done to be able to replicate it. I have tried to do this.

It is also fair to say that the focal theory of the study is not very focused. The topic involves several disciplines and this study has deliberately ranged across them. It deals with four facets of the learning and teaching of spelling, all of them big subjects in themselves. In Part B Chapter 1 derives mostly from linguistics, Chapter 2 from psychology and Chapter 3 tries to bring these two disciplines together to consider teaching. Chapter 4 considers emotional and social influences surrounding teaching and learning. I think it was necessary to embrace all these areas because 1 felt, when I began, and still feel that one of the problems attached to literacy is that it has been tackled by separate disciplines which have not interacted sufficiently to be able to co-ordinate their theories and policies and that people often could not be helped to learn because their tuition would concentrate on one aspect of the task only, when so many different processes have to interact to achieve success. The study supports this view; its picture of writing and spelling is of a complex activity where all these ingredients, the task, the learning processes, the teaching and the emotional atmosphere in which it takes place contribute vitally to the outcome. The focus is provided by the pupils and the way in which all these factors impinged on them.

No new information emerges from the study, but it brings together things already known but perhaps not all known to the same people, or not sufficiently emphasised. The ignorance of everyone concerned about the spelling system (hardly surprising since the research is both rather academic, rather recent and out of line with "common sense"), the importance of teachers' and preliterate children's differing perceptions of some sounds and some other aspects of writing, the evidence that so much "writing" and hypothesising about writing goes on among (some) pre-school children, the fact that many of these children hardly ever saw anyone writing outside school, the importance of the family and the "writing community" and, above all, the question of who has Special Needs, what they are and how we supply them are all important parts of the debate.

The contribution here to that debate lies in the bringing together of these findings from different disciplines and in the attempt it makes to take a rational view of success in spellers. The Special Needs boys appear not as poor learners but as poorly-managed and misinformed learners who had actually learned rather well and had made valid deductions from their learning. The poor spellers among the fourteen are, obviously, less successful in that respect than the good ones but not (not allowed to be) inhibited from continuing to write and to learn because of that.

The study supports a welcome modern trend to avoid the stale and acrimonious conflict among the champions of different teaching methods and resources and the search for disabilities in pupils, to show how circumstances may combine in such a way as to persuade some able pupils that it is not necessary or desirable to read and write and that they have disabilities which will make it very hard for them to do so.

It is impossible to doubt the importance of the subject. The arguments for a general high standard of literacy in society are well rehearsed and observation of the personal consequences of failure in it demonstrate how absolutely desirable the ability to write with confidence and fluency is for most individuals. But there is an educational argument for the specific study of the learning of spelling, put by Frith (1980 p.5)

> The question of how to teach and how to learn is
> exceedingly important to the study of spelling, since
> spelling is above all an educational skill.

She goes on to say that "the present theoretical framework" for studying learning in general

> ... does not explain how a person passes from one stage
> of skill to the next. Perhaps a more appropriate
> framework can be developed through focusing on such a
> typically learned skill as spelling.

monday 4th march 1999

Things I don't Like.

I dot Like plepr tleing my me
what to do. and roreing me about.
I don't Like do what I Like
what I doing now.
And I don't Like be tank out
of the unit because its sune I b
Changet on because it's ten oclock on monday
and Thursday Friday it's ningen.
nage

Things 7
6
3

Thursday, 14th March 1991

The crash

on wednesday 13th March
on the M4 there was
the 3bigs crash in the whole
in of England one car corash
into the side bromer and
he went Flying a cress
the morerway and crash
into a Lorry with a lotg
of Gus canR and the car
and the went up with Flams
and 28 car Lorry and vans wehb
into the back of it. and foar 13
ploper Died in the crash.
And it ended up with a
pelue up!

4
4
6
5
5
6
6
5
6
6
6
6
6
5
6
2
7

Things
6
Chan

Examples of M's writing: one of the worst and one of the best
only ten days apart but written in very different moods.

185.

Stage 3   Magic e.   Probably after
                              count.

$\overline{\quad}$ e | hop
                         | mat
                         | can
                         | pin | etc.
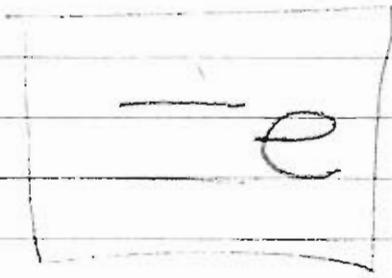
till Gregory
Dolch

Stile Tray work.
(Tutor Pack Macheras).
(Bron word builders ;
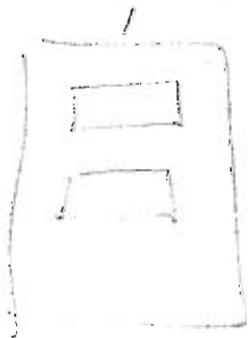
                    } roll of words

                    | b |
                    | ba |
                    | bat |

Games   — Stott
          Elizabeth Wood ? (will check this)

Stage 4
          Vowel Digraphs   G. R. P.

Notes from the Dyslexia Centre where M. had received tuition.

186.

Christmas

chram

28th November

No. g words
Written

For¹ my¹ Britherdoll² I¹ am¹ — 5

5 mire. going¹ Dollei⁸ and¹ I'want¹ @ Some¹ — 6

Football³ books⁵ and¹ Son¹ gonl Kirper — 5

guse⁴ The¹ England³ Thdsuted⁴⁵ — 5

and¹ The¹ England³ Footkit⁸ — 5
ball

For¹ christmas² I¹ want¹ — 4

a¹ canne⁸ craem⁸ and¹ a¹ (35) 5

I¹ walkman¹ W⁸ from¹ Sony⁸ and¹ — 5

Some¹ Tener⁸. — 2

5 mire. Im¹ going¹ to¹ invent³ — 4

fiven friend¹ to¹ my¹ — 4

party² Im¹ going¹ bout⁸ — 4

and¹ a¹ fime film⁴ as¹ well. — 5

and¹ my¹ mum¹ is¹ going¹ to¹ — 6

Dust¹ Some¹ trainer⁸ a chig⁸ (35) 5

10 mire (70)

bowling   goalkeeper
bowling   goalkeeper

Target Levels	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Correct	43	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	
Incorrect	4	1	3	2	2	0	0	8	
Total	47	3	5	3	2	0	0	10	(70)

M's writing marked according to Arvidson (1977). It looks
dreadful, but nearly all the frequently-used words are correct.

THE CRASH 14/3/91 (see Appendix 1 A).   This was the longest and, in
my subjective judgment, one of the "best" pieces that M. wrote among
his five-minute stories.   There had been a great deal on the news
about this terrible car crash and it was near his home, so he was
excited by it and inspired to write - for once!

1.   Analysis according to Arvidson (1963):   Words are grouped into
8 Target Levels according to their frequency of use;   2,700 words
are in Levels 1-7, all others are in Level 8.

Levels:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Correct:	48	5	3	0	0	1	0	0	57
Incorrect:	3	2	6	0	3	0	1	2	17
Total:	51	7	9	0	3	1	1	2	74

He wrote 74 words altogether, of which 57, or 77.0%, were correct.
Of his 17 errors, I judged 7 to be "slips of the pen" on the grounds
that he was writing at speed, excited and concentrating on the story
rather than on the "secretarial aspect" of the task and that he
identified and corrected them unaided while editing the piece.   He
could, therefore, in, say, twelve minutes, produce unaided 74 words
of which 64 or 86.5% were correct.

Level 1:   (these words are from the group which accounts for 75% of
all that anyone ever writes in English) (Arvidson 1963):

51 were written of which 48 (94.1%) were correct and 2 were judged
to be "slips".

Level 2:   7 written, 5 (71.4%) correct and one a "slip.

Level 3:   9 written, 3 (33.3%) correct and 3 "slips".

Level 4:   None written.   Level 5:   3 written, all incorrect.

Level 6:   1 written correctly. Level 7:   1 written incorrectly.

Level 8:   2 written, 1 (50%) correct and one "slip".

Seventeen errors in 74 words, especially if underlined in red ink,
look bad.   10 errors and 7 quickly-identified and -corrected "slips
of the pen" seems better.   74 words of which 86.5% are correct
seems better still.

From the point of view of the workload of a writer editing a 74-word
piece, 10 errors or 13.5% may not be thought an unmanageable number
to look up.   The analysis offers an opportunity to study first the
words likely to be needed most often.

2.   Analysis according to Peters (1975):

I.   Substitution of letter strings:

Reasonable Phonic Alternative: WHOLE/HOLE
Category 2. Phonic Alternative not Conforming
                                    to Precedent: FLAMES/FLAMS

II. Faulty Auditory Perception: ACROSS/A CRESS   GAS/GUS
                              BIGGEST/BIGS   MOTORWAY/MORERWAY

III. Perseveration: None

1V. Analysis of Structure
Omissions   Insertions   Transpositions   Doubling   Contractions

V.   Unclassifiable: PEOPLE/PLOPER   BARRIER/BROMER   PILE/PELUE

---

4.   Analysis according to Nelson (1980):

Order Errors: None

Phonetically Inaccurate Errors:

BIGGEST/BIGS BARRIER/BROMER CRASHED/CRASH FLYING/FLY CARS/CAR

ACROSS/A CRESS LOTS/A LOTS GAS/GUS CANS/CAN MOTORWAY/MORERWAY

CRASHED/CRASH FLAMES/FLAMS LORRIES/LORRY VANS/VAN PEOPLE/PLOPER

Unclassified: WHOLE/HOLE

---

4.   Analysis according to Read (1986):

Letter-name spellings (p.5):   BIGGEST/BIGS   FLAMES/FLAMS

Child's perception of vowel-sound (p.40):   GAS/GUS

Unclassified: MOTORWAY/MORERWAY   WHOLE/HOLE   BARRIER/BROMER
               PEOPLE/PLOPER   PILE/PELUE

---

5.   Analysis according to Klein and Millar (1990):

Spell it like it sounds: BIGGEST/BIGS   MOTORWAY/MORERWAY
                           WHOLE/HOLE   GAS/GUS

Get letters out of order: None

Don't know rule: WHOLE/HOLE   FLAMES/FLAMS

Mix up sounds: BIGGEST/BIGS   MOTORWAY/MORERWAY   GAS/GUS

Miss out/add bits: BIGGEST/BIGS   WHOLE/HOLE   FLAMES/FLAMS

Unclassifiable: BARRIER/BROMER   PEOPLE/PLOPER   PILE/PELUE

---

6.   Analysis according to Cripps (1991)

Category 1.   Possible: WHOLE/HOLE

Category 2.   Unlikely: FLAMES/FLAMS

Category 3.   Auditory: ACROSS/A CRESS   GAS/GUS   BIGGEST/BIGS

Category 4.   Handwriting: None

Category 5.   Random/Bizarre: PEOPLE/PLOPER   BARRIER/BROMER
                               PILE/PELUE

Analyses 2 - 6 demonstrate the difficulty of deciding how to assign
spelling errors to the different categories for diagnosis

Number of Words Written

Number of Level 1 Words Written
Number of Level 1 Words Written Correctly

Number of Words Levels 2-7 Written
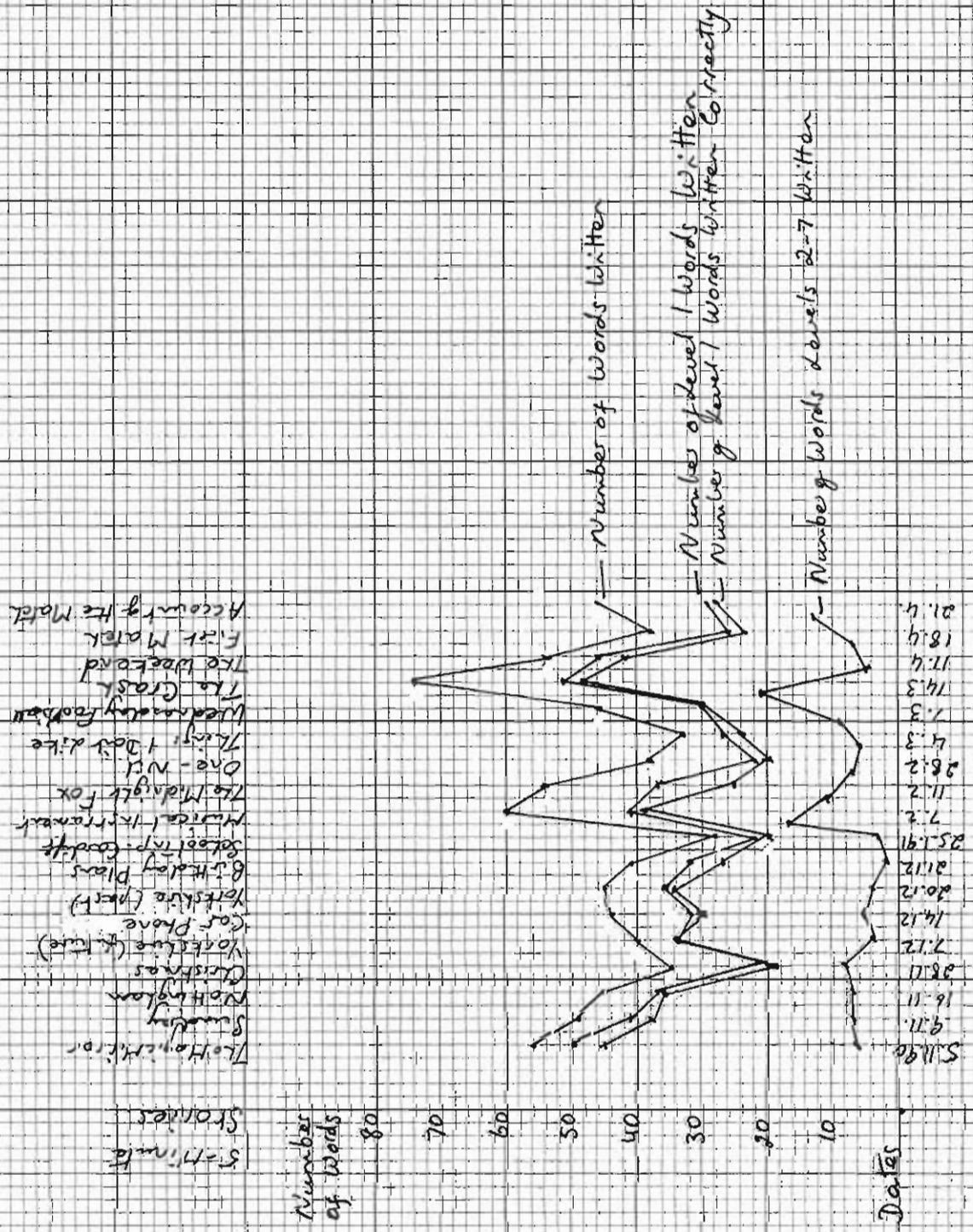
Progress of M's Writing. (according to Arvidson)

Number
of Words

80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10

Dates

S.11.86
9.11.
16.11
38.11
7.12.
14.12
30.12.
31.12.
25.1.91
7.2.
11.2.
28.2.
4.3.
7.3.
14.3
17.4
18.4
21.4

Short
Stories

The Haunted Tor
Sunday
Nottingham
Christmas
Yorkshire (true)
"Cat Phone
Yorkshire (pt. 1)
8. Holiday Plans
School Trip Cardiff
Musical Instrument
The Midnight Fox
Drac — Null
Things I don't like
Wednesday Football
The Crash
The Weekend
First Match
Account of the Match

191

Thursday 25th January.

Spelling

I do not like Spelling when my teacher asks me to Spell it right I sa draw same thing in the margen margin I think English is a stupid langwig and I do not like writing it I don't no if I would like writing it if the Spelling was not hard

Saturday 13th June 1992.

My Perfect Holiday.

My perfect Holiday would Be a six weeks in Swizoland for the first three weeks I would go skying in the Alpes Alapales. I would stay in a five star hotel and in the day I would sky and snow Bord and to get around I would have a snow mobeal. At night I would eat in restronts and go to night clubs.

= Number of words written

Number of words written / Number of words written correctly

= Numbers used & 2 Words Written

Number of words

80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10

Dates

5-Minute Stories
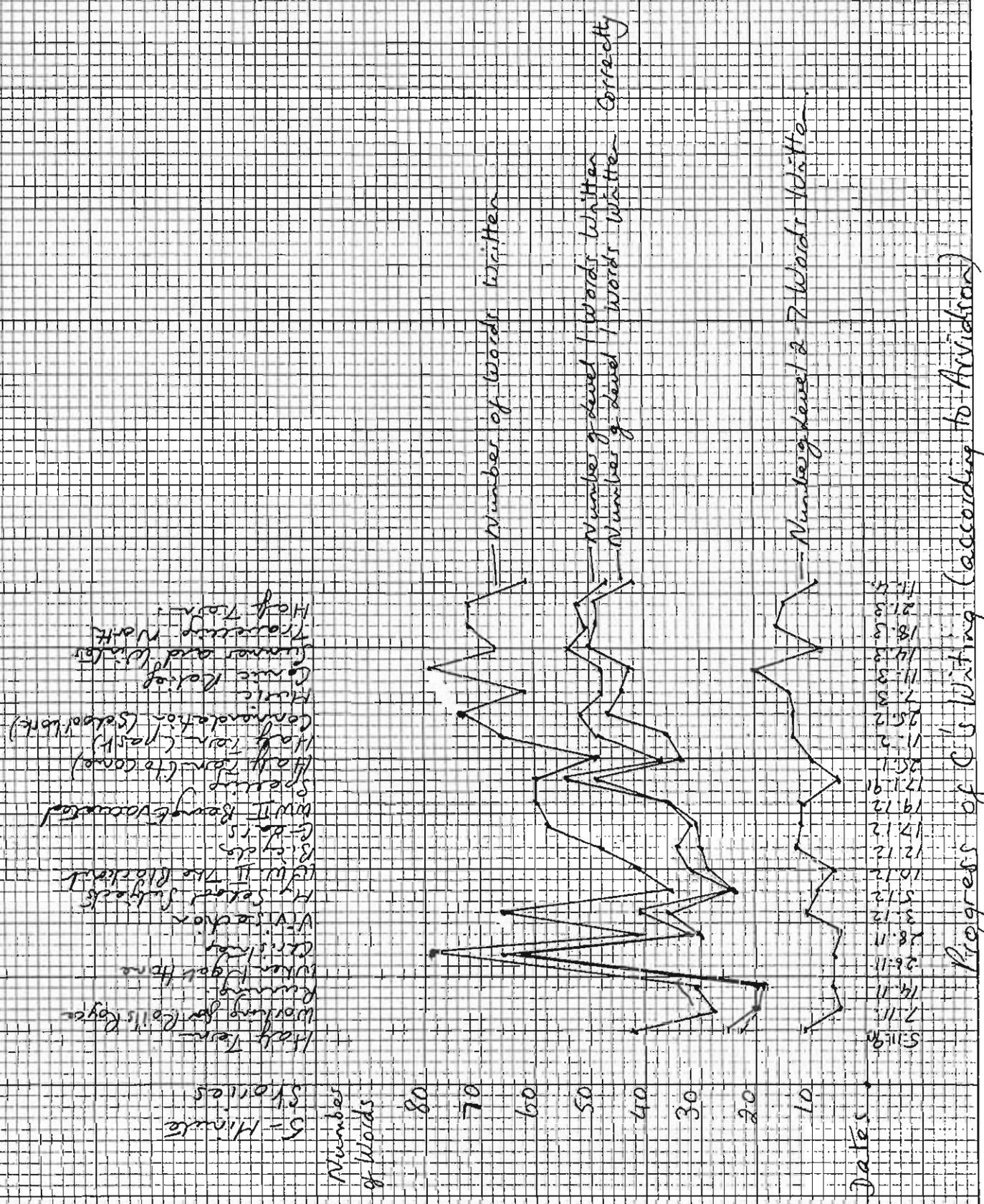
Progress of C's Writing (according to Arvidson)

Monday 13th May 1991

Whales and Dolphins

Whales and Dolphins are ~~too~~ of
the most inteligent mamals the at ~~wh~~
live. Whales have a languish wich
is very loU ~~both~~ grous and sou
are too loU ~~for~~ ~~the~~ Huter beif ~~too~~
they are threteud by hunting.
Whales huters harpoon whales
and chase them for up to ~~too~~ hous.
This is cruel and un-nelsery becae
~~the~~ huters or the people ~~too~~
~~etaat~~ Whale meat do not need it;
they can eat meny ~~other~~ cindal
of ~~the meats~~ because I cUo [2 words]

Other many Kinds

Dolphins ae very inteligeut they have
a languich sisn is onedle ~~upoff~~
of a ~~range~~ of Sounds from loU
the hige ~~Frequedwatsey~~ they are
threteud by drag net fisuing
for tuner few Ships will drag a
mile or longer net betwen them
to cath tuner dolphins get caore in
the nets and drown ~~becaas~~ they

"Whales and Dolphins" - the Piece of C's Writing which is Analysed
according to Klein and Millar in A.2. p.60.

191

A "Good" Boy

Dear Charlie,

I am going to give you some handy tips on how to make a good piece of written work. All these things I have learnt. This is the first thing try to have clean hands so you don't ruin yr work (also try not to smudge your writing). Second try to put down notes before you start and if you don't know a word use a dictionary. Third thing, you make a mistake then put one line through it. And wight in black. I like to wright in blue but black is supposed to be smarter.

A "Middling" Girl

If you had a word that had a vowel in (apple) you would say would you like an apple not a apple, if you had a word made up of all constedents (fly) you would say then a fly not an fly. If you are writing a story that involves people you need to use sh marks if you want them to talk.

A "Worrying" Boy

the first fing you ned to no is capital letters and fat stops and you allso ned comery and Cuestonmancs and allso net riting and if you dunnt no a word look in a dictionamy all ask the teter and wen you get a word rong you pot a net lin frow it and if you get a big mistaker you pob a lin frow it and you haw got to haw paregnuts and you rit wiv a black pen and

SUBJECTS / GROUPS / OBSERVATION TIMES

PRIMARY — 10 hours, 5 sessions

Subjects and groups observed:

- **ENGLISH**
  - Group 1. 140 min, 4 ps.
  - Group 2. 140 min, 4 ps.
  - Group 3. 105 min, 3 ps.
- **GEOGRAPHY**
  - Group 1. 105 min, 3 ps.
  - Group 2. 210 min, 6 ps.
  - Group 3. 210 min, 6 ps.
- **SCIENCE**
  - Group 1. 210 min, 6 ps.
  - Group 2. 210 min, 6 ps.
  - Group 3. 105 min, 3 ps.
- **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**
  - Group 1. 70 min, 2 ps.
  - Group 2. 35 min, 1 p.
  - Group 3. 105 min, 3 ps.
- **DESIGN/TECHNOLOGY**
  - Group 1. 70 min, 2 ps.
  - Group 2. 35 min, 1 p.
  - Group 3. 70 min, 2 ps.

SUMMARY OF LESSON OBSERVATIONS

WRITING TASKS

Category	Eng G1	Eng G2	Eng G3	Geog/Sci etc.
Pragmatic				
Summary	1			4, 2, 1
Description	4	1	1	2, 3, 3, 2
Narrative	1			1, 2
Persuasive				
Reflective	4	2	1	1
Free Comp.	2			
Dictation				1
Worksheet/Gaps	1			1, 1, 1
Other				

TEACHING POINTS

Category	Eng G1	Eng G2	etc.
Spelling	6	4	1, 3, 2
Punctuation	3	1	2, 2
Handwriting			
Neatness			1
Grammar			
Length	1	1	
Organisation	1	1	5, 1
Content	3	2	1, 1, 2, 1
Editing			1, 1
Lexical Choice		2	2
Other	2		

TEACHERS' INPUT METHODS / PUPILS' WORKING METHODS / CONTENT OF LESSONS

Category	Eng G1	Eng G2	etc.
Advice	7	4	5, 2, 1, 2
Metalanguage	3	1	3, 2
Compulsory	(all the work was compulsory)		
Collaborative	✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Draft/Redraft	✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Content-of-lesson notes (right margin, by group):
Spelling lesson / Comma lesson; Narrative five; Comment on radio / Autobiography; Comma in reading / Thought journey / Funny story; Description of local area / Identification of features / As group 1; Use of microscope / Observing pond water / Principles of fuses; Expansion of heat / Dissolving & solving / Recording generalised; Planning/Exact & Evaluating / Christmas display.

TEACHER INTERVIEW

Please describe your policy for the pupils' written work.   (Refer to lesson observation record and cover collaborative/individual work, drafting and redrafting, all aspects of presentation)

Do they all do the written work set?

What happens if they fail to do it?

Do you always read it?

Is there a decline in standards of literacy?   If so, why?   If not, why do so many people think there is?

Is English particularly difficult to write?

What part do other factors play like intelligence, culture, dyslexia etc.?

Is it important for everyone to be able to write correctly?

Do you think everyone can learn to do so?

Please comment on the children in my study whom you teach, with particular reference to their written work.

PUPIL INTERVIEW:

Do you like writing?   Why/Why not?

Do you like it more than you used to or not so much?   Why?   (When did it start to go wrong?)

Are you getting better at it or worse?

Do you expect to be able to write well when you grow up?   Will it matter?

What is most important about writing?   (Refer to pupil's letter on writing)

Did you enjoy it at Infant School?   At Junior School?

Were you always good/bad at it?

Do you ever write for fun?   What?   When?   Who to?

Do your family/older friends do much writing?   Give details.

What will you need writing for when you grow up?   (What are you going to do when you grow up?)

Do you do different kinds of writing at school? (English/Science/Geography?)

Do you have trouble with spelling?

What do you do when you can't spell a word you want to write?

What do you do when you want to learn a word?

What did/do the teachers do to help?   At Infant School?   Junior?   Secondary?

PARENT INTERVIEW

Are/were you happy with your child's progress and management at school?
At Infant School?   At Junior School?   Now at Secondary School?

Is there/was there good co-operation between you and the schools?

Is s/he improving/deteriorating?   In attitude?   In effort?   In achievement?

Can parents help?   Do you help?   How?

Do you encourage/pressure your children to write apart from schoolwork?

What influence do you think other members of the family and friends have on your child?

As a family do you do much writing?   At work?   At home?

Do you like/dislike writing?   Why?

Do you ever write for fun?

Do you think there is a problem of falling standards?

Why are they falling?   Or why do we think they are falling?   (Modern influences: TV/Radio/Records/Films/Easy Transport?)

Do we need to write these days?   What for?

What are the most important aspects of writing?
(Grammar/Handwriting/Punctuation/Spelling?)

How does our spelling system work?   Is it satisfactory?

What do you do when you can't spell a word you want to write?

What do you do to teach your child to spell a word?

WRITING AND SPELLING

I am studying written work in schools with particular emphasis on spelling. I should be very grateful if you would help me by completing this questionnaire.

PLEASE RETURN TO *the School Secretary by 30/3/92.*

PART I: THE PUPILS

Below are nine factors within pupils themselves which may be thought to affect their ability to write and spell. How important do you feel these are? Please fill the boxes using the following code:

1 - unimportant
2 - of some importance
3 - important
4 - very important
5 - crucial

Eyesight	☐	Hearing	☐
The pupil's own speech (articulation/dialect)	☐	Perceptual/neurological function (Dyslexia?)	☐
Memory	☐	Intelligence	☐
Understanding of the writing task	☐	A "gift" for spelling or the lack of it	☐
Amount of reading practice	☐		

Is there anything else which should have been included in this list?

PART II: THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM

1. How far do you feel that inconsistencies in the English Spelling System are responsible for some pupils' spelling difficulties? (Please tick the appropriate box).

Not at all? ☐   Partly? ☐   Largely? ☐

P.T.O.

Teachers' Questionnaire

PART II: THE ENGLISH SPELLING SYSTEM (continued)

2. What are the characteristics which make some words difficult to learn to spell?

3. Should our spelling be reformed?

PART III: TEACHING WRITING AND SPELLING

1. Nine features of written work are listed below. How much importance do you attach to each of them, both when you prepare pupils for written work and when you mark it? Please fill in the boxes, as before, using the code:

1 – unimportant
2 – of some importance
3 – important
4 – very important
5 – crucial

Choice of words	☐	Handwriting	☐	Organisation	☐
Content	☐	Layout	☐	Punctuation	☐
Grammar	☐	Neatness	☐	Spelling	☐

Is there anything else which should have been included in this list?

2. Please describe briefly what you do to help your pupils with their spelling, both in the preparation for written work and in responding to their writing.

Have you any further comments?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED FOR YOUR TIME AND FOR YOUR HELP

Susan Greig.

(Susan Greig)

201.

BIBLIOGRAPHY/REFERENCES:

ARGYLE M. (1967). The Psychology of Interpersonal Behaviour.
Harmondsworth. Pelican.

ARNOLD Ron (1987). Paper Given to NFER Conference 10/11/87.

ARVIDSON G.L. (1977). Learning to Spell. *Oxford.* Pergamum Press.

BACON F. (1605). The Advancement of Learning.

BAKER R.G. (1980) Orthographic Awareness. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive
Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

BARON J., TREIMAN R.. WILF J. and KELLMAN P. (1980). Spelling and
Reading by Rules. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling.
London. Academic Press.

BARR J.E. (1983). Spelling in the Context of Writing for a Purpose.
Unpublished Thesis, University of Birmingham.

BARR J.E. (1985). Understanding Children's Spelling. *Edinburgh.*
Scottish Council for Research in Education.

BENNETT D.M. (1967). New Methods and Materials in Spelling.
Hawthorn, Victoria. Australian Council for Educational Research.

BETTELHEIM B. and ZELAN K. (1991). On Learning to Read. London.
Penguin.

BISSEX G.L. (1980). Patterns of Development in Writing: A Case
Study. TIP, Vol XIX No. 3. (1980) pp.197-201.GNYS AT WRK: A Child
Learns to Write and Read. *Cambridge, Mass.* Harvard University
Press.

BODMER F. (1944). The Loom of Language. *London.* Allen and Unwin.

BRADLEY L. and BRYANT P. (1978). Difficulties in Auditory
Organisation as a Possible Cause of Reading Backwardness. in
Nature, 271, 746-747.

BRITTON J. (1970). Language and Learning. *Harmondsworth.*
Penguin.

BRUMFIT C.J. (1980). Problems and Principles in English Teaching.
Oxford. Pergamon.

BRUMFIT C.J. (1985). Language and Literature Teaching: From
Practice to Principle. *Oxford.* Pergamon.

BRUNER J. and HASTE H. (Eds.) (1987). Making Sense. *London.*
Methuen.

BRYANT P. and BRADLEY. L. (1985). Children's Reading Problems. *Oxford.* Blackwell.

BULLOCK A. et al. (1974). A Language for Life: Report of the Committee of Inquiry under Sir Alan Bullock. *London.* H.M.S.O.

BURKE S.J. and BRUMFIT C.J. (1974). Is Language Literature or Is Literature Language? in *English in Education*, 8, 2.

BURNS Robert (1982). Self-Concept Development and Education. *London.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

BYRNE B. and FIELDING-BARNSLEY R. (1989). Phonemic Awareness and Letter Knowledge in the Child's Acquisition of the Alphabetic Principle. In *Journal of Educational Psychology* Vol. 81. No. 3, pp. 313-321.

CHARNLEY A.H. and JONES H.A. (1979). The Concept of Success in Adult Literacy. Cambridge. Huntingdon.

CHOMSKY C. (1971). Write First, Read Later. In *Childhood Education*, March 1971, pp.296-9.

CHOMSKY C. (1977). Approaching Reading through Invented Spelling. in RESNICK and WEAVER: The Theory and Practice of Early Reading. *Hillsdale.* Laurence Erlbaum.

CHOMSKY N. and HALLE M. (1968). The Sound Pattern of English. *New York.* Harper and Row.

CLARK M.M. (1976). Young Fluent Readers. *London.* Heinemann Educational.

CLARK M.M. (1970). Reading Difficulties in Schools. *London.* Heinemann Educational.

CLARK M.M. (1985). New Directions in the Study of Reading. *Lewes.* Falmer Press.

CLAY M.M. (1972). Reading: The Patterning of Compex Behaviour. *Auckland.* Heinemann Educational.

CLAY M.M. (1975). What Did I Write? Auckland. Heinemann. Auckland.

CLAY M.M. (1979). The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties. *Auckland.* Heinemann Educational.

CLAY M.M. (1979). Stones: The Concepts About Print Test. Auckland. Heinemann Educational.

CLAY M.M. (1982). Observing Young Readers. *London.* Heinemann Educational.

COHEN G. (1980). Reading and Searching for Spelling Errors. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

COHEN L. and MANION L. (1980). Research Methods in Education. *London.* Croom Helm.

COOK-GUMPERZ J. (ed.) (1986). The Social Construction of Literacy. *Cambridge.* Cambridge University Press.

CRITCHLEY M. (1970). The Dyslexic Child. London. William Heinemann Medical Books

CROLL P. (1986). Systematic Classroom Observation. *London.* Falmer.

CRUMP T. (1988). Alternative Meanings of Literacy in Japan and the West. in Human Organisation Vol. 47, No. 2, pp.138 -145.

CULLER J. (1976). Saussure. *Glasgow.* Fontana.

CUNNINGHAM A. (1988). Phonemic Awareness: The Development of Early Reading Competency. in Reading Research Quarterly, Fall 1989 xxiv/4 pp.471-2.

DIRINGER D. (1949). The Alphabet: A Key to the History of Mankind. *London.* Hutchison.

DONALDSON M. (1978). Children's Minds. *Glasgow.* Fontana.

DUKE B. (1986). The Japanese School. *New York.* Praegar.

DYSON A. (1985). Three Emergent Writers and the School Curriculum: Copying and Other Myths. in The Elementary School Journal 85 (4) pp.497-512.

EHRI L.C. (1980). The Development of Orthographic Images. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

EHRI L.C. and WILCE L.S. (1986b). Does learning to Spell Help Beginners Learn to Read Words? in *Reading Research Quarterly* 22. pp.47-65

ELLIS A. and BEATTIE G. (1986). The psychology of Language and Communication. *London.* Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

ELLIS N. and CATALDO S. (1990). The Role of Spelling in Learning to Read. in Language and Education 4, 1-28

ELLIS N. (1991). Spelling and Sound in Learning to Read. in SNOWLING & THOMSON. London. Whurr.

FERNALD G.M. (1943). Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects. *New York.* McGraw-Hill.

FERREIRO E. and TEBEROSKY A. (1983). Literacy Before Schooling. *London.* Heinemann Educational.

FRITH U. (Ed.) (1980). Cognitive Processes in Spelling. *London.* Academic Press.

FRITH U. (1985). Beneath the Surface of Developmental Dyslexia. in K.E. Patterson, J.C. Marshall and M. Coltheart (eds.) Surface Dyslexia, pp. 301-30. London. Lawrence Erlbaum.

GALTON M., SIMON B., and CROLL P. (1980). Inside the Primary Classroom. *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

GELB I.J. (1952). A Study of Writing. *Chicago.* University of Chicago Press.

GENTRY J.R. and HENDERSON E.H. (1978). Three Steps to Teaching Beginning Readers to Spell. *The Reading Teacher*, March pp. 632-7.

GENTRY J.R. (1982). Analysis of Developmental Spelling in GNYS AT WRK. in The Reading Teacher 36, 192-200.

GOODY J. (Ed.) (1968). Literacy in Traditional Societies. *Cambridge.* Cambridge university Press.

GORMAN T. (1987). Literacy and Communication in the United Kingdom: Facts and Fallacies. *Paper presented at NFER Conference*, 10/11/87.

GREIG S. (1981). Adults with Spelling Difficulties: an Analysis of their Needs. Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis. University of Birmingham.

GUBB J., GORMAN T. and PRICE E. (1987). The Study of Written Composition in England and Wales. *Windsor.* NFER-NELSON.

HALL N. (1987). The Emergence of Literacy. *Sevenoaks.* EDWARD ARNOLD in association with UKRA.

HALLIDAY M. (1985). Spoken and Written Language. *Oxford.* Oxford University Press.

HAMMERSLEY M. and ATKINSON P. (1983). Ethnography: Principles in Practice. *London.* Tavistock.

HAMMERSLEY M. (Ed.) (1986). Controversies in Classroom Research. *Milton Keynes.* Open University Press.

HARRIS R. (1981). The Language Myth. *London.* Duckworth.

HARRIS R. (1986). The Origin of Writing. London. Duckworth.

HEATH S. B. (1983). Ways with Words. New York. Cambridge University Press.

HEIM A. (1970). Intelligence and Personality: Their Assessment and Relationship. Harmondsworth. Penguin.

HENDERSON E.H. and BEERS J.W. (eds.) (1980). Development and Cognitive Aspects of Learning to Spell. Newark, Del. International Reading Association.

HENDERSON L. (1984). Orthographies and Reading. *London*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

JACKSON P.W. (1968). Life in Classrooms. New York. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

JAMES W. (1980). Principles of Psychology. New York. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

JENSEN A.R. (1962). Spelling Errors and the Serial Position Effect. in Journal of Educational Psychology 53, 105-109.

JENSEN H. (1970). Sign, Symbol and Script: An Account of Man's Effort to Write. *London*. Allen and Unwin.

JONES H.A. and CHARNLEY A.H. (1978). Adult Literacy: A Study of its Impact. National Institute of Adult Education.

KAVANAGH J.F. and VENEZKY R.L. (1980). Orthography, Reading and Dyslexia. *Baltimore*. University Park Press.

KELLY G.A. (1963). A Theory of Personality: the Psychology of Personal Constructs. New York. The Norton Library.

KRESS G.R. (1982). Learning to Write. *London*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

LAWRENCE D. (1971(. The Effects of Counselling on Retarded Readers. in Educational Research 13, 2, pp.119-24.

LECKY P. (1945). Self-Consistency. New York. Island Press.

LEONARD W.J. (1972). Classified Spelling. Huddersfield. Schofield & Sims.

LEVINE K. (1986). The Social Context of Literacy. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

LITERACY AND EDUCATION FOR ADULTS. (1964). XXVIIth. International Conference on Public Education. *Geneva*. International Bureau of Education, Geneva and UNESCO, Paris.

LUNDBERG L., FROST J. and PETERSON O. (1988) Effects of an Extensive Program for Stiulating Phonological awareness in Preschool Children. in *Reading Research Quarterly* 23, pp.263-284.

LUNZER E. and GARDNER K. (1979). The Effective Use of Reading. london. Heinemann Educational.

LURIE A. (1990). Not in Front of the Grown-Ups: Subversive Children's Literature. *London*. Bloomsbury.

LYNN R. (1988). Edcational Achievement in Japan. *Basingstoke. Macmillan.*

MAKITA K. (1968). The Rarity of Reading Disability in Japanese Children. American Journalof Orthopsychiatry 38, 599-614.

MARLAND M. et al. (1977). Language Across the Curriculum. London. Heinemann.

MARSH G., FRIEDMAN M., WELCH V. and DESBERG P. (1980). The Development of Strategies in Spelling. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

MARTIN J.R. (1985). Factual writing: Exploring and Challenging Social Reality. *Oxford.* Oxford University Press.

MEEK M. et al. (1983). Achieving Literacy: Longitudinal Studies of Adolescents Learning to Read. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

MEEK M. and MILLS C. (Eds.) (1988). Language and Literacy in the Primary School. *Lewes.* Falmer.

MERRITT J.E. (1972). Reading Failure: A Re-examination. in Reid J.F. Reading: Problems and Practices. London. Ward Lock Educational. pp. 186-195.

MILROY J. and MILROY L. (1985). Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation. *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

MITCHELL R., HOOPER J. and BRUMFIT C. (1994). "Knowledge about Language", Language Learning and the National Curriculum. Occasional Paper, University of Southampton.

MORTON J. (1980). The Logogen Model and Orthographic Structure.

MORTON J. and SASAMUMA S. (1984). Lexical Access in Japanese. in Henderson L. (Ed.) Orthographies and Reading. London. Lawrence Erlbaum.

MOSELEY D. (1974). Spelling: Task and Learner. in Wade B. and Wedell K. (eds.) Educational Review Occasional Publications No.5. University of Birmingham.

MOSELEY C. and MOSELEY D. (1977). Language and Reading among Underachievers. Windsor. N.F.E.R.

NAKANISHI A. (1980). Writing Systems of the World. *Tokyo.* Charles E. Tuttle.

NASH R. (1976). Teacher Expectation and Pupil Learning. *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

NAVEH J. (1982). Early history of the Alphabet. *Jerusalem.* The Magna Press.

NAVON D. and SHIMRON J. (1984). READING HEBREW: How Necessary is the Graphemic Representation of Vowels? in HENDERSON (Ed.) Orthographies and Reading. *London.* Lawrence Erlbaum.

NELSON H.E. (1980). Analysis of Spelling Errors in Normal and Dyslexic Children. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

PETERS M.L. (1967). Spelling: Caught or Taught? *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

PETERS M.L. (1970). Success in Spelling. *Cambridge.* Cambridge Institute of Education.

PETERS M.L. (1975). Diagnostic and Remedial Spelling Manual. London. Macmillan Educational.

PETERS M.L. (1992). Towards Spelling Autonomy. in Sterling C. and Robson C. (eds.). Psychology, Spelling and Education. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters.

POWNEY J. and WATTS M. (1987). Interviewing in Educational Research. *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

PURVES A. (1992). The 1EA Study of Written Composition II: Education and Performance in Fourteen Countries. Oxford. Pergamum Press. .

QUANDT I.J. (1983). Language Arts for the Child. *Englewood Cliffs.* Prentice Hall.

QUANDT I.J. and SELZNICK R. (1984). Self-Concept and Reading. *Newark.* IRA.

QUINN V. and McCAUSLAND A. (1986). Dyslexia: What Parents Ought to Know. .
London. Penguin.

READ C. (1971). Preschool Children's Knowledge of English Phonology. in *Harvard Educational Review*, 41, pp.1-34.

READ C. (1986). Children's Creative Spelling. *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

ROZIN P., PORITSKY S. and SOTSKY R. (1971). Americn Children with Reading Problems can Easily Learn to Read English Represented by Chinese Characters. in *Science* 171, pp.1264-1267.

RUTTER M. (1975). Helping Troubled Children. Harmondsworth. Penguin.

RUTTER M., MAUGHAN B., MORTIMORE P., OUSTON J. with SMITH A. (1979). Fifteen Thousand Hours. *London*. Open Books.

SADLER B.R. and PAGE E.G. (1975). Blackwell's Spelling Workshop. Oxford. Blackwell.

SAMPSON G. (1985). Writing Systems. *London*. Hutchinson.

de SAUSSURE F. (1983). Course in General Linguistics. Translated by Roy Harris. *London*. Duckworth.

SCARBOROUGH H. S. (1989). Prediction of Reading Disability from Familial and Individual Differences. in *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol.81 No. 1, pp.101-108.

SCHONELL F.J. (1942). Backwardness in the Basic Subjects. Edinburgh. Oliver and Boyd.

SCINTO L. (1986). Written language and Psychological Develoment. *Orlando*. Academic Press.

SCRAGG D. (1974). A History of English Spelling. *Manchester*. Manchester University Press.

SEYMOUR P.H.K. (1992). Cognitive Theories of Spelling and Implications for Education. in Sterling C. and Robson C. (eds.). Psychology, Spelling and Education. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters.

SHOOK S.E., MARRION L.V. and OLLILA L.O. (1989). Primary Children's Concepts about Writing. in *Journal of Educational Research*, No. 3, pp.133-138.

SLOBODA J. (1980). Visual Imagery and Individual Differences in Spelling. in Frith 9(ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

SMITH Frank (1971). Understanding Reading. New York. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

SMITH Frank (1982). Writing and the Writer. *London*. Heinemann Educational.

SMITH Frank (1983). Essays into Literacy. London. Heinemann Educational.

SMITH J. and BLOOR M. (1985). Simple Phonetics for Teachers. *London.* Methuen.

SMITH P.T. (1980). Linguistic Information in Spelling. in Frith U. (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

SNOWLING M. J. (1985). Children's Written language Difficulties. *Windsor.* NFER-Nelson.

SNOWLING M.J. and THOMSON M. (1991). Dyslexia: Integrating Theory and Practice. London. Whurr.

SPENCER E. (1983). Writing Matters Across the Curriculum. *Edinburgh.* Scottish Council for Research in Education.

STAINES J.V. (1958). The Self-Picture as a Factor in the Classroom. in *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 28, 29

STANOVICH K.E. (1991). The Theoretical and Practical Consequences of Discrepancy Definitions of Dyslexia. in SNOWLING M. and THOMSON M.(Eds.) Dyslexia: Integrating Theory and Practice. *London.* Whurr.

STEIN J.F. (1991). Vision and Language. in SNOWLING M. and THOMSON M. (Eds.) Dyslexia: Integrating Theory and Practice. *London.* Whurr.

STERLING C.M. and ROBSON C. (eds.) (1992). Psychology, Spelling and Education. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters.

STEVENSON C. (1985). Challenging Adult Literacy. *New York.* Teachers College Press.

STUBBS M. (1980). Language and literacy. *London.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

STUBBS M. and DELAMONT S. (Eds.) (1976). Explorations in Classroom Observation. *Chichester.* John Wiley and Son.

STUBBS M. (1986). Educational Linguistics. *Oxford.* Blackwell.

TANNEN D. (ed.) (1982). Spoken and Written Language. Exploring Orality and Literacy. Norwood, N.J. Ablex.

TAYLOR D. (1983). Family Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write. Exeter, new Hampshire. Heinemann Educational.

TEMPLE C., NATHAN R., BURRIS N. and TEMPLE F. (1982). the Beginnings of Writing. Boston. Allyn & Bacon.

TENNEY Y. (1980). Visual Factors in Spelling. in Frith (ed.) cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

UPWARD C. (1990). Rule of Thum. Times Educational Supplement 23/11/90 Extra p. R16.

UPWARD C. (1992) Teaching Literacy First, Traditional Orthography Second. in STERLING C.M. & ROBSON C. (1992). Psychology, Spelling and Education. Clevedon. Multilingual Matters.

VALLINS G.H. (1954). Spelling. London. Andre Deutsch.

VELIS J-P. (1990). Through a Glass Darkly: Functional Illiteracy in Industrialised Countries. Paris. UNESCO.

VENEZKY R. (1980). Spelling Instruction and Spelling Reforms. in Frith (ed.) Cognitive Processes in Spelling. London. Academic Press.

VYGOTSKY L.S. (1956 Tr. 1962). Thought and Language. Cambridge, Mass. M.I.T. Press.

WALKER R. and ADELMAN C. (1975). A guide to Classroom Observation. London. Methuen.

WANKOWSKI J. (1973). Temperament, Motivation and Academic Achievement. University of Birmingham.

WEBSTER M. and SOBIESZEK B. (1974). Sources of Self-Evaluation. New York. Wiley.

WELLS G. (Ed.) (1981). Learning Through interaction: The Study of Language Development. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

WELLS G. (1987). The Meaning Makers: Children Learning Language and Using Language to Learn. Portsmouth. Heinemann Educational.

WHITE J. (1991). A History of the National Writing Project 1985-1989. National Curriculum Council.

WHITE M. (1987). The Japanese Educational Challenge. New York. The Free Press.

WRIGHT W.D. (1975). Learn to Spell Welwyn. Nisbet.

ZUTELL J. (1978). Some Psychololinguistic Perspectives on Children's Spelling. in Language Arts Vol. 55 No. 7, pp.844-51.