LETTER NAMING AS A SPELLING STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

Poor performance in spelling has frequently been cited as a characteristic of dyslexics (Critchley, 1975; Naidoo, 1972; Orton, 1966; Rutter, 1978), although little attention has been devoted to its study (Cook, 1981) and remediation (Bradley, 1981) in dyslexic monolinguals and even less in dyslexic bilinguals (Luelsdorff, 1981; Luelsdorff and Marshall, 1982).

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the use of letter naming as a spelling strategy based on an analysis of the vowel errors attributable to letter naming in a corpus of sentences containing 6,162 words with 2,138 errors dictated to a 12-year-old incipient English/German bilingual over a 14-month period (cf. Luelsdorff 1981 for methodological details) and to propose extended letter naming as a technique for the prevention and remediation of spelling errors.

PRECONVENTIONAL SPELLING

Studies of preschool children's prephonic, preliterate, "invented" spelling (Read, 1971) indicate that such children spell on the basis of their phonetic analysis of the spoken word and their knowledge of the written alphabet and letter names, a spelling strategy which was pointed out by Cook (1981) to be also frequently observable in the misspellings of older dyslexic children. That knowledge of letter names plays the key role in preconventional spelling becomes

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apparent on the inspection of the list of preconventional error types, reproduced here from Cook (1981) as Table 1.

TABLE 1

I. Consonant Phonetic Spellings (Preconventional)
   A. Nasal omitted before a final stop consonant, as WET/went; DOT/don't.
   B. Use of letter whose name contains the phoneme, as Y for /w/ and H for /ch/: YOH/watch; YEL/will.
   C. Spelling initial /dr/ as JR (JRS/dress) and initial /tr/ as CHR (CHRAN/train).
   D. Representation of surface phonetic detail, such as the reduction of medial /t/, as in LIDL/little.

II. Vowel Phonetic Spellings (Preconventional)
   A. Letter name for long vowel sound, as in MAK/make; FEL/feel; SNO/snow.
   B. Short vowel sound spelled with letter name articulated in same place, such as BAD/bed; KIT/cut; SET/sit; JRO/draw.
   C. Representation of elongation, rounding, or glide on vowels, such as BOE/boy; GOW/go; MEE/me.

III. Syllabic Phonetic Spellings (Preconventional)
   A. Letter name used for syllable or part of syllable, as RGU/argue; XFRS/express.
   B. Final syllables (vowel-consonant segments) as in ENTR/enter; MITN/mitten; LIDL/little.

LITERAL USE AND MENTION

To Carnap we owe the expression "autonymous" in reference to the use of words as the names of the same words, as in "The word 'man' is spelled with three letters" or "The word 'man' is a monosyllable." To this expression we would like to add "visual autonymous use" and "audio autonymous use" in order to distinguish between the two essentially different autonymous uses of names exemplified by "The word 'man' begins with the letter m," in which 'man' is used to refer to the sequence of letters which constitute its legitimate spelling, and by "The word 'man' initiates in a voiced bilabial nasal," in which 'man' is used to refer to its pronunciation. Both these autonymous uses of the word 'man', in which 'man' appears as the proper name of its spelling, on the one hand, and as the proper name of its pronunciation, on the other, sharply contrast with the denotative use of 'man', in which 'man' is used to refer to a featherless, plantigrade, biped animal. Cast in terms of Quine's distinction