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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPELLING SKILLS IN ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE IN FIFTH GRADERS**

**MAJOR PAPER**

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The best teachers know how to teach spelling in a way that is meaningful. It's more than a list - it's an art!

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## **DEDICATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Throughout the process of the academic formation of primary school students, English subject provides them with a basic level of language skills, and also contributes to their comprehensive education.

Practice has shown that, even those students that have an average development in linguistic skills, experienced difficulties when establishing phoneme-grapheme relationships and using upper and lower cases, as well as identifying the boundaries of words when writing. Hence, many experts emphasize on the importance of developing, as part of the communicative competence, a linguistic competence that includes knowledge of spelling.

With the use of various theoretical and empirical methods it was found that, in the current teaching-learning process of writing in Class 5.A from "Ramón Pando Ferrer" Elementary School, there is a lack of teaching materials and of actions that lead to improve spelling skills. Consequently, the objective of this research is to build a system of actions that improve spelling skills in 5.A students from "Ramón Pando Ferrer" Elementary School.

The system proposes actions to improve the existing material aids, to involve all of the students' senses in the learning process, and to make use of games, competitions, and artistic creation for the sake of developing spelling skills. This system resulted from a process of implementation of planned actions, reflection on their results, changing what did not work as expected and keeping what worked better. The effectiveness of the actions presented as a system was verified by assessing the improvements during the English lessons.

## **SOMMAIRE**

Tout au long du processus de formation académique des élèves de l'école primaire, le matière d'Anglais propice le développement des compétences linguistiques à un niveau de base dans cette langue, tout en contribuant à leur développement intégral.

La pratique a montré que, même avec le développement normal des compétences, les étudiants ont encore des problèmes à établir des relations sonores et graphiques, utiliser les majuscules et les minuscules, et aussi quand ils doivent identifier les limites de mots lors de l'écriture. Par conséquent, de nombreux experts insistent sur l'importance de développer, dans le cadre de la compétence communicative, une compétence linguistique qui garantit, entre autres choses, la connaissance de l'orthographe de la langue anglaise.

Avec l'utilisation de diverses méthodes théoriques et empiriques, il a été constaté que, dans le processus actuel d'enseignement-apprentissage de l'écriture dans le groupe 5.A de l'école primaire «Ramón Pando Ferrer», il y a avait des insuffisances avec l'utilisation des matériaux pédagogiques et la pratique des actions qui conduisent à la réalisation de ce développement, résultant en un niveau insuffisant de compétences orthographiques des élèves. Par conséquent, l'objectif de cette recherche est construire un ensemble d'actions visant à améliorer les compétences de l'orthographe en anglais des élèves en groupe 5.A de l'école primaire « Ramón Pando Ferrer ».

Le système propose des mesures pour améliorer les matériels déjà existants, impliquer tous les sens des élèves dans le processus d'apprentissage et l'utilisation de jeux, compétitions et art. Ce système résulte d'un processus d'application d'actions prévues, reflets de leurs résultats, évolution de ceux qui n'ont pas fonctionné comme prévu et conservation de ceux qui ont fait mieux. L'efficacité des actions présentées comme un système a été corroboré par les améliorations évaluées pendant les leçons d'anglais.

## INTRODUCTION

In the current progress of the world, all the cultures, political ideas, and other aspects of the human activity such as work, studies, or simply friendship, mix in the natural interaction of humanity. Language is a social phenomenon that plays a very important role in this interaction, as it is the most powerful mechanism of communication. Due to this, to acquire and to be literate in a second (L2) or foreign language (FL) it is essentially important to achieve this interaction with other people around the world. People have realized about this necessity, that is why schools all over the world attempt to include the teaching of a FL, generally English, in their curriculums; this language reaching its character of LINGUA FRANCA. Ernestina Bosch in her PhD thesis declares: “En esta **era del conocimiento** el inglés alcanza el carácter de *lingua franca*, proceso iniciado en el período de la posguerra de la Segunda Guerra Mundial por la posición ventajosa económica y militarmente en que quedaron los Estados Unidos de América” (Ferguson, 1999 en Bosch, 2007); and she adds: “[...] Actualmente su predominio se vincula a los procesos de globalización e internacionalización económicas” (Bosch, 2007:1).

As an example of its importance in the current days, it can be added that 1,400 million people live in countries where English is the official language, one from every five people of the global population speaks English with a certain level of competence; approximately 85% of the mails sent are written in English; more than 70% of the scientific community reads English; and, almost all the information of the global electronic systems is stored and saved in English, too; and it is considered that this character of International Language will remain until 2050 (Hasman, 2000 en Bosch, 2007).

Hence, learning English language helps this way to fulfill the general goal of education, which is the plain and comprehensive development of man's personality; not only contributing to raise their educational level, but making them competent for the coming future in which handling a L2 or FL will be strictly necessary to fit in this progressing world; getting them to complete a system of knowledge, abilities, capacities, experiences, attitudes, values, and motivations; all combined in their daily-life activities, and in their wishes of transforming the reality nearby.

In the particular case of the Cuban free system of education, schools, universities, and work places are aware of all this “constant progress”, that is why English is taught from 3rd grade to 6th grade in Elementary schools, from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Junior High school, from 10<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> in Senior High school, and in universities. Adults also learn English at work or in their free time in language schools, passing all from the elementary level to the advanced, having each one its own program, objectives, contents, and methods.

The teaching of a foreign language must not only focus on the linguistic aspects, but must also work on the basic abilities that allow an effective communication in the language. It is a priority that the students be competent from the communicative point of view, that is to say, that the students must develop what is understood as the capacity to

produce and process written or oral texts in a coherent way: communicative competence (Camacho, 2003). The development of integrated skills in the different areas of such competence; i.e. linguistic, discursive, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and strategic; is the final objective of a foreign language teaching-learning process that follows a communicative approach (Van Ek, 1986).

Learning a FL comprises, as well as in the first language (L1), the development of the four communicative macro-abilities: listening, writing, speaking, and reading. The relationship between the characteristics of the L1 and the ones of the FL turns out essential in the development of such linguistic skills, taking into account the differences to make emphasis on what the students are about to learn; and the similarities, to take advantage of what they already know; so as to motivate them to learn something new and to use their own knowledge to get to it.

In Cuban fifth grade English syllabus, it is settled that the most important ability to develop is speaking, this being the global goal to achieve in elementary school in combination with the strengthening of determined values and reinforcement of cultural boundaries with the English-speaking countries throughout the knowledge of costumes, traditions and language. Reading, listening, and writing are also dealt with, but receiving less emphasis. In the specific case of writing, it should be implemented just as an instrumental resource to support the oral abilities, therefore it is not taught and learnt as a creative and productive process, but only at a basic level, in which they have to put correctly in writing what they are able to say orally, as this has to do with the spelling of words, through the establishment of the phoneme-grapheme relationship.

However, the experience of the authoress in her practicum revealed that spelling is a rather neglected skill in the teaching-learning process (TLP) of English language in fifth grade. There are only few exercises in the didactic materials that aim at developing this ability, the students tend to commit mistakes while copying from the board, and make negative transference from the mother tongue; consequently, they show very limited spelling skills, as confirmed by a study carried out as part of this research paper with 5<sup>th</sup> graders at "Ramon Pando Ferrer" Elementary School in Santa Clara city, during 2012-2013 academic year. The study revealed that:

- The students used upper and lower cases indistinctively.
- They made wrong associations of English sounds with the Spanish graphemes having a similar phonological realization.
- In many cases, they did not recognize the limits of words.

The search of a scientific solution to this current problematic situation led the authoress to analyse some previous research works done on the topic, for example: Paz González, 2011 and Artiles Echavarría, \_\_\_. These authors properly dealt with the most common mistakes in writing and gave a practical solution through proposals of activities, but these are not specifically devoted to enhance spelling skills and do not acknowledge it as a root to the development of writing.

These needs, theoretically and practically confirmed, led the authoress of the present paper to conduct a research on the light of the following **Scientific Problem:**

How can teachers contribute to improve fifth graders' spelling skills in English language, at "Ramón Pando Ferrer" Elementary School?

The **object** of the research was the teaching-learning process of writing in English Language, and the **field of action** was the teaching-learning process of spelling in English Language to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students.

The **general objective** of the research was:

To build up a system of actions that improves 5<sup>th</sup> graders' spelling skills in English language at "Ramón Pando Ferrer" Elementary School.

To fulfill this objective, the following scientific questions and tasks were established:

**The scientific questions:**

- 1- What theoretical and methodological guidelines support the teaching-learning process of spelling in English language in fifth grade?
- 2- What weaknesses and strengths do the teaching-learning process of spelling in English Language show in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at "Ramon Pando Ferrer" Elementary School?
- 3- How to build up, through a process of reflection upon practice, a system of actions that improve fifth grade students' spelling skills in English language?
- 4- What system of actions derives from the process of practice and reflection?

**The scientific tasks:**

- 1- Determination of the theoretical and methodological guidelines that support the teaching-learning process of spelling in English language in fifth grade.
- 2- Assessment of the weaknesses and strengths the teaching-learning process of spelling in English Language shows in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at "Ramon Pando Ferrer" Elementary School.
- 3- Building up, through a process of reflection upon practice, of a system of actions that improve fifth grade students' spelling skills in English language.
- 4- Presentation of the system of actions derived from the process of practice and reflection.

Following a dialectic-materialist position and in correspondence with the object of study and the field of action, this research was conducted mostly following a **qualitative** paradigm, and specifically an **action research** methodology; however its development also demanded the use of some quantitative methods to achieve the necessary complementation of data.

Thus, the following were the methods engaged in the research process:

**From the theoretical level:**

- **Analytic-Synthetic:** it was useful during the whole process to analyze and understand the theory, to assess the students' needs, to conceive the actions, to evaluate the results of their implementation, and to draw conclusions about the whole process.
- **Inductive-deductive:** it helped to go from the general ideas to specific details and vice versa in the establishment of general and particular theoretical considerations expressed by different specialists on the topic, as well as in the

analysis and interpretation of the data obtained through the different instruments applied.

- **Historic-logic:** it was useful to analyze the historical evolution of the spelling-skill teaching process, its conceptions, and changes through years.
- **Systemic approach:** It guaranteed the systemic structure of the components of the teaching-learning process of spelling.

### **From the empirical level**

- **Participant Observation:** this method was used, primarily, to get aware of the state of spelling skills in the students; then, to corroborate the data obtained from the pedagogic test, and also during the systemization of actions, being a constant way of feedback.
  - **Analysis of documents:** it was used to analyze the conception and treatment of spelling in the official documents and the didactic materials for the teaching of English in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - **Analysis of the students' outcome:** this method was used while revising the student's workbook, checking the activities assigned in the lessons, and the ones assigned as homework during some of the stages of the research.
  - **Interview:** this method was used to gather the students' appreciations about the subject.
  - **Pedagogic test:** it was administered to assess the students' weaknesses and strengths, regarding spelling skills.
  - **Portfolio:** It kept records of the students' assignments and the projects developed through the academic year in order to analyze the improvements they had and the deficiencies they kept in the spelling ability.
  - **Teacher's diary:** It was used as a means to record and reflect on the results of the systemization of actions in terms of its efficiency in the development of the students' spelling skills.
  - **Questionnaire:** It assessed the Spanish teacher's opinions on the students' spelling skills level and their most relevant mistakes in such language.
  - **Triangulation:** It came to authenticate the data obtained from the different methods and resources used during the different stages of the research: the needs assessment and the systemization of actions; also, it was used to establish regularities during the whole process which helped to integrate such data.

### **From the mathematical level**

- **Percent analysis:** to process the quantitative data and to facilitate the process of inference.

The subjects of the research were the 25 students from class 5thA in "Ramon Pando Ferrer" Elementary School, who were chosen following an intentional criterion, since they integrated the class that the authoress worked with during her practicum. This

class's proficiency level is average and its students' behavior is also similar to the rest of the classes in that grade.

This paper is structured in an introduction, a main part containing four epigraphs that respectively look at the theoretical framework, the assessment of the students' needs, the building process of the system of actions, and its final presentation. The main part is followed by the conclusion, the bibliography and the necessary appendixes that complement the paper.

## MAIN PART

### I. A Theoretical and Methodological Framework on the Teaching-Learning Process of Spelling as an Essential Aspect within Instrumental Writing

#### 1.1 Writing as an Essential Ability in a Foreign-Language Class

Writing as a term has several meanings. Many experts have proposed its definition; for example, Widdowson (1978:62) states that “writing is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitting them through the visual medium as mark on paper”. Hornby (1974:996) states that “writing is, in the sense of the verb ‘write’, to make letters or other symbols on a surface, especially with a pen or a pencil on a paper”. Troyka (1987:3-4) states that “writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose. The purposes of writing are to express one’s self, to provide information for one’s reader, to persuade one’s reader, and to create a literary work”.

Concisely, writing ability is the skill to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings to other people in written symbols to make other people or readers understand the ideas conveyed.

In general, writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed. (García S, 2010)

Textual decision in writing depends on the writer’s perception of the audience. S/he must negotiate a match between the purpose of the text and the needs of the reader, as far as these needs can be predicted. (ibídem)

As a linguistic skill, writing is considered productive and interactive. Productive because the writer encodes a message using a graphic and orthographic system: the written word; and interactive, because the message is written to be read by the reader(s), using a written text as the channel of interaction. (ibídem)

The writer has choices at the surface level of lexis, grammatical structure, collocations, cohesion, coherence, and so forth. The writer also has choices about the type of text to use to convey the desired meaning. But at the discourse level, at the interface between writer and reader, the writer cannot make choices freely: she or he must write for the reader. The writer may choose any structure or lexis which will appropriately express the intended meaning to the expected audience. (ibídem)

Penny Ur (1996) states that the objective of the teaching of writing in a foreign language is to have learners acquire the skill they need to produce a range in different kinds of written texts similar to those that educated persons would be expected to produce in their own language.

In achieving the purpose for writing, people need knowledge and to make choices about a number of factors such as: (Parrot M., año, \_\_\_\_ en García. C.S, 2010)

- grammar
- handwriting
- vocabulary
- paragraphing
- cohesion
- formulae
- rhetorical organization
- spelling
- Layout
- Capitalization
- Underlining/italics
- Punctuation, and others.

Christopher Tribble (1996:43 & 67) establishes what writers need:

- Content knowledge: knowledge of the concepts involved in the subject area.
- Context knowledge: knowledge of the social context in which the text will be read, including the reader's expectations and knowledge of the context alongside which this new text will be read.
- Writing process knowledge: knowledge of those aspects of the language (e.g., lexis, syntax, mechanics and punctuation) that are necessary for the completion of the task.
- Mechanics and punctuation are essential in the process of writing. Rosa Antich and C. Villar in *English Composition* (1989:10-33) offer a wide explanation on this concern and include as mechanics of writing the following:
  - characteristics of a manuscript
  - the hyphen
  - capitalization
  - syllabication at the end of line
  - italics
  - numbers
  - quotation marks
  - the apostrophe

Antich also states that the mechanics of writing do not affect the expression of thought because they are merely matters of form. According to her, punctuation includes:

- the comma
- the semicolon
- the colon
- the period
- the dash
- the parentheses
- the brackets

Unlike mechanics, punctuation affects understanding if not used appropriately.

### 1.1.1 Approaches to the Teaching of Writing

For the teaching of writing, some experts have provided a series of approaches that focus on such ability from different sights. Some authors coincide in the definition and conception of, at least two of the approaches; this is the case of the process approach and the product approach.

#### - **TheProcessApproach**

Process approaches to writing tend to focus more on the varied classroom activities which promote the development of language use; brainstorming, group discussion, re-writing. Such an approach can have any number of stages, though a typical sequence of activities could proceed as follows:

**Stage 1:** generating ideas by brainstorming and discussion. Students could be discussing qualities needed to do a certain job, or giving reasons as to why people take drugs or gamble. The teacher remains in the background during this phase, only providing language support if required, so as not to inhibit students in the production of ideas.

**Stage 2:** students extend ideas into note form, and judge quality and usefulness of ideas.

**Stage 3:** students organize ideas into a mind map, spidergram, or linear form. This stage helps to make the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas more immediately obvious, which helps students with the structure of their texts.

**Stage 4:** students write the first draft. This is done in class and frequently in pairs or groups.

**Stage 5:** drafts are exchanged, so that students become the readers of each other's work. By responding as readers, students develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else, and thus can improve their own drafts.

**Stage 6:** drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.

**Stage 7:** a final draft is written.

**Stage 8:** students once again, exchange and read each other's work and perhaps even write a response or reply.

#### - **TheProductApproach**

This is a traditional approach, in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, which is usually presented and analyzed at an early stage

**Stage 1:** model texts are read, and then features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques.

**Stage2:** this consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests, practicing the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure.

**Stage 3:** organization of ideas. This stage is very important. Those who favor this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language.

**Stage4:** the final result of the learning process. Students choose from a choice of comparable writing tasks. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent users of the language.

Besides the last two approaches, García, S.C (2010) contemplates two more approaches to teach writing: the model approach and the interactional approach.

#### - **TheModelApproach**

It emphasizes on exposure to write sentences, paragraphs and essays of competent writers (preferable native writers). In its purest form followers of this approach hoped that imitating written models would enable the learners to manipulate grammatical markers, combine sentences and organize paragraphs all at once.

#### - **TheInteractionalApproach**

It came up as an attempt to supplement the other approaches. It is based on the provision of the extensive written input and feedback to students' writing. What is of greatest interests and value in this approach is the nature and role of feedback. Traditionally, the feedback students have received on their written work has been embodied in single-word and phrase-level comments, underlining, circles, arrows, set expressions like 'excellent', 'nice work', 'well done', 'keep up the good work', 'please, see again', 'needs more explanation', and the like..

This kind of writing that students receive from their teacher is different in form and style from the kind of writing that they are required to produce for their teacher. Teresa Pincas (1986) points out that students are expected to communicate in a much different way; and adds, the syntactic are as their teachers tend to correct –absence of tense or number making of verbs and of determiners on nouns, use of phrases (fragments) instead of complete sentences, lack of paragraphs development- are the very same structures and forms the teachers write on the students' papers as they evaluate them. Although they require that their students write in fully formed sentences, with cohesive paragraphs, with a variety of lexical items, with tensed verbs and numbered nouns, teachers seldom use these structures in their written response to students' work.

This interactional approach advocates for the provision of extensive paragraph-level written feedback. As teachers are generally the intended audience of the students' written work, they should respond or write back to their assignment in the same kind of written communication, keeping in this way written interaction with the students. The

teachers can serve as meaningful intake relevant to the writing skills they are seeking to develop in their students.

## 1.2 Instrumental Writing as a Means to an End

Rosa Antich de Leon (et. al.) in the book *Metodología de la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras* (1989, 290) states that “[...] in non-specialized courses, writing skill in a FL is not an end in itself, but a means to help the learning of other language items; i.e., writing used as an instrumental aim to fix grammar rules, lexicon or to develop listening, reading, or speaking skills”.

Penny Ur (1996: 162), on the other hand, also uses the term *writing as a means* to denote the use of writing for engaging with aspects of the language other than writing itself; for example: learners note down new vocabulary, copy out grammar rules, write out answers to reading or listening comprehension questions, do written tests, and the like.

The practice of instrumental writing is a very profitable way to assimilate a FL, because the recurrent and varied work helps the students, on one hand, to deal with grammar and vocabulary; besides, the establishment of a phoneme-grapheme relationship while writing permits the student to develop reading skills; and, on the other hand, it allows the students to improve the oral expression as they acquire and grow their habits of stating ideas.

It is also important to say that instrumental writing activities, well-conceived and assigned, enable the teacher to take advantage of the time devoted to the subject in the syllabus in an extraordinary level, and of the possibilities of the students' independent work. Undoubtedly, independent work is the most efficient means to develop the cognitive independence and to expand the learning process beyond the classroom.

To develop instrumental writing skills, the students should learn:

- How to write correctly the letters and the other components of the graphic system.
- The correspondence between sounds and other prosodic aspects. (phoneme-grapheme relationship)
- How to apply the orthographic directions.
- How to express in writing what they are able to say orally.
- How to write a letter, a post card, a summary, to fill an application document, and so on, according to the objectives and characteristics of the grade.

To deal with instrumental writing, the following aspects must be taught:

- The Graphic system.
- The script of the language.
- The differences of pronunciation.
- The grammatical structures.
- The vocabulary (orally and in the frequent forms of writing)

In the action of writing, the audio, visual, and motor agents take part. Psychological researches show that any knowledge is more rapidly inferred and it is fixed in a more

profitable way if it is exercised in written after having perceived it by the ear and repeated it orally.

The psychological and physiological basis of the written expression is the interdependence of the agents of movement, of the motor-speaking agent, and of the visual one. The relationship and bounds of the visual-graphic type, the ones of the speech motor, and of the hearing system, joined to the activity of the agents, constitute its fundamentals. (Antich, 1986: 292)

As part of the language system, the teaching of spelling, one of the most difficult aspects to learn in English language, is found particularly important; especially, when it is considered a starting point to develop the four macro-abilities.

### **1.2.1 Historical Antecedents in the Teaching-Learning Process of Spelling in English language**

English spelling was first developed in the 7th century, but it has changed greatly since then. This process of change comes after the Norman Conquest in 1066 when Norman French became the official language of England. During the next three centuries only few continued to write English, mostly monks. Later, when England began to re-establish its own identity around 1350, after many wars with France and a succession of deadly plagues, the English language had become very different from the Anglo-Saxon of pre-Norman times, and English writing had to be rediscovered too. Early modern English writers, like Geoffrey Chaucer and William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into modern English in 1525, tried to give English a consistent spelling system, but their efforts were much undermined. People continued to use many of the French spellings they had become used to. Some of their mistakes later became the norm and remain so to this day, e.g. 'double, couple, route, sure, centre, table'. From then, religion, politics, and economy were the main excuses for such changes; subsequently early writing teaching was carried out in monasteries to ensure the "conversion" to God, but all that it achieved was a chaos in English spelling.

In 12th century, some copies of Old English works and documents appeared with a modernized spelling, influenced by other languages. Product of wars, invasions, and economic development, the learning of spelling got to be an issue of generalizations, context, an even legacy or tradition generation through generation. This way, substitution of letters, vocalization, and formation of diphthongs, triphthongs, and so on, took place. This evolution of the writing-system led English language to a collapse of the standard.

Hence, many have been the attempts of educators to teach spelling in English speaking countries from that time to nowadays. For example, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century texts were designed not only for the religious or moral development but also to learn spelling, with long lists of words and memory tasks (Schlagal, B 2002)

Serious research on spelling began in the early 20th century and was directed toward issues of memory and to the question of whether or not it was more advantageous to teach spelling words by a context method or by a list method. Researchers also

questioned the comparative value of a study-test versus test-study-test approach to the week's spelling routine. (Ibidem)

During this century, the focus of spelling books narrowed, leaving behind the larger issues of the language arts to focus more exclusively on spelling itself. The spelling books, however, continued to offer large numbers of words to be learned each week often as many as fifty at a time (Hanna, Hodges, & Hanna, 1971). Schlagal describes these books like this: "Word lists appeared with no particular orthographic principle guiding their selection and presentation. Some books, for example, presented word lists in alphabetical order. Others made a rough effort to control word difficulty by number of syllables (one and two syllable words were taught before three and four syllable words)". (Schlagal, B; 2002: p.45)

But it was not until the 1930s that educators began to organize spelling lists around words most frequently used in reading and writing (Rinsland, 1945, en Schlagal, 2002, 48 p.). As an effort, therefore, to better meet individual needs and incorporate incidental and even idiosyncratic types of learning into the formal study of spelling, students were asked to compile individual notebooks. These supplementary notebooks were comprised of words students had misspelled or particularly needed in their writing (Hanna, et al., 1971, en Schlagal; 2002: p.48).

As research continued into the 1930s and 1940s new memory-based strategies evolved for dealing, with word learning (Hanna, et al., 1971). The useful study method was developed in which students (1) look at a word, (2) pronounce the word, (3) close their eyes and visualize the word, (4) open their eyes and write the word, and (5) check the spelling of the word, repeating all the steps, if necessary, until the word has been written correctly several times. The ancient practice of writing misspelled words repeatedly until they were committed to memory gave way to the practice method wherein missed words were rewritten correctly three times. Respecting this more modest practice, Henderson (1990) states that the aspirin principle should apply: "One helps a lot; two are almost twice as helpful, a third adds very little more, and four are bad for the stomach"

(p. 90). In fact, copying a word over correctly more than three times appears to be counterproductive, affecting the quality of attention and inducing students to apply desperate measures like writing all the first letters first, then all the second letters, and so on, destroying the kinesthetic image which is a legitimate part of word knowledge. (Fernald, 1943; Gillingham&Stillman, 1997; Hildreth, 1955, en Schlagal, B; 2002)

In the 1950s spelling experts began to respond to criticisms about the presentation of words in basal spellers. Although these words were controlled for difficulty; they were not organized to promote orthographic generalization. That is, the word lists did not illustrate spelling patterns which might be grasped and applied to other contexts. The obvious feature being neglected in; the word lists was **the phoneme-grapheme correspondence** that must be obtained in any alphabetic orthography, during this era the first major computerized investigation into the nature and consistency of phoneme grapheme correspondences in English spelling was conducted (Hanna Hanna Hodges and Rudolf, 1966). The results demonstrated a surprising degree of consistency in the

system. Further studies have substantiated and extended these results, taking into account **the morphophonemic character of English spelling** (Venezky, 1967).

More recently, researchers have turned away from questions about what words to teach and how to teach them. Instead they have focused their attention on how learners acquire orthographic knowledge (Nelson, 1989). As a result, they have documented and described the developmental nature of orthographic knowledge. (Henderson, 1990; Henderson&Beers, 1980; Read, 1975; Schlagal, 1982, 1992; Templeton & Bear, 1992).

Subsequently, these descriptions show how learners appear to move in logical ways from simple, concrete sound-to-letter spelling to pattern driven spellings to a growing awareness and control of the meaning-by-pattern spellings of low-frequency Latin and Greek derived vocabulary. This developmental research has influenced the construction of a number of contemporary basal spellers, affecting the particular kind and order of features presented for study. This research has also led to the elaboration of intriguing, individualized developmental plans for the systematic teaching of the orthography (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 1996; Bloodgood, 1991; Ganske, 2000; Henderson, 1981; Morris, 1999).

Some educators, however, interpret the findings of developmental research as proof that formal systematic spelling instruction is not necessary. That is to say, some have advanced the developmental nature of orthographic learning as a chief rationale for incidental, opportunistic, and proofreading approaches to spelling. Learning to spell, it is argued, extends from broad, meaningful reading and writing not from formal study of words. Interestingly, a variety of spelling studies early in the century concluded that incidental and opportunistic approaches to spelling were less generally effective than weekly routines of formal spelling instruction, provided the words studied are appropriately selected (Fitzgerald, 1951; Horn, E., 1950; McKee, 1939; Wallin, 1911; Winch, 1916, en Schlagal, B; 2002).

The arguments above show out the evident controversy of how to teach to spell. It is clear that the needs of students and how they acquire the word knowledge is important to adopt a certain way to teach English spelling, that is why the authoress of this research credits all of them with distinctive levels of importance and usefulness. She gives great attention to the morphophonemic character of the English spelling, the incidental (indirect) and intentional (direct) teaching of it, as well as the use of memory and the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses. All the theory found has been helpful and deserves a grain of appreciation, as it served for the authoress to conceive the plan of activities aimed to the development of such a skill.

A more recent research also affirms the importance of the development of spelling in order to enrich the learning of other abilities, in this regard Ken Boston author of the book "Teaching spelling K-6.State Literacy Strategy" states: "[...] learning to spell is closely linked to learning to talk, listen, read and write, students should be taught in a systematic and explicit way about the types of spelling knowledge that are appropriate to their writing purposes and stage of spelling development".

This research, as said before, is intended to develop the writing ability in English language in fifth graders, strictly the spelling component of it. "Knowing how to get children spelling in a meaningful, authentic way that promotes literacy development is essential."(Word Journeys: Assessment-Guided Phonics, Spelling, and Vocabulary Instruction)

"Effective spelling programs use a balance of modeled, guided and independent teaching strategies in the context of integrated talking, listening, reading and writing episodes to support and extend students as they learn to spell". (Boston, K; 1998: p.20)This idea follows the CLT stages: presentation, controlled practice, and free practice.

Summing up, currently there are many methods that enable teachers and students with tools to the betterment of the spelling skill, but there is no consensus on how best to teach spelling in a classroom setting. For example, some experts on the topic suggest to abandon the traditional spelling books; they also assert that spelling instruction should be integrated into other subject as need arises. Others advocate teaching spelling systematically through "word study". Still others contend that conventional spelling books are useful tools that, if used appropriately, are an efficient and reliable way to teach the spelling system (Templeton, 1991, en Schlagal, B; 2002).

In English language, spelling is probably the biggest difficulty for non-native speakers when writing, since its spelling does not follow the alphabetic principle consistently. Because of the many changes in pronunciation which have occurred since a written standard developed, the retention of many historical idiosyncrasies in spelling, and the large influx of foreign words (mainly from Danish, Norman French, Classical Latin and Greek) with different and overlapping spelling patterns; English spelling is difficult even for native speakers to master. This difficulty is shown in such activities as spelling bees that generally require the memorization of words. The generalizations that exist are quite complex and there are many exceptions leading to a considerable amount of memorization learning. The spelling system causes problems in both directions - a learner may know a word by sound but not be able to write it correctly (or indeed find it in a dictionary), or they may see a word written but not know how to pronounce it or mislearn the pronunciation. However, despite the variety of spelling patterns in English, there are dozens of rules that are 75% or more reliable.

Accurate spelling is not an isolated skill limited to a student's weekly spelling test or spelling bee competition. Spelling is one of the fundamental subskills of effective written communication. The goal of spelling instruction should not be temporary memorization of words but rather the development of skills to be able to correctly represent written language. While spelling of individual words in English language can be tricky at times, it is not complete chaos that requires the memorization of 50,000+ individual words.

While the written English code is complex, it absolutely is a phonemic code. Therefore, effective spelling instruction should always emphasize the phonemic nature of spelling. If children learn to 'spell' words based on phonemic processing it greatly improves their spelling ability.

## **1.2.2 How to Improve Spelling**

Some specialists suggest learning strategies to favour the acquisition of spelling skills, drawn from a combination of educational studies and interviews with spelling experts.

As it might be expected, there is not a single approach or method on how to teach spelling that is best for all students and all teachers. However, there are some general guidelines the authoress found over her practicum and research that can be applied to almost every English class to improve spelling skills while dealing with vocabulary, as well as with oral, and written exercises.

Some authors establish that to become a good speller there are four ways to achieve spelling goals and improve it as well; they call them 'forms of spelling knowledge' These are: phonological knowledge: how words sound, visual knowledge: how words look, morphemic knowledge: how words change form, and etymological knowledge: where words come from. These forms of knowledge will make the student understand and use a correct spelling of words, depending on which they feel more comfortable and enabled to write and to spell.

### **1.2.2.1 Integrating the four forms of spelling knowledge**

Students do not necessarily draw on just one of the four forms of spelling knowledge to spell a word. In order to become proficient spellers, they need to be able to draw on and integrate several forms of knowledge to spell. For example, in order to write the word "their", a student may rely on phonological knowledge to write down the initial sounds th-, then use visual knowledge to recall the ending -eir, and confirm this by syntactic knowledge as to which form of the word is needed in writing. In working out how to spell hydroelectricity, a student may use etymological knowledge to write hydro-, phonological knowledge to write -electri-, and visual knowledge to write -city.

Other authors agree in the visual and hearing method to learn how to spell; this is the case of the multisensory methodology used in the book named above and the one described -in the book: "All About Spelling Level 1 Teacher's Manual"- as an approach that reinforces and ensures student's spelling improvement combined with systemic and guided activities.

The multisensory learning activities help the student master important spelling strategies. Some of these activities are:

- Flashcards provide a visual and hands-on way to help him/her learn and review phonograms, words, and spelling rules.
- Segmenting Words activity helps the student identify the individual sounds in a word so that he can spell more easily and accurately.
- Concept-oriented spelling lists that are grouped by similar phonograms and spelling rules accelerate learning by organizing ideas in the student's mind and allowing the student to concentrate on and master one or two main concepts before moving on.

- Key Cards, these clearly present key ideas, concepts, and spelling rules that help kids thoroughly understand why a word is spelled the way it is and how to apply that knowledge to many other words.
- More Words and Dictate Phrases, this reinforces current and previously learned concepts, increase the student's repertoire of words, and allow the student to apply his knowledge in practical situations.
- Progress Charts give students a visual reminder of how far he has come and motivates him to master the next step.

Positively, some other authors consider the traditional method a still-worthy one, as there are rules that help students to spell words, write, and read easier, as well as make generalizations while learning new words, though it has to become more interesting, and let behind its "boring" strategies. "Take, for example, the difference between "hard c" (as in *cat*) and "soft c" (as in *cell*)"- explain the experts-. After accumulating many words containing the letter "c," students discover that "c" is generally hard when followed by consonants (as in *club* and *crash*) and the vowels "a," "o," and "u" (as in *cat*, *cot*, and *cut*). In contrast, "c" is usually soft when followed by "i," "e," and "y" (as in *circus*, *celebrity*, and *bicycle*). Leipzig, D. H. says in this regard: "Of course, for every rule there are exceptions that threaten the rule. Students learn, though, that spelling patterns exist and that these patterns help to explain how to spell, read, and write words."

To achieve relevant progression in spelling, teachers and students alike must become word detectives, involved in an ongoing attempt to make sense of word patterns and their associations to one another. Spelling "rules" are not dictated by the teacher for students to memorize; instead of that, spelling patterns and generalizations are discovered by students.

Some teaching strategies -according to experts in word study- establish that teachers must encourage students to compare and contrast features in words. One common method for doing so is by having students sort words. When sorting, students use their word knowledge to separate examples that go together from those that don't.

In addition to sorting, students may hunt for words in their reading and writing that fit the pattern being studied, may construct a word wall illustrating examples of the different patterns studied, may keep a word study notebook to record the known patterns and their new understandings about words, or may play games and activities to apply their word knowledge (Bear et al., 2000).

A cycle of instruction for word study might include the following:

1. introduce the spelling pattern by choosing words for students to sort
2. encourage students to discover the pattern in their reading and writing
3. use reinforcement activities to help students relate this pattern to previously acquired word knowledge

Teachers then test students' pattern knowledge rather than their ability to memorize single words. For example, a teacher might have students work with twenty words during a word study cycle and then randomly test students on ten of those words. For

students studying the -at family, a teacher might include the word "vat" on the spelling test even though it wasn't on the initial spelling list – this allows the teacher to see if students are able to transfer their knowledge of the "at" chunk to a new word they haven't seen before.

Adapted and excerpted from: Leipzig, D. H. (2000). The Knowledge Base for Word Study: What Teachers Need to Know. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 11(2), 105-131.

Applying the rules also enables students to become powerful readers and function as part of a literate society, as well as teachers must understand how students are actually learning word structures and use that knowledge to improve students' spelling skills.

Specialists suggest some useful tips like:

1. Our brains work best with sequential patterns, hence spelling should be taught as patterns.
2. Understanding of roots, suffixes and prefixes enhance spelling of bigger words and comprehension of texts.
3. Breaking words into the syllable level and into morphemes creates accessible "word bits."
4. Direct teaching of odd words (only 5% of English) is necessary.

Other strategies are:

- teach specific sounds, patterns and meaningful parts
- Use a multi-sensory approach: students must feel how words are spoken and written
- study patterns
- memorize "No Excuse" words (sight words)
- provide ample opportunities to practice
- make the students accountable in their personal writing
- use spelling games for kids during the lessons

### **1.2.2.2 The Do's and Don'ts of Spelling**

Many teachers have developed the tried and true strategies to help their students become better spellers. Here is what they say and do:

- ❖ Do have a word wall.
- ❖ Don't forget to change the words.

Word walls provide a great strategy for young learners to see and write the words they need, when they need them. Change the words as needed throughout the year to ensure maximum learning. Use it all year, refer to it often and make sure the words are relevant to their learning throughout the year. Wordwalls will benefit students in kindergarten to the 3rd grade. However, they can be used in the inclusional classroom at any grade. Word wall words should be alphabetized to help children locate the word they need quickly.

- ❖ Do provide spelling lists that meet the weekly/monthly needs.
- ❖ Don't use those traditional spelling texts.

Students need to be able to spell the words they need to write. Therefore their spelling lists need to be connected to other things that are currently being taught. For instance, if

you are teaching transportation, the spelling words should be those that they need to know like: fast, slow, air, ground, fly, train etc. Have your students brainstorm the list of words they need to learn on a regular basis. Everyday words should be included in their word walls. Words that have certain patterns are good to learn as well. These would be the word families and words with similar patterns like through, enough, etc.

Also, it can be noted that word searches, alphabetizing words, writing words out rarely leads to new learning or improved spelling ability. Applying words in authentic situations is much more worthwhile.

- ❖ Do focus on the 44 sounds throughout the year.
- ❖ Don't just focus on the long and short vowels and beginning and ending consonants.

When you think about ape and apple, long and short come to mind. However, what about the “a” sound in star and in jaw? Is it long or short? If you're teaching about some of the spelling patterns, be aware of the 44 different sounds.

- ❖ Do provide strategies to help them spell.
- ❖ Don't bother with weekly spelling tests.

Help students recognize spelling patterns, generalizations and some of the basic rules. When students write, have them circle the words they are uncertain about. This will help them learn them. Spelling tests only support short term memory and don't tend to lead to permanent learning. Help them to notice the patterns and help them to make connections. (If funny has 2 consonants, how do you think bunny and runny would be spelled? Prompt children to identify the patterns) Do use spelling patterns, everyday words and theme based words focused on your specific curricular area. Although some children enjoy the weekly spelling tests, others spend far too much time memorizing words and all too often forget them. The weekly spelling test tends to only be a test of short term memory.

Don't over emphasize spelling rules. Remember that thinking is more important than memory and leads to more permanent learning. There are also many exceptions to the spelling rules so choose the rules you teach carefully.

<http://specialed.about.com/od/literacy/a/spell.htm>

The previous strategies and advice on how to teach spelling are useful steps to follow and incorporate into English lessons, to work with vocabulary, and to improve students' spelling skills. All of them emphasize the importance of the process of thinking and hand-on way of the students, as well as the enormous significance of the correct guide on the part of the teacher to encourage kids to learn how to spell.

### **1.2.3 Effective Classroom Practices for Spelling**

The following practices and activities are examples which may be used in the classroom to reinforce the four forms of spelling knowledge and encourage students to integrate and use these strategies in the appropriate contexts.

As demonstrated in the daily observation during the practicum, students in their spelling development will benefit from an emphasis on different forms of knowledge. Most of these strategies would first be modeled by the teacher, and then used in guided practice

by groups with similar needs, before students would be expected to use them independently. This research will include some of these practices into the lesson plan, as there is no a specific class devoted to spelling, but it is integrated into the lesson. Some of these effective practices are:

### 1. Word webs

Word webs can be constructed around morphemes or topic words, to build up lists of words based on a particular form of spelling knowledge. The webs can be added to over days or weeks, as additional examples are experienced in reading, e.g.:

Etymological  
from the Greek "aer" meaning air  
Aeronaut  
aeroplane  
Aerodrome  
aeronautics  
Aero  
Aerobics  
aerodynamics

### Morphemic

Running hoping

Jumping **ing**trying

Seeing being

This can be adapted at later stages by the use of a dictionary or thesaurus for checking or finding additional words.

### 2. Dictation

Writing a dictation based on previously treated words is one way of assessing memory. It is most beneficial if early feedback is given. The dictation passage can be given when the words are introduced, with the words underlined or in bold, so that meaning within the context of other words can be made explicit. After writing a dictation, students should be encouraged to proofread their work.

### 3. Wordstolearn

Students can be encouraged to look carefully at a word in order to identify which types of knowledge and strategies would be the most useful in helping them learn to spell the word. This encourages the thoughtful integration of knowledge and strategies. For example, the following knowledge and strategies would be helpful in learning to spell the following words:

✓ Morphemic understanding of two words making a compound word:  
**cupboard**= cup + board

✓ Morphemic generalization of words ending in -y where y changes to *i*

before an ending is added e.g. *happiness, happily*

- ✓ Phonological knowledge: **kangaroo**
- ✓ Etymological knowledge from the root “octo” meaning eight: **octopus**
- ✓ Phonological and visual knowledge to spell *slight*.

#### 4. Clapping sounds

Hearing the sounds within words is an important first step for spelling and reading. In early stages, students can be assisted to hear the sounds within words by clapping once for each **syllable** heard, starting with one- and two-syllable words and moving on to three- and four-syllable words, e.g.:

*pup-py chil-dren gar-den com-pu-ter tel-e-vi-sion*

#### 5. Silent partners

In modeled reading sessions, with text in big books or on an OHP, the teacher masks silent letters in words e.g. *the road si-n was -nocked over*. Students are asked to supply the missing letter or letters that complete the word. Younger students may be given plastic letters to select from in order to complete the words. The teacher can record words on cards for follow-up games in guided and independent sessions.

#### 6. Look, say, cover, write, check

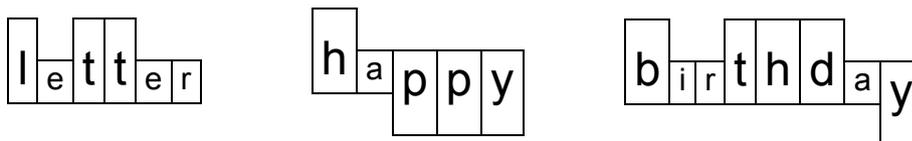
This approach is useful when particular words need to be learned automatically, e.g. high frequency words, technical terms for a particular topic, or a student's own nominated errors. A folder or pad can be kept with the words on the left hand side and attempts made on the right side.

The student looks at the word, says it (perhaps s-t-r-e-t-c-h-ing it out to help articulate sounds), covers it up, writes an attempt and then checks carefully against the original. Repeat this process if the word is incorrect the first time.

The left-hand pad of paper is used for the student to enter words to be learnt during the week. The right-hand pad is used for the student's attempts at spelling the words during the week.

#### 7. Patterns

Visualizing the shape of a word can help students to remember correct spelling. First, the teacher explicitly models how box shapes can show the pattern of letters e.g.



Students can then make up the patterns for words they are currently studying, then match shapes with words in the list.

## **8. Finding rules**

This activity is useful in guided spelling sessions after it has been modeled. Rather than giving students a rule to learn, ask them to attempt a generalization about a group of words with a similar pattern. Display these generalizations in the classroom and adapt them, as more examples or exceptions are found over time, for example the rule for adding -ing: hope + ing = hoping.

## **9. Concept groupings**

These are words which could be taught using any of the four forms of knowledge but they would usually be presented together. At this stage, they would be modeled for students and used by them from sources around the room. Many students should then be able to spell these words independently in their writing.

- a) Family words, e.g. mother, father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, stepfather, grandmother
- b) Pastimes, e.g. soccer, ballet, computer, swimming, tennis, reading, football
- c) Parts of the body, e.g. arm, body, leg, hand, face, ear, eye, nose, knee
- d) Descriptive words, e.g. tired, pretty, ugly, terrible, fluffy, sleepy
- e) Senses, e.g. ear, hear, touch, feel, taste, nose, smell
- f) Clothing, e.g. t-shirt, jeans, dress, pants, shoes
- g) Building words, e.g. door, chair, window, table, cupboard
- h) Weather words, e.g. sunny, rainy, cloudy, warm
- i) Time words, e.g. hour, minute, o'clock, digital
- j) Seasons: spring, summer, autumn, winter
- k) Shapes, e.g. square, circle, triangle, rectangle, oblong
- l) Properties of objects, e.g. thick, thin, narrow, broad
- m) Verbs used in steps of procedures, e.g. cut, put, mix, fold.

These strategies are flexible, active, and interesting. They provide a wide source of possibilities for students to go forth their basic lexical stock, and take them to the betterment of their spelling skills.

### **1.2.4 Other Considerations on the Teaching of Spelling**

#### **1. Images Before Rules**

At school, students are drilled in long lists of spelling rules; for example 'I before E, except after C' rule. However, two major drawbacks to this approach to spelling have been pointed out. Firstly, the English language has exceptions to just about every spelling rule, because that language is such a collage of other languages, it is impossible to describe it using a group of simple rules. In fact, it is for this reason that Spelling Bees have come to play such a big part of English-speaking culture.

Secondly, and most important of all, brains usually do not master spelling through rules. Research confirms that human brains acquire spellings through images. What is learnt to recognize is not usually rules, but rather the picture of the word (the experts call this a Mental Orthographic Image).

The secret to correct spelling in English lies in exposing your brain to the image of a word over and over again. Moreover, the image needs to be quite large (larger than the words of a typical printed book or Web page) and free from other distractions.

Flashcards, whether electronic or the 'cards in a shoebox' variety, are perfect for implementing this.

## **2. Avoid Looking at Misspellings**

This one follows logically from the previous tip, but it must be highlighted because it is a mistake that will be seen in classrooms frequently. People sometimes think they are helping students learn to master a tricky spelling by showing ways in which it is often misspelled. Just as repeated exposure to word-images is responsible for most of students' ability to spell words correctly; it can also be responsible for their tendency to spell words incorrectly; if students keep staring at commonly misspelled versions of words. Teachers must make sure that all of the spelling lists are full of correctly spelled words only.

## **3. See It, Hear it, Say It**

Involving several senses in the learning process can really speed up word-acquisition. Each time a new word is seen, it is important to find out how it is pronounced and to say it aloud. If possible, somebody else can help out by saying the word too.

Not only do the different sensations (seeing, hearing, saying) work together to help ingrain a new word, but the repetition of the spelling of a word will also help to fix it.

## **4. Target Specific Weaknesses**

Word study has to be personalized if it is to be efficient. When students receive a spelling list from a teacher, it will typically contain a large number of words they already know. Although students need to revisit familiar words occasionally they will improve spelling far more rapidly filtering out all the familiar words. Not just by crossing the familiar words out - which still leaves distractions all over the page - but by constantly recreating new lists filled only with the unfamiliar ones. But research has shown that almost no students study this way. It seems to be obligatory to go over and over the list that was handed down by an authority figure, as if there was something innately special about it. There can't be, because a teacher, or an educational body, cannot adapt their lists to suit individuals. To progress as rapidly as possible, it is needed to take charge of students' own spelling program.

## **5. FIRST Test, THEN Study**

Traditional teaching requires teachers to study a set amount of material for weeks on end, and then tests themselves at the end to see how well it was mastered. There are several weaknesses in this approach. For one thing, and this recaps on a point made earlier, it may then be devoted far too much precious time on that things are already known. For another, it can take a very long time to find out that the study has been

ineffective: test first, and then it must be developed a study program around the weaknesses found in the test. This also means that teachers do not have to make guesses at what they think students already know.

### **6. Form Relevant Associations**

Disorganized lists of words and facts are very difficult to remember. There is a well-known strategy for achieving almost miraculous feats of memory when it comes to recalling long random-looking lists, and that is to make extensive use of images and stories.

The idea then is to group words together into meaningful lists, where each list has a clear theme. It can then be used pictures, stories, and other clever memory devices to glue the words in each list together.

This practice can also help reinforce distinctions that are often accidentally blurred. People may forget the spelling of a specific word, but just by remembering the group it belonged to people can be confident about the correct spelling.

The suffix -OUS, for example, usually sounds just like the suffix -OSE, making it difficult to remember which words end in which suffix. Rather than disperse these words indiscriminately through the spelling lists, it is far more effective to group all the -OUS words together in one list and all the -OSE together in another list.

While testing the weaknesses and strengths, these words will be thrown randomly. But when students go to save a word from their brain, it will be connected to its neighbors through a mnemonic, a story, or one of their own ingenious inventions.

### **7. Time Repetitions Carefully**

There are far too many words in any dictionary to rehearse every word every day. It would take most of people a whole year to get through it once. Not to mention the fact that most of them would die of boredom well before getting to the end. But words have to be repeated many times (experts say 6 or 7 is typical) before they become a part of the working vocabulary. So how can be possibly mastered a long list of words in a reasonably short period of time? The answer lies in carefully timing repetitions.

Once a word has been successfully spelled on three or four occasions, remove it from the frequently-tested list. Other words need to be rehearsed more frequently (daily or weekly, depending on students' success rate).

It is not necessary to test students on a given word too frequently though. It is possible to recall words from their short term memory (e.g. if you just tested them a half an hour ago) but then fail to recall the word a week later. Leave at least a day between repetitions of any given word.

### **8. Stay Motivated**

Being motivated is important, because many people might think that being motivated requires you to enroll in a 'positive-thinking' program, but it really means keeping the brain alert throughout every study session, and ensuring that students are always enticed to keep going.

Here are a few **tips** that help keep you on the job when it comes to what may seem like a very monotonous task - SPELLING.

**Work with others** — many people find group work more stimulating than solo study sessions. In addition to the obvious reasons that groups can break the monotony, there are a couple of not so obvious ones here. Firstly, by divvying up spelling tasks (finding all words having a certain tricky-to-spell quality, for example), you can pool your resources. Secondly, the only way to test on spelling a word from its pronunciation is if another person pronounces it. When working in groups it can be taken turns of testing each other, and the sessions are not only more useful, but far more entertaining.

**Regular feedback** — test students frequently and in small batches. Getting feedback after six months of hard slog is no fun at all. Getting a score out of 20 on a daily basis, every single time students sit down to study is far more rewarding and motivating. This 'immediate gratification' plays a big part in the appeal of computer programming to many students. When a student writes in a computer program and executes it, the computer tells immediately whether it has been committed a mistake or not. Instant feedback works wonders for most people.

**Focus on unfamiliar** — this one was already mentioned right at the start of this page. Repeating long lists of familiar words, stumbling across a new and interesting word only every now and then, is boring. By weeding out all the familiar words, only revising them occasionally, and filling the lists with weird and wonderful words that the student is just not 100% sure about, keeps your mind alert, interested, and far less likely to drift on to something going on outside.

All the theory presented above has been thoroughly helpful in the struggle of teachers to present meaningful, effective, motivating, and flexible activities that provide students with tools to improve their spelling skills.

In sum, all the authors and experts agree that the united work of students and teachers is essential to progress in this aspect of the language. They also advocate for the use of visual, phonological or hearing methods, the use of lists that provide the students a way to be aware of their advances and difficulties through the pathway of learning to spell; and eventually, they give total importance –some less than others- to the assimilation of spelling rules as such, rather than to the memorization of an untidy jumble of words, for what they acknowledge the traditional method with a peculiar role in the process of getting confident while writing words.

The authoress considers that the methods to teach spelling presented in this epigraph are valid as in the classrooms we found that the students have various learning styles, therefore it is needed to assess the students and their level knowledge, as well as the way in which they acquire it better in order to select the right method for each student, or at least to combine approaches to provide activities with meaningful tasks. This should help students to achieve spelling objectives, going from basic goals to more complex word knowledge, giving them tools, mechanisms, and effective opportunities to go step by step in the process of improvement of their spelling skills.

On the light of this, the researcher asserts that the view back in history was indispensable for her to comprehend the treatment that this aspect of the English language system has had all through the centuries of human activity and the necessity

of the TLP of spelling in English classrooms to fulfill a more comprehensive language knowledge. Theoretically, this epigraph looks for options and ways to teach spelling, what the authoress found rich in variety, novelty, and quality.

## **II. A Needs Assessment on the teaching-learning process of Spelling Skills in English Language in 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

The authoress carried out this research in her practicum at “Ramon Pando Ferrer” Elementary School in Santa Clara, where she taught the subject to a group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders that became the **subject of the present research**. Class 5<sup>th</sup>A at “Ramon Pando Ferrer” Elementary School shows a series of characteristics that are described below:

The class is formed by 25 students: 11 boys and 12 girls, all of them are between 10 and 11 years old, and they show an average learning rate. Three of them are high achievers, while the rest of them are average learners. Their behavior is standard, though some of them are not always self-controlled. In general terms, the motivation of the group towards English language is above average, as most of them refer to the subject as entertaining. This group is characterized by being happy, motivated, attentive, and participative, it is also observable that they are interested in learning and are willing to complete the exercises. Some of these students (*50% of the group*) come from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class where the authoress carried out her practicum during last academic year, so they have already been subjects of the research she is conducting and are acquainted with it. (See appendix 1 and 2)

The teacher attempts to improve the writing ability developing spelling skills, being these basis for the well-use of such ability. To comprehend better what the teacher intends a conceptualization of the independent variable is done below.

### **Concept of Spelling**

Spelling: according to Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, it is “the forming of words from letters according to accepted usage: ORTHOGRAPHY; also: the letters composing a word.” (1987 p.840)

In the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, spelling is settled as orthography, [...] “term used for (1) general spelling (2) for correct or standard spelling. For some languages, the orthography is based on generally accepted usage and it is not prescribed by an official body.”[...] Like the term “spelling” itself, the term orthography is more likely to be used of alphabetic writing than of syllabic writing, and is unlikely to be used for ideographic writing.” (Richards J, 1985)

The researcher agrees with the concept of spelling given by Webster’s Dictionary, because it can be inferred that words are compound by “members” which are letters, and it also gives importance to the norm of the English-speaking countries.

The present research was carried out following mostly a qualitative paradigm, particularly an action-research methodology; however, the process had to be complemented with the use of some quantitative methods, which were particularly necessary in the needs assessment process.

In order to assess the weaknesses and strengths of the teaching-learning process of spelling in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at “Ramon Pando Ferrer” Elementary School, two phases were necessary: one to assess the needs of the process plan through the analysis of official documents and didactic materials, and a second phase to assess the students' needs through a pedagogical test and a questionnaire.

## **2.1 1<sup>st</sup>Phase Outcomes**

The analysis of the process plan revealed that English subject is taught mainly through a visual didactic material: the video-lesson, which covers the first 20 minutes of the lesson period; this only allows the teacher a 25-minute span to provide the students with enough practice and motivation on the contents. The students have a workbook set into 40 lessons with a variety of exercises to deal with all the abilities: speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

The objectives specified in 5th grade for the teaching of English as a foreign language are:

At the end of the course the students should be able to:

- Reproduce simple messages with the help of the teacher
- Ask and answer at elementary level about basic information: personal information, spelling, description of school objects, talk about family members, physical moral description, occupations, likes and dislikes {toys—colors}, and parts of the body, school routines and means of transportation.
- Express the content with a correct pronunciation and intonation
- Comprehend simple oral messages while listening attentively to the teacher and video-sequences.
- Strengthen bounds of friendship and solidarity with other countries, especially with English-speaking ones, as well as knowing about their language and culture.

To assess the strengths and weaknesses of the didactic materials (Workbook 'English Come!') a guide was conceived. Provided that in this level the students are not required to take down notes on a notebook, the role of the workbook is crucial. (See appendix 3)

The categories that were taken into account to analyze the workbook were the following:

- 1) Number of exercises explicitly devoted to develop spelling skills
- 2) Number of exercises that implicitly contribute to develop spelling skills.
- 3) The ability that spelling is most related to, within the exercises.
- 4) The aspect of the language system that spelling is most related to, within the exercises(grammar, vocabulary and communicative functions)
- 5) Correspondence of the exercises with the communicative approach.

The results of the analysis made on 5<sup>th</sup> grade workbook 'English Come!' revealed that out of the 380 exercises contained in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade workbook “English Come!”, only 68 exercises (33%) are devoted to develop writing skills. Out of these 68 exercises, only 24 develop explicitly spelling skills. The rest of the exercises implicitly contribute to develop

such skills; however, the tasks are sometimes found to be excessively repetitive. In general, they do not provide teachers with a wide variety of choices to deal with spelling. The analysis also showed that the ability that spelling is most related to, is speaking with 70% of the exercises (15) mixed with this ability; 20% of them (6) are related to listening and there is a 10% (3) related to reading.

The aspect of the language system that spelling is most related to, within the exercises in this workbook is vocabulary, with 11 of the exercises (47%); it is followed by the work with communicative functions, with 8 exercises (29%); and the rest of the exercises (24%) are link to the practice of grammar aspects.

Finally, it was found that the majority of the exercises follow the communicative approach as the tasks are meaningful and appropriate to teach, they are also in correspondence with the needs of 5<sup>th</sup> graders, and help them to develop self and peer correction; nevertheless they do not trigger the students need to write.

In general, the analysis of documents led to the following **reflections**:

- 1) There is not any objective that specifically aims to the development of writing ability or spelling skills.
- 2) There are few exercises explicitly devoted to develop spelling skills in the work book.
- 3) Most of the exercises are devoted to speaking and do not provide teachers with a wide variety of choices to deal with spelling.
- 4) The majority of the exercises follow the communicative approach but the tasks are sometimes found to be repetitive.

## **2.2 2nd phase outcomes**

In this phase, the students' needs in terms of spelling skills were assessed by means of the following **analysis categories**: (See appendix 4)

- a) Establishment of phoneme-grapheme relationship
- b) Recognition of word limits
- c) Capitalization

The students had to be assessed and placed into levels in order to be aware of what their actual performance regarding spelling is, and then start the construction of a meaningful and effective spelling instruction, taking into account that the students' needs have be encountered at their level. That is why this pre-assessment is essential.

By administering a pedagogic test (dictation) it was revealed that the students had weaknesses in spelling words in English language. The authoress could find out that the students had difficulties like: (See appendix 5)

- 1) Wrong association of the English sounds with the Spanish graphemes that have a similar phonological realization

E.g:

- ✓ /tʃ/ -ch instead of -sh
- ✓ /ð/ - d instead of -th
- ✓ /f/ - f instead of -ph or -ff
- ✓ /θ/ - z, -s instead of -th

- ✓ /i:/ - I instead of -ee
- ✓ /ɔ:/ - o instead of -a
- ✓ /u:/ - u instead of -oo
- ✓ /æ/ /ʌ/ - e instead of -a or -u
- ✓ /tʃ/ - y, -ll instead of -g or -j

- 2) Wrong delimitation of words
- 3) Use of capitalization when not needed
- 4) Use of lower-case when capitalization was required

In all, they showed difficulties in establishing a correct phoneme-grapheme relationship, which is different from their L1; making mistakes, overall, with consonant graphemes that do not exist in Spanish like: “sh”, “th”, “ph” and with vowel graphemes “a”, “e”, “i”, “o”, “u” when not corresponding with their phonemic realization in Spanish.

However, the students showed certain level of awareness about the English language; they understand that their mother tongue is different from the one they are learning. The majority of them could spell correctly words like: “what” which combination of graphemes is completely unknown in Spanish, “I” this pronoun has an only letter, but its phonological realization contains 2 phonemes. These are just two examples of the students’ strengths that include also their motivation, active participation, cooperation and commitment to learn how to spell words in English.

The students were placed in three levels according to their spelling abilities, in line with the results of the pedagogic test already declared. Out of the 25 students, a minority of 3 students (12%) were placed in the high level, a bigger number of them were in the middle level with 9 students (36%), and a higher quantity of students were placed in the lower level with 13(52%). (See appendix 6)

The authoress also made a **questionnaire** headed to the manager of the group, who is at the same time their Spanish teacher. This empirical method was aimed at finding out the causes of students’ spelling mistakes and to compare the state of their spelling abilities in Spanish regarding dyslexia, misplacement of letters, use of capitalization, and so on. The Spanish teacher provided the following statements: (See appendix 7)

- “Sí hay casos de alumnos en el aula que cometen dislexia al escribir.”
- “Son frecuentes los errores con el uso de la b,v; c,s,z; g,j; h.” The use of b,v and c,s,z are mistakes of high frequency. She referred the use of the grapheme “l” when the phoneme “r” was dictated.
- “Al utilizar las mayúsculas hay estudiantes que las adicionan, pero es más frecuente su mal posición.”

Having this information as a basis, she added her own opinion: “Considero que la habilidad de escribir en la lengua materna constituye el punto culminante del desarrollo del lenguaje de los alumnos; pues mediante ellos deben aprender a expresarse por escrito con orden lógico, fluidez, claridad y precisión.”

When asked if the development of the ability in their mother tongue influenced the teaching-learning process of it in English, she answered: "Influye, pero considero que afecta más el desarrollo de la lengua extranjera Inglés, su desconocimiento, las pocas horas clase y su ejercitación, pues no se habla bien de lo que no se conoce. La ejercitación, el diálogo es la forma de aprender Inglés" –and this- "con una frecuencia semanal es imposible."

Eventually, having administered these three instruments, a triangulation of the information could be done. It was evident that the lack of time, effective exercitation, and meaningful practice of the contents that the Spanish teacher referred to in the questionnaire, was corroborated with the lack of exercises found the workbook, and is consistent with the spelling difficulties the students showed. The results of these instruments made evident the importance of a good basis from the mother tongue, and correlation among students' mistakes committed in Spanish and in English regarding, dyslexia, capitalization, and so on.

### **III. A System of Actions to Improve the Students' Spelling Skills: Construction Process and Results**

Taking into account the students' needs, as well as the theory, a process of construction of actions began —implementing, reflecting on the results, changing what did not work as expected, and keeping what worked the best— in order to have the learners overcome their difficulties in terms of spelling.

However, the construction of a system of actions could not start without having the concepts of system and action well-defined.

According to Grijalbo's Dictionary (s.a:874) a system is defined as "an organized whole of things, means, and ideas that contributes to a same goal".

Webster's Dictionary (1983:895), on the other hand, defines system as "a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items forming a unified whole".

Whereas, Von Bertalanffy cited by Rodríguez, A. (2010:35); defines system as "A whole of interrelated elements".

The authoress finds more adequate the definition of system provided by Grijalbo's Dictionary, because it acknowledges the idea of integrated elements aiming at a common goal.

With regard to the term action, Webster's Dictionary defines it as "a process that involves more than one step, or is continuous, or is capable of repetition. Something done or effected".

Encarta Dictionary, on the other hand, defines action as "a process of doing something in order to achieve a purpose" (Encarta 2008). The authoress agrees with the second concept, because it involves a "step-by-step" notion to achieve a determined aim.

Having analyzed these two terms separately, a concept of system of actions to develop spelling skills can be provided for this particular research, this being: *an organized whole of interconnected procedures devoted to develop abilities in establishing phoneme-*

*grapheme relationship, capitalizing, and stating word limits, so that students can become good and proficient spellers.*

### **3.1 Building the System of Actions to Improve the Students' Spelling Skills**

First, an initial series of actions was conceived according to the authoress' idea of what could probably work with this particular kind of students.

1. The use of some complementary bibliography, such as: Inglés Junior (a picture dictionary), El Tiempo (an illustrated book), Colección "Aprende Inglés con Disney", The Zoo, A First Reader, Counting Animals, Innovative Kids.
2. The adaption of exercises to meet spelling goals.
3. The elaboration of a particular stock of visuals for each lesson.
4. The intensive use of visuals to have the students learn directly the phoneme-grapheme correspondence by association.
5. Focus on the alphabet
6. Use of Wordwalls
7. Orientation of multisensory activities:
  - ✓ The look, say, cover, write, and check folder
  - ✓ Following shapes and patterns
  - ✓ Crosswords
  - ✓ Lettersoups
  - ✓ Silent patterns
  - ✓ Clapping sounds
  - ✓ Wordstolearn (Chart)
  - ✓ Word Sort
  - ✓ Dictation
8. Playing games:
  - ✓ Spelling bingos
  - ✓ Spelling bees: the speller of the week
  - ✓ Creation and Art

Gradually, these actions were introduced and adapted according to the reflection process that derived from practice.

#### **THE USE OF COMPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY**

First of all, some bibliographical sources were used (Inglés Junior -a picture dictionary-, El Tiempo -an illustrated book-, Collection "Aprende Inglés con Disney", The Zoo, A First Reader, Counting Animals, Innovative Kids.) to enrich the supply of vocabulary the students had, and to complement the teaching material aids in order to have the students learn the spelling of words, and to keep them enthusiastic towards the teaching-learning process of spelling, doing away the boredom of the regular lessons.

The students showed curiosity, constancy, and discipline. It helped the students recognize the meaning of words without the need of translation; i.e., by association.

### **THE ADAPTION OF EXERCISES TO MEET SPELLING GOALS**

As it is stated in the regularities about the didactic material, the workbook contains many interesting exercises, but they do not contribute to develop skills regarding spelling, that is the reason why the teacher adapted some of them in order to improve the lesson quality and to take advantage of the gist of the exercises contained in the didactic material.

The variations made to the workbook exercises came from placing the student in a communicative situation, reassigning the tasks, changing the aims of the exercises that were just focused on oral expression into ones that dealt with listening, speaking, and spelling; to the conception of new exercises aimed, specifically, at improving spelling skills. Such is the case of the exercise implemented in lesson 11 (I like to be on Fashion) in which the main vocabulary content was "activities at home and after school". The students were asked to write sentences with a list of activities given before. The transformations made to this exercise were:

- Students were asked to see the list of activities.
- Secondly, to read them silently following the teacher lecture.
- Then, to write them down on their notebooks. (Group/teamwork)
- And to say aloud the list.
- Finally, they had to perform a role play.

#### **List of Activities**

- Do the homework
- Play baseball
- Read books
- Visit my friends
- Watch the cartoons
- Write the lesson

#### **Role Play**

You are talking to your new friend in the yard of the school. You two are new at school, and are interested in knowing your new friend's daily activities.

#### **Student A**

- 1) Pregúntele a su nuevo compañero qué es lo que hace en la escuela.
- 2) Esté preparado para responder las actividades que usted hace en su casa después de la escuela.

#### **Student B**

- 1) Respóndale a su compañero con la lista de actividades aprendida durante la clase.
- 2) Pregúntele lo que él o ella hace después de la escuela.

This kind of new-conceived exercise indirectly had the students spell words and phrases, and also integrated the 4 macro-abilities. The students showed more interest and active involvement while participating in the lessons that contained this kind of

exercises than in those that followed the orientation of the workbook and the video-lessons.

### **THE ELABORATION AND INTENSIVE USE OF A PARTICULAR STOCK OF VISUALS**

Due to the lack of visuals that call the attention of the students and their willingness to participate; and that, at the same time, fulfill spelling goals during the regular lessons, the teacher elaborated a stock of visuals (pictures) representing family members, seasons, occupations, animals, daily activities, parts of the body, and so on. In the bottom of the picture there was a clear identification of what it represented, but using bigger letters than regular size, so that the students could focus on the words presented as vocabulary, fix its spelling, and identify its meaning without the need of translation. Also these visuals had colors and simple shapes that made the picture evident and interesting.

As the lessons passed and the visuals were presented, the students were motivated and excited and made many questions and positive comments on them. Using the visuals the students were able to establish a relation between the image and its written representation; for example, in the lessons 9 and 10 “What do I do during the day?” and “After school”, they worked with pictures of daily activities that they do at home and at school, respectively. They also built some sentences using these activities. Through the activities, they committed mistakes when writing the following words: “books”, “cartoons”, and “lessons”. The most common mistake they made was related to the spelling of the doubled grapheme [oo] and [ss] which, in English, sounds /u/ and /s/ respectively, so they used to write “u” instead of “oo”; and, in the case of the spelling of *lesson*, they tended to spell it with only one “s”. The teacher had the learners participate and focus on learning the spelling of the new words through the pictures. This action worked very well in every lesson as it involved the student with the content of the lessons.

### **FOCUS ON THE 26 LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET**

In the process of developing spelling skills, the researcher focused on teaching the letters of the English alphabet, for that an **Alphabet Wall** was made, and some of the 26 graphemes were taught during the lessons; making emphasis on the unfamiliar sounds of letters such as “v”, “z”, “g”, “j”, “h” and so on.

The teacher:

- Asked the students to be attentive and listen to the pronunciation of the alphabet.
- Asked the students to follow the teacher reading aloud.
- Asked the students to take down notes of the alphabet in their notebooks.

This first meet with the English alphabet was very useful for students to find the relation between phonemes and graphemes; they showed interest, willingness to participate, and discipline during the dictation of the alphabet, following the steps and repeating the alphabet twice as well as taking notes of the alphabet on their notebooks.

The alphabet wall was not only used to introduce the English alphabet, but also it was used as material aid by the teacher while teaching pronunciation, and during the spelling sessions.

### **USE OF WORDWALLS**

This action enabled the students to have referential knowledge, and worked as a motivating and brainstorming aid; the “poster” contained a group of words organized by family; for example, during the lessons that dealt with animals, the names were grouped according to their characteristics: Domestic Animals (pets), Wild Animals, and Farm Animals. This also functioned as an aid to support the activities assigned during the lesson. It was used before and after the video.

The teacher:

- Pasted the posters on the wall.
- Asked the students to find some of the animals they learnt during the presentation of the mini-dialogue, then the ones that they did not know.
- Using mimics, direct translation, and similarities with Spanish words, she conveyed the meaning of the unknown words.
- Asked them to write down the name of the animals which spelling they considered more difficult to learn.
- Asked them to make substitutions within the mini-dialogue and practice it in pairs.

In this particular exercise, the students made it right, but the time was not enough to work with the whole list of animals in the poster, so the teacher had to make it shorter for further lessons.

As the students’ acceptance of this action was evident, in further lessons a homework with other families of words was assigned; the students were supposed to elaborate their own wordwalls with different vocabulary; for example, 6 wordwalls were pasted on the classroom (clothes, family members, food, fruits, toys, and games wordwalls). This action created an English class ambiance within a normal classroom, and the students used the wordwalls as referential vocabulary source during other lessons.

Some of the students came up with the idea of designing more wordwalls making use of pictures, drawings, and so on; this is evidence of interest in the English lessons. The students were able to write some of the words learnt and spell them in their notebooks and on the board.

### **ORIENTATION OF MULTISENSORY ACTIVITIES**

This action had the intention to make the students use as many senses as possible while learning the spelling of words through activities.

#### **Activity 1: LOOK, SAY, COVER, WRITE, AND CHECK FOLDER**

This extra-class activity was oriented to keep records of the students’ frequency words, and involve themselves in the process of learning how to spell, enriching the practice at home. It was assigned as independent work and checked from time to time as homework.

The teacher

- Gave each student a piece of paper folded into 4 parts and pasted it in the last page of the workbook.
- Introduced the independent work explaining what the name of the folder means: Look, say, cover, write, and check, making sure that they understood what each of these words meant, for them to understand the dynamic of the activity.
- Asked them to decorate the cover of the folder as they desired with colors, and so on. (at home)
- Gave an example. First, asked the students to look at a word and write it down in the left side of the folder, then to repeat it aloud after the teacher; afterwards, asked them to cover this side of the material, and to recall its spelling and write it down on the right side.
- Finally, she asked them to unfold both left and right side of the paper in order to check the spelling.

It took more than 5 minutes to assign and explain this activity, so the lesson took 15 more minutes than expected; however, the time used to carry out this activity in subsequent lessons was not a real problem as the students worked with this material previously at home. A problem that could be perceived was that there were some students that did not study at home, though the majority of them used the folder regularly.

When the teacher checked the folder every two weeks, 6 students in particular showed a significant progress as they studied making use of it, there was a group of students who were not as constant as the others, but made use of it too, especially during the lessons taking down notes of tricky words directly on the folder. In every lesson, there were two students who did not work at all with the folder, these two students sometimes participated in oral exercises, but they did not fulfill the written tasks.

### **Activity 2: SHAPES AND PATTERNS**

This activity was conceived in order to create strategies for them to recall the letters that form words. It was included within exercise 1 on page 71 of the workbook, (a close-up activity).

The teacher:

- Assigned exercise 1 on page 71 (letter soup)
- After having solved it, asked them to draw the shapes of the letters that compounded the words found in the letter soup.
- Checked it asking them to go to the board.

The students developed the activity readily, they took the chalk and their pencils to draw the shapes of the letters on the board and on their notebooks. Some of the students were asked to use this strategy in the folder and the chart; others just did not understand what they had to do, so the teacher took into account their peculiar needs and assisted them during the process.

Regarding the time, it was optimum to solve the whole exercise as it was taken from the workbook and reoriented to achieve spelling goals.

The teacher considered that this activity could be combined with the other activities that encouraged the students to create their own strategies to recall the spelling of words; such is the case of the “words-to-learn chart”.

### **Activity 3: CROSSWORDS**

This activity was assigned to encourage the students to divide the words into their components (graphemes). In 10 minutes on a big crossword with pictured clues of toys and games, they were supposed to:

- Brainstorm some of the words learnt in the last two lessons.
- Write them on the board.

After having pasted the crossword on the board, they had to:

- Solve it following the pictured clues that appeared at the beginning of the squares.
- Follow the arrows pictured to guess the direction that the words were written in.
- Go to the board and fill in the blanks, TO BE CHECKED.
- Spell and read aloud the word they wrote.

This activity was very interesting, and could afford mass and spontaneous participation, though many mistakes were committed while the students read aloud, instantly, these mistakes were corrected by the teacher.

The time was not optimum to complete the whole crossword, so it had to be finished after the video-lesson, but not all of the students could go to the blackboard.

In this activity, the majority of students showed an average progress, while others committed mistakes writing wrong words.

This was one of the first actions that, explicitly, asked the students to spell the words; subsequently, the students did not remember the denomination of the letters, so they used the alphabet wall as referential knowledge.

### **Activity 4: LETTER SOUPS**

This activity was conceived to enhance the students’ word knowledge and to encourage them to read aloud and spell the words.

The teacher

- Assigned the activity that contains the letter soup.
- After having found the words, she asked the students to go in front of the class, and write the word s/he found, then to spell it and say it aloud.

With this activity, time was never enough for students to spell the words, so it had to be finished at home as independent work. During the development of the activity, some of

the students did not participate and did not solve the exercise; these students are those that presented more difficulties while spelling or developing any other ability.

With regard to oral spelling, they misnamed vowels as they tended to use the Spanish denomination instead of the English one, and they also had problems recalling the names of some consonants, especially “g”, “q”, “k”, and “h”.

Having analyzed that the letter soup and the crosswords were already assigned exercises of the workbook, and that they were only reoriented looking for spelling goals; the teacher made the decision of joining these two activities to the second action that aims at the same goal, which is to ameliorate, to reorient, and to improve the existing ones.

### **Activity 5: SILENT PATTERNS**

This activity was planned to enrich the students’ word knowledge while they differentiated the letter sounds as an after-viewing activity to be developed in 10 minutes. The orientation of the activity was like this:

- Give each student a photocopy of the material “My Zoo” (See appendix 8)
- Ask the students to listen carefully to the dictation of the words, and find the missing letters.
- Then, ask them to exchange their photocopies, and make peer correction.
- Make sure they rewrote right the ones they had first written wrong.
- Suggest that they use their look, say, write, cover, and check folder to make corrections.

The development of this activity presented several problems; first, the time did not work well, because the action “wordwall” took place the same day and the look, say, cover, write and check folder would be assigned, too. As recommendation these three activities must be oriented in three different lessons.

Although the time was not enough for the development of the two actions, the dictation started, but only 8 words could be dictated rapidly; however, the teacher considered that this action could be implemented in a speed that every student could understand words and could have the time to find the missing letters. For that reason, she decided to leave it for the next lesson.

Regarding spelling, the students had problems to write the combination of letters: “ph”, “pp”, “ff”, and vowels, but they showed a particular concern about knowing whether they were getting the word right or not.

It was assigned as an after-viewing activity during lesson 26 “A Visit to a Zoo” with the same steps. On this occasion, time was not enough either. The second time, it was developed like this: before the dictation, the students were given a series of images to recall the name of the animals learnt in the previous lesson and this time, 8 words were dictated at a normal speed, in a 15-minute dictation. In this session, few students showed problems with the writing of doubled graphemes, and only two miswrote the word “spider”.

A third session was needed to complete the action, there were 6 words left; this time, the dictation was developed in an easier way. It could be done in a 10-minute dictation, but the students still confronted problems with vowel sounds.

The teacher drew the conclusion that too many words were not indispensable for the needs of the students at this level, and that she should make the list shorter, so that it could be implemented in the first lesson that deal with animals in 15 minutes. Despite this, she suggested that in the case of a spelling session, the number of words could increase.

This activity could also be set into the “dictations” action as it is a dictation in itself; but, in that case, the particularity of the missing letters should be taken into account.

### **Activity 6: WORDS TO LEARN:**

As well as the look, say, write, cover, and check folder, this activity is conceived to keep records of students’ independent work and their frequency words.

The teacher

- Gave each student the “WORDS TO LEARN” printed material. (See appendix 9)
- Asked them to paste it at the end of the workbook, next to the folder.
- Explained to them what they had to do with it:
  - a. Look for those words that you consider are the trickiest ones when you write them.
  - b. Once selected those words, write them on the left cells of the printed material.
  - c. On the right side, you will create a strategy to memorize and learn the spelling of these words.
  - d. Practice regularly at home.
- To check it, the teacher collected the students’ workbooks.

This activity was easy to present, as the researcher noticed the students’ enthusiasm with the purpose of the research. They mentioned that they had never been given any materials to work with at home, and they were thankful.

When this activity was first checked, it was perceived that half the students had not worked with this material at home and the teacher could see that the words that contained graphemes such as: “k”, “g”, “h”, “j”, vowels, and combinations of letters were the most selected as tricky ones.

In further lessons, when the spelling bees started, some of the students spelled out the words in writing with the name of each letter in parentheses as a strategy. Consequently, as mentioned before in previous activities, the teacher realized that this activity could be combined with others; for example, following patterns and shapes could be a mnemonic strategy for them to write there in the right-side cells, so she recommended doing it in further lessons.

### **Activity 7: SORT OF WORDS**

This activity was conceived to enrich the students' word knowledge, and to make spelling generalizations with similar words using the illustrated book, "Inglés Junior: El Tiempo". In every lesson, a page of the book was brought to the classroom to motivate towards the video-lesson, to teach vocabulary, and to solve other exercises. It was used like this:

- Introducing the topic of the lesson, the teacher hanged a visual related to this topic on the board.
- She asked them to speculate about the topic and to write down the new words.
- She taught the pronunciation of new words and made emphasis on the way they are written.
- The teacher asked them to use the words to make substitutions or to complete the exercises.

A variation of this action was implemented in lesson 23 "Let's Eat!"

In this activity the students were divided into 4 teams of 5 members and they were given a group of 4 cards with the name of different foods. The words were grouped as follows: meats, fats, vegetables, and fruits.

A bag contained the words all together. Then, a student had to go and take a word out and describe it for the rest of the class for the students to guess what it was. The team that had the word had write the word in a bubble drawn on the board and read it aloud.

To ensure that everybody kept all the words, they were asked to take down notes of the words. And, at the end they kept 4 groups of 4 words each in their notebooks.

All the activities that contained visuals called the students' attention highly, so this helped to attain their attention during the teaching of spelling.

The students showed a basic word knowledge as the lessons took place.

This action could be mixed with the wordwalls, making use of them as visuals.

For some students the time was not enough to write all the words, so the visuals were left hanging on the board until the end of the lesson and beyond. It was necessary to take more time than expected, so the teacher reflected that it would have been better to write only those words that the students consider tricky and/or useful.

While spelling and reading aloud, 2 students were not able to read the words, while the majority of the students asked for an example to repeat after, and only a few of them made it without any help.

### **Activity 8: CLAPPING SOUNDS**

This activity was useful to recognize the number of words that build up a sentence and to recognize the limits of words. It was used as while-viewing activities and while practicing mini-dialogues in pairs.

This action took place in all of the lessons that presented a mini-dialogue.

The teacher:

- Asked the students to be attentive to the video-teacher.

- Asked them to repeat after the video-teacher.
- Asked them to “clap” at each word they heard, as the mini-dialogues were playing.
- Asked them to identify how many words there were in the question of the mini-dialogue and in the answer, too.
- When practicing, asked them to clap with her while reading the dialogue aloud making emphasis on the number of words they said, and, thereby, being aware of the number of words they wrote.

This action was widely accepted by the students, they enjoyed it and, perhaps, it was taken as an excuse by some of the students to make noise and disturb the lesson.

Some of the students could not follow the lecture correctly at a normal speed, consequently they did not get to identify the number of words. So, in further lessons, the dialogue was read at a slow speed, like “cutting in and out” the sentence.

At this point, the advanced students showed progress in identifying the limits of words and the importance of punctuation marks to differentiate the question from the answer; while others just followed the activity as their classmates developed it.

### **Activity 9: DICTATION**

First, this activity was conceived to assess the students’ spelling proficiency and complement other actions, and as a brainstorming. However, as it was taking place within the lessons, the teacher realized that it was probably the most important action that she was implementing, so she started making dictations weekly. (See appendix 10) It was developed like this:

- Weekly or every two weeks, the teacher asked the students to study for a dictation the following class.
- She developed the dictation activity:
  - a. Make a first reading of 5 words or a mini-dialogue.
  - b. Dictate the first word/sentence once, twice, and thrice.
  - c. Then, make a final reading, for them to check their writings.
- After the dictation, she collected the papers.
- When checked, she gave them back again (next lesson).
- She also asked them to correct the mistakes signaled and write the words correctly on their notebooks.
- And sometimes, she asked them to give her the papers back.

This activity is reflected in almost all of the multisensory ones, that is why it comes to be one of the most important within these group. Consequently, the teacher brought it to be the head of the multisensory activities as it comprises most of the language abilities in one activity.

The students’ collected paper showed gradually a change in the students’ spelling behavior:

- Some students presented problems while writing only a letter or committed no mistakes, while others could not even write the word.
- At first, they did not listen to the teacher, and asked one and twice to repeat the dictation, but as time passed by, they got used to the dynamics of the action.
- Sometimes, when the dictation was a mini-dialogue, they did not recognize the limits of words, so the “clappings” were implemented within it.
- The time, sometimes, was a factor that did not propitiate the normal development of the dictation.
- 6 of the students presented relevant results in this “tests-dictations” committing no mistakes at all, or sometimes miswriting only one or two words.
- When the dictation was a list of words related to the topic of the unit, there were better results than the ones of the dialogues. The lists were not very long, and the time was enough.

### **PLAYING GAMES**

This action comprises activities like games, competitions and art; encouraging the students to create, share with their classmates, and play among them while learning.

#### **Game: SPELLING BINGO**

This game helped the students to enhance the practice of the phoneme-grapheme association.

##### **Steps:**

- Students were given a list of 20 words and a chart divided into 10 squares.
- From the list they had to select 10 words, and it was optional to leave one in blank.
- Then, the teacher (with the 20 words in a bag) started asking a student to go and take a word randomly, this student has to spell the word chosen.
- The teacher asked the students to repeat the words aloud.
- They had to color the word in their charts in the case they had it, and the one who first completed coloring his/her chart shouted BINGO and was proclaimed winner.

This activity kept the students attentive and participative, and the time was enough to play. Related to spelling, some students showed an improvement in their skills, spelling correctly the words they took off the bag, but some still had to think too much to spell even short words, in spite of this they were willing to participate and play.

#### **Competition: Spelling Bee THE SPELLER OF THE WEEK**

As the activities of spelling the words aloud were taking place, the ambiance of the class was getting more competitive, so the students decided to make a weekly competition. This helped to use the word knowledge they had learnt, to practice the letters and sounds of the English alphabet, to acknowledge those students who evidently had

gained a significant progress while spelling, and finally, to cheer up those students who had more difficulties during the lessons. (See appendix 11)

As time was always a problem during the implementation of the spelling bees, this time, the students decided it would be an extra-class activity, so it was developed after the English lesson, as pure spelling sessions.

The competence was developed like this:

- Ask some students to come to the board to participate spontaneously.
- Give them a word to spell.
- Divide the board into columns taking into account the number of students that would participate.
- Ask them to write their names in the upper side of the column.
- Ask the student to spell the word following the pattern provided:
  - a. Divide the word into its graphemes.
  - b. Between parentheses write the name of each letter.
  - c. Finally, spell out the word.
- When they finish, check it with the entire class.
- Select those students who make it better, and dictate a word for them to spell as a competition.
- The one who makes it first and right wins!

This activity measured the students' spelling behavior thoroughly, their involvement with their own spelling learning process, their knowledge in phoneme-grapheme association and in their command of capitalization rules.

It never took less than 15 minutes to be developed, anyway the students were always enthusiastic, spontaneously active, participative, and completed the task.

The advanced students participated actively, while the average students showed a good participation during the spelling sessions too, though they did not always achieved the goal, especially with words containing graphemes such as: "r", "k", "z", vowels, and the like.

The students who had a bad behavior during the English lessons never went to the board, even when they were asked to. These students did not show relevant progression regarding spelling skills, as well as other abilities.

This action enhanced the collective work, the partnership, and the positive attitude towards the English lessons.

### **Artistic Activity: CREATION AND ARTS**

This last action was carried out to recall the use of capital letters and the importance of the limits of words. It took a whole lesson to be developed and even though some students could not finish it, they kept it to bring it the following lesson. (See appendix 12)

The teacher:

- Gave the students a piece of paper, color pencils, markers, and so on in order to draw a city in which they would locate some places and avenues that could be found in the town.
- Asked them to write two sentences that described their drawings using the communicative function “expressing existence”.
- Went around the class making corrections.
- Encouraged the students to self-correct and make peer correction.
- Encouraged the students to improve their spelling skills saying things like:
  - a. Remember that the names of avenues, names of people, days of the week, month of the year are written with initial upper-case letter.
- Accompanied the students in the process of the sentence construction. (feedback)

As expected, most of them committed mistakes while using upper-case letters when writing the names of the avenues that exist in Santa Clara.

Besides the grammatical mistakes, they also missed some letters while writing the words: “there”, “are”, “schools”, “streets”, and so on.

Other words such as: “market”, “hospitals”, “drugstore”, and “house” were not tricky for many of them.

Something that the teacher really liked was this process of feedback that helped them realize their own mistakes and correct them on the spot.

### **3.2 General Reflections and Transformations Resulted after the Implementation of Actions**

The previously described system of actions was the result of the process of assessment carried out in class 5A. This particular class showed difficulties in the initial assessment concerning the phoneme-grapheme association, the use of capitalization, and the limits of words while spelling in English.

During the whole process of implementation of actions, the students looked excited, motivated, and positively influenced to learn the spelling of words by heart. In every class, they asked questions, asked for more exercises to improve their spelling abilities. The actions described above were openly accepted and the students loved to work in pairs and groups. They also showed interest in the meaning of new words. The majority of the exercises from the workbook were improved or, in a certain way, modified in order to take advantage of them.

In the everyday practice, the teacher made a self-critical assessment of the lesson plan in order to achieve more qualified lessons, as well as their own preparation to teach them.

It was important for the teacher to provide the students with new vocabulary using other sources, in order to develop strategies for them to learn at home by drawing their own visuals.

The students’ collected papers, the reflections and comments derived from the **analysis of the students’** outcome, were gathered and recorded in the **teacher’s diary** and the

**portfolio.** With respect to the analysis of the students' outcome, a particular phenomenon was evidenced in students' notebooks: in many cases students miswrote some words that they copied from the board; this as a consequence of the difference between the teacher's calligraphy and theirs. To exemplify this, the words WILD and MICE can be helpful. Where they had to write W they wrote N in upper-case, and in the case of the plural of MOUSE, they united the last two letters, writing this: "mia".

The actions were carried out all through 24 lessons of the 40 the workbook proposes during the current academic year 2012-2013, starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> lesson (It Is Hot!) to the 28<sup>th</sup> (In My Town There Is...).

The success of the system of actions applied did not depend on the actions conceived to improve spelling skills in the students; but in those efforts of them, who were the real performers of the actions. As these actions were somewhat different from the regular type of activities they were used to having in class, the students felt highly motivated towards them, and showed a peculiar enthusiasm during their application; but most importantly, the students improved their spelling skills.

From the authoress' point of view, the most effective actions were those that dealt with the phoneme-grapheme association and those which kept the students using as many senses as possible while facing a spelling task and getting word knowledge. Though these actions sometimes represented a huge challenge for some of them, they were interested in accomplishing them.

The teacher considers that one action that encouraged them to really spell and work with the words, was the implementation of « speller of the week » sessions; these sessions invited the students to divide the words into graphemes, say the letters aloud, write, check, and rewrite words again.

The most important achievement of this research is the fact that the students became aware of their spelling behavior, and put hands in to improve it; they showed their efforts while spelling and solving the activities, learning the new words brought, doing the independent work, participating actively during the lessons, and dividing the words into their parts during the "speller of the week" sessions.

Finally, the authoresses can say that she has experienced her own challenge. She realized that teaching spelling in English can become a hard task. For that, she thinks it is not good to pretend that all the problems the students presented have been solved; therefore the students still have problems while limiting words, and overall when they make phoneme-grapheme Spanish-like associations. Thus, it is important to continue working with the aspects that have to do with sound-letter association and the limits of words for the improvement of students' spelling skills.

## **IV. System of Actions Derived from the Process of Practice and Reflection**

### **4.1 Characteristics of the System of Actions**

This system of actions was built up with the intention of improving 5<sup>TH</sup> graders' (class A) spelling skills, and thus improving their writing ability. Consequently, pedagogically

speaking, this study helped to fulfill the role of the school of leading children into academic achievements, reaching social development and cultural transmission; enhancing the development of the students' educational level making it comprehensive, active, and effective.

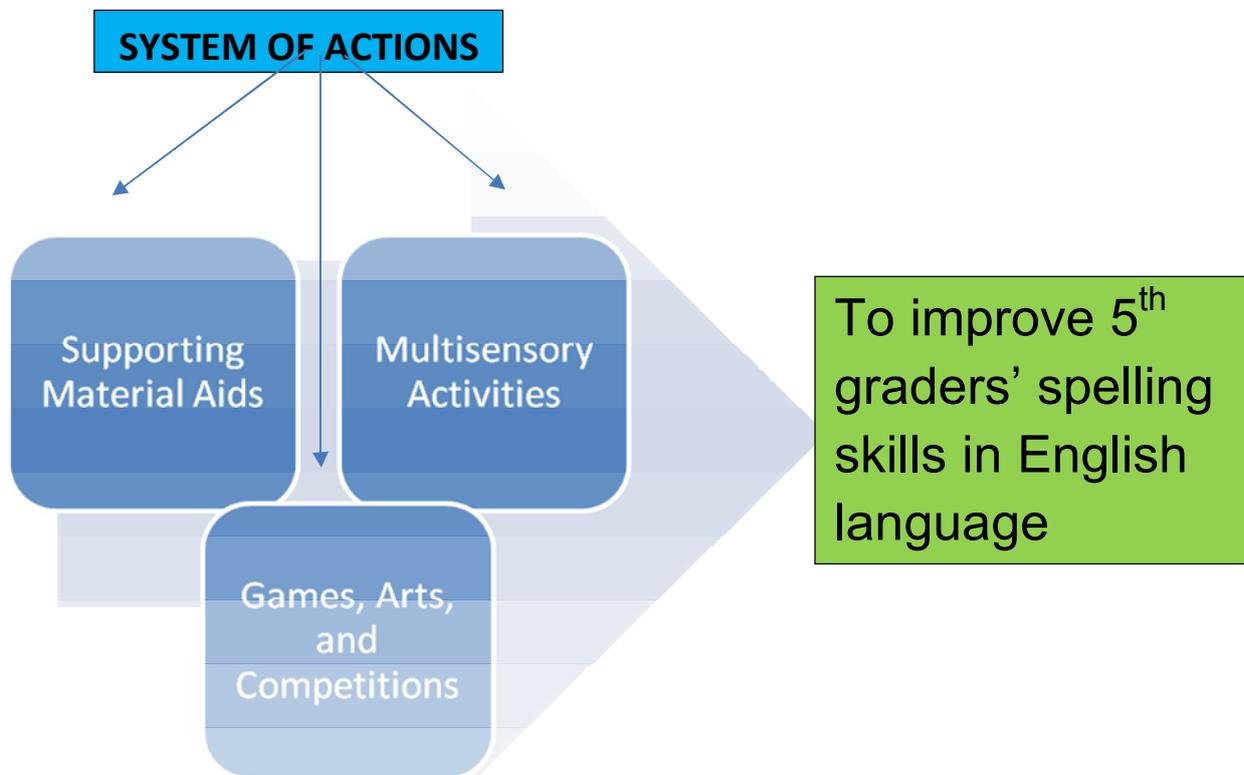
The authoress intended to favor the integration of the four macro-abilities, emphasizing on writing, this combined with a remarked educational intention, developing in each lesson values of love, compassion, partnership, friendship, responsibility, solidarity, patriotism, environmental and health education, and so on. This makes the system of actions, not only instructive, but also educative. The proposal also enhances pair and group work, as well as peer and self- correction.

The researcher attempted to provide teachers with a variety of actions to help them turn their students into good spellers in English language.

As the communicative approach points out the importance of flexible, methodical, organized, meaningful, and systemic exercises to improve a given aspect of the language, this system of actions to improve spelling skills was conceived following the CLT patterns and principles. It is organized and systemized throughout the 40 lessons contained within the 5<sup>th</sup> grade English Workbook (English Come!) using the 10-minute segment before the video-lesson and the 25 one after it. Some of the actions were designed to work with during the lessons and some were assigned as homework and independent work, in spite of this, it is open to any changes, and adaptable to any teacher's ways and methods.

#### **4.2 The System of Actions**

The final version of the system of actions derived from the implementation of an original idea of what could probably work with these students and the respective reflection upon the results of the implementation. Practice led the researcher to combine some of the actions, to organize them taking into account the objective, the importance, and the usefulness of each of them. So, they were grouped into three sets of actions. Graphically, the resulting system of actions can be represented as follows:



### **Actions that Support the Existing Material Aids**

The first set of actions, Supporting Material Aids, entails the ones that support and improve the existing material aids for the teaching of spelling.

1. Teach the English alphabet through an alphabet wall.

TEACHER:

- Brings an alphabet wall as material aids to teach the English alphabet in the first lesson.
- Leaves the material as a referential source.

STUDENTS:

- Must be attentive to the first oral reading of the whole alphabet and to the denomination of each letter (graphemes).
- Follow a second reading after the teacher.
- Take down notes about the English Alphabet.

2. Use wordwalls with pictures to provide the students with a wide stock of vocabulary; using bigger letters than regular size in the identification of each picture to help the students fix the spelling of the word.

TEACHER:

- Teaches the vocabulary through this aid and emphasizes on the spelling of words.

STUDENTS:

- Take this material as a referential source.
- Make a visual association among image, word, and its spelling.

3. Change, improve, and reorient the exercises on the workbook.

TEACHER:

- Assigns spelling tasks after a given exercise. E.g. crosswords and letter soups.

STUDENTS:

- Divide the word into its smaller units (graphemes)
- Add the name of each grapheme in parentheses.
- Put the graphemes together again and write the word down.
- Read it aloud.

### **Action that comprises multisensory activities**

This set of actions leads the students to use as many senses as possible to learn the spelling of words in English; besides they record their progresses.

1. Make dictations to help the students appreciate the different phonological realizations of graphemes in English language, to make an association between sound and letter, to practice vocabulary, and to assess their progressions regarding word delimitation.

TEACHER:

- Varies the kind of dictation for achieving different purposes.
  - a. Dictation of mini-dialogues clapping sounds to limit words.
  - b. Dictation of frequency-word lists to practice the spelling of tricky words.
  - c. Dictation of “silent patterns” or “missing letters” to recognize the individual phonological realizations of graphemes and the letters that compound a word.
- Makes the dictation following the pattern below:
  1. A first reading to give a global idea of the dictation.
  2. A second reading for students to write down.
  3. A final reading for them to check.
  4. One last reading if needed.

STUDENTS:

- Listen to the first reading and try get a global comprehension of the text.
- Listen to the second reading and write down the dictation.
- Listen to a final reading and check.
- Ask for an extra reading if needed.

Graphically, the dictations dynamics would be described like this:



2. Have the students develop strategies like mnemonics and frequency-word lists to be aware of their own weaknesses and strengths in spelling, to recall the words already learnt, and to have records of their own progress.

- A. Look, say, cover, write, and say folder
- B. Wordstolearn chart
- C. Shapes and patterns

TEACHER:

- Gives each student the necessary materials to keep record of their progresses, to elaborate the chart and the folder.
- Teaches strategies to recall the spelling of words.

STUDENTS:

- To use the given material as independent work to practice the spelling teachings at home.

### **Actions that encourage the students to create, play and compete while learning how to spell.**

1. Make weekly extra-class spelling sessions where the students can get to learn the graphemes that form the words and differentiate between the name of letters and their phonological realizations.

TEACHER:

- Guides the sessions.
- Corrects mistakes.

STUDENTS:

- Select tricky words.
- Divide them into graphemes.
- Add the name of each grapheme in parentheses.
- Spell it aloud.
- Put the graphemes together again to form the word.
- Read the Word aloud.

E.g.:



- \*The teacher chooses the best and names him/her “the speller of the week”
2. Make spelling bingos, so that the students can play, share, and learn at the same time.

#### TEACHER AND STUDENTS

- Play it as a normal bingo, but this time- instead of being read- the word will be spelled out aloud. The students have to identify what the word is and check whether they have it on their chart or not.

\*the teacher can call the students (one at a time) to come and spell the words themselves.

3. Combine arts and writing applying the process approach to teach writing and spelling.

#### TEACHER:

- Gives the necessary materials for the students to draw a given situation (related to the content of the lesson) They have to describe their drawings in writing. Initially, they write a first draft following a model, then they ask for corrections, and go back to rewrite.
- Passes around the class making corrections, guiding the group, cheering them to make peer correction, suggesting that they make improvements in their writings, and the like.
- Focuses on main capitalization rules.

The teacher, authoress of this research, suggests the previously described system of actions to those teachers that find an important task for them to teach their students how to spell; she also suggests to carry out spelling sessions as extra-class activities for the improvement of spelling and writing abilities.

## CONCLUSION

From all the research process, the following conclusions resulted:

1. From the theoretical and methodological point of view the development of spelling skills is supported by:
  - a. The conception of the communicative approach in language teaching.
  - b. The conception that spelling should be approached, not only generalizing spelling rules, but making the students' being aware of their own spelling needs, listing frequency words, and using multisensory activities.
  - c. The conception of the morphophonemic character of English spelling.
  - d. The conception that spelling in writing is the forming of words from letters according to accepted usage.
2. The assessment process carried out proved that the major weaknesses of the students regarding SPELLING were: the wrong association of the English sounds with the Spanish graphemes that have a similar phonological realization, the wrong delimitation of words, the use of capitalization when not needed, and the use of lower-case when capitalization was required. Furthermore, this process of assessment also evidenced students' strengths such as: their interest towards the subject, their motivation and activeness to participate and learn, and their awareness of the importance of English in the current days.
3. The designed system of actions resulted from an action-research methodology that implied implementing an initial system of actions, reflecting on its effectiveness in practice, restructuring and improving the system according to this reflection process.
4. The actions derived from the practice and reflection process to develop spelling skills comprises three types: one of them are those actions that lead the students to use as many senses as possible, the other entails the actions that support and improve the material aids that exist for the teaching of spelling in English language in 5th grade; and finally, there is a group of actions that encouraged the students to create, to play and to compete. All of them aimed at improving spelling skills.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The authoress of this research suggests that:

- The system of actions be adapted to and implemented in other grades and levels.
- Teachers continue to look for effective and meaningful practices that reinforce their students' abilities in associating sounds and letters and identifying word boundaries.
- Teachers encourage children to create their own strategies to develop spelling skills according to their needs.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix #1

Photograph of class 5<sup>th</sup>A at “Ramón Pando Ferrer” Elementary School



## Appendix #2

### Interview

Objective: to gather the students' appreciations about the subject.

Indicators:

- 1) Willingness to learn a new language
- 2) Opinion about the English language
- 3) Opinion of the lessons
- 4) Others

Questions:

- 1) How do you feel during the English lessons?
- 2) Who likes English? Who doesn't? Why?
- 3) Is it important for our lives? Yes\_\_ No\_\_
- 4) What is your opinion about the lessons?
- 5) Do you think learning English is difficult?
- 6) Which of the four abilities is more difficult to develop?
  - Writing
  - Speaking
  - Listening
  - Reading

Appendix #3  
Guide for the Analysis of Documents

Document: English Workbook "English Come! 5<sup>th</sup>"

Objective: to analyze the conception and treatment of spelling in the didactic material in fifth grade.

Aspects:

1. Number of exercises explicitly devoted to develop spelling skills.
2. Number of exercises that implicitly contribute to develop spelling skills.
3. The ability spelling is most related to within the exercises.
  - a) Speaking
  - b) Listening
  - c) Reading
4. The aspect of the language system that spelling is most related to, within the exercises.
  - a) Grammar
  - b) Vocabulary
  - c) Communicative function
5. Correspondence of the exercises with the communicative approach.
6. Availability of visuals.

## Appendix #4

### Analysis Categories for the Classification of the Students in Different Levels

#### **High level:**

1. Phoneme-grapheme association
  - a) The student establishes a correct phoneme-grapheme association.
2. Capitalization
  - a) S/he uses capitalization correctly.
3. Word delimitation
  - a) S/he recognizes the limits of the words and separates them.

#### **Middle level:**

1. Phoneme-grapheme association
  - a) The student makes some mistakes in establishing the phoneme-grapheme association.
2. Capitalization
  - a) S/he sometimes uses capitalization when not required.
  - b) S/he sometimes uses lower-case letters when capitalization is required.
3. Word delimitation
  - a) Sometimes s/he fails to establish the limits of the words and writes the together.

#### **Low level:**

1. Phoneme-grapheme association
  - a) S/he often establishes a Spanish-like phoneme-grapheme association to write in English.
2. Capitalization
  - a) S/he often uses capitalization when not required.
  - b) S/he uses lower-cases when capitalization is required.
3. Word delimitation
  - a) S/he rarely establishes the limits of the words and writes them together.

Appendix #5  
Pedagogic Test

Objective: to assess the students' weaknesses and strengths, regarding spelling skills.

DICTATION

1. Dialogue

A: What do you do on weekends?

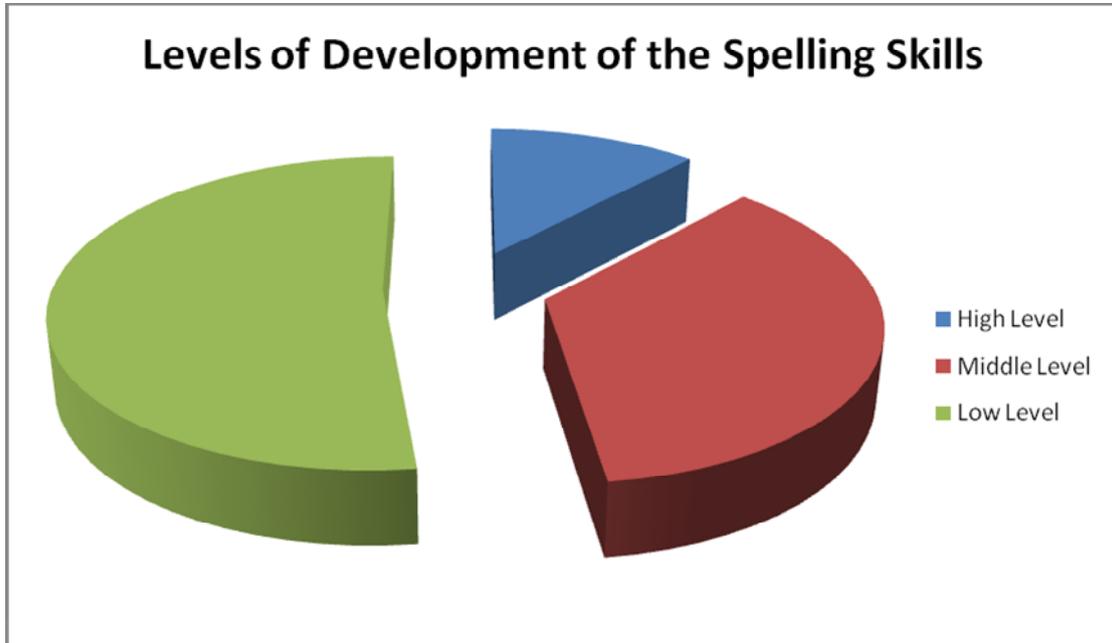
B: I play with my friends.

2. Words

- Mechanic
- Pilot
- Summer
- January
- August
- Winter

Appendix #6

Graphic of the Levels of Development of the Spelling Skills in Class 5.A



Appendix #7  
Questionnaire

Objective: to assess the Spanish teacher's opinions on the students' spelling skills level and their most relevant mistakes in such language.

Indicators:

1. Ortografía
  - Dislexia
  - Omisión
  - Adición
  - Uso de letras (v,b; c,s,z; h; g,j, etc)
2. Uso de mayúsculas
  - Omisión
  - Adición
  - Mal posicionamiento
3. Opinión general acerca del desarrollo de la habilidad escrita en la asignatura Lengua Española.

Questions:

1. ¿Hay casos de alumnos en el aula que cometan errores de dislexia al escribir?  
Sí\_\_ No\_\_
2. ¿Son frecuentes los errores con el uso de las letras tales como: v,b; s,c,z; j,g; h; etc? ¿Cuáles son los casos más frecuentes?
3. Al usar las mayúsculas ¿los estudiantes las mal posicionan, las omiten o las adicionan?
4. ¿Cuál es su opinión acerca de la habilidad en la asignatura?
5. ¿Considera usted que el desarrollo de la habilidad escrita en español constituye la base para el buen desarrollo de la misma en la lengua inglesa?

## Appendix #8

### 2 samples of the students' printed material of wild animals : "My Zoo"

**My Zoo**

Name: Kaylin Martell Milán  
 Group: 5<sup>ta</sup>  
 Date: Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013










1 EleP\_han\_t    2 Hip\_popotamus    3 Giraffe    4 Ze\_b\_e\_a    5 Kangar\_o\_o    6 Crocod\_i\_l\_e    7 Li\_o\_n    8 Ti\_g\_er










9 b\_e\_a\_r    10 F\_o\_x    11 Monk\_e\_y    12 Sh\_a\_r\_k    13 But\_terfly    14 Sp\_i\_d\_e\_r    15 Dragonfly    16 Be\_e\_t\_l\_e








17 d\_o\_l\_p\_h\_in    18 S\_e\_a\_l    19 Woodpecker    20 \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ n    21 O\_w\_l    22 Li\_z\_a\_r\_d

Listen carefully to your teacher and complete the missing letters. (escucha cuidadosamente a tu maestra y completa las letras que hacen falta)



**My Zoo**

Name: James Gómez Martínez  
 Group: 5<sup>ta</sup>  
 Date: Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013










1 EleP\_han\_t    2 Hip\_popotamus    3 Giraffe    4 Ze\_b\_e\_a    5 Kangar\_o\_o    6 Crocod\_i\_l\_e    7 Li\_o\_n    8 Tig\_er










9 b\_e\_a\_r    10 F\_o\_x    11 Monk\_e\_y    12 Sh\_a\_r\_k    13 But\_terfly    14 Sp\_i\_d\_e\_r    15 Dragonfly    16 Be\_e\_t\_l\_e








17 d\_o\_l\_p\_h\_in    18 S\_e\_a\_l    19 Woodpecker    20 \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ n    21 O\_w\_l    22 Li\_z\_a\_r\_d

Listen carefully to your teacher and complete the missing letters. (escucha cuidadosamente a tu maestra y completa las letras que hacen falta)



Appendix#9  
Words to Learn Chart

# WORDS TO LEARN

Word/palabra	Strategy/estrategia

Appendix #10  
6 samples of the students' progresses

James Gómez Martínez 5<sup>to</sup> A  
Dictado  
dog, cat, pig<sup>x</sup>, chicken<sup>x</sup>, horse.  
g ck horse.

Gabriela B. Domínguez Cuellar 5<sup>to</sup> A  
dog ✓  
cat ✓  
pig ✓  
chicken ✓ Sin apóstrofe  
horse ✓

Daniela Karla Torres Morán  
Dictado  
Dog - Cat - Pig - Chicken - Horse.  
↓  
¿Cómo suena la h en Inglés?

Elena María Hernández Manero. 5<sup>to</sup> A.  
dog, cat, pig, chickens, horse.

English

Nombre: Mercedes Martínez

Dictado

Dog / pig / horse /  
cat / ~~cheques~~ → chickens

Keylin Martell Milián 5<sup>to</sup> A  
dog, cat, pig, chickens, horse.

¡Excellent!  

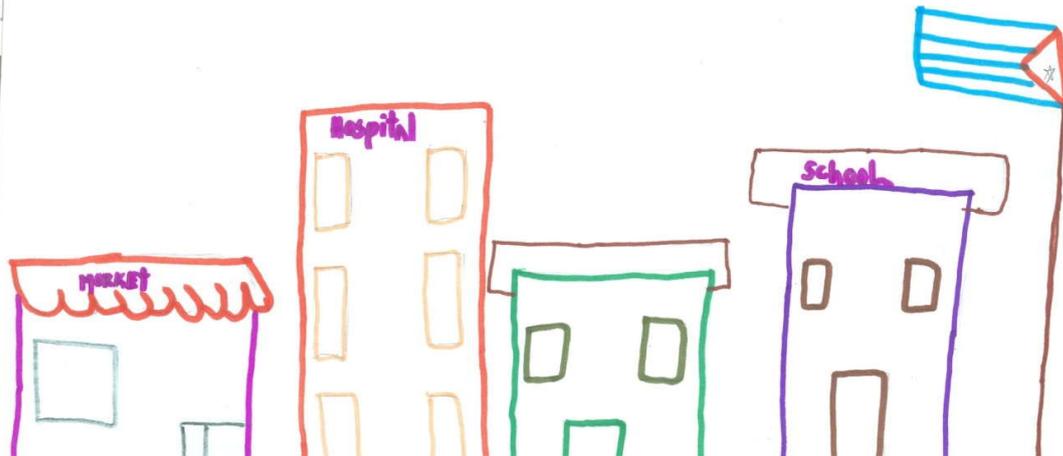

Appendix #11  
Photograph of the students playing “the speller of the week”



Appendix #12  
4 samples of students' classwork



In my town there is a market, there is a hospital, there is a house, there is a school.



Suliana

In my town there is a house and a school.

