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DisSPELLing a Myth

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```
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Design Technology: Children's Engineering, by Susan Dunn and Rob Larson, was published in 1990 by The Falmer Press, a division of Taylor & Francis, Inc., 1900 Frost Road, Suite 101, Bristol, PA 19007. ISBN: 1-85000-590-7. Taylor & Francis can be reached at 1-800-821-8312. They will charge the \$18.00 cost to a major credit card and ship via UPS. My copy arrived in just three days!

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On both LCSJ bulletin boards my username is EadieA.
I'd love to hear from you electronically!

DisSPELLing a Myth by Judi Harris

My students took spelling tests on words that they hadn't studied or memorized.

No, it wasn't cruel and unusual punishment. It was a different way to learn to spell. And, considering that they spelled most of the words (that they hadn't studied) correctly, I'd be willing to wager that either they learned to spell without memorization, or they were excellent spellers already.

If you had seen their writing in September, you would have known for sure that they did *not* begin the school year as national spelling champions. Yet they improved their spelling in a Logo-like way.

A Curricular Catalyst

"So what's so Logo-like about spelling?" you ask.

The answer is simple: *patterns*. Students can learn to spell better by recognizing and applying letter patterns, instead of memorizing 20 new words each week.

AIRS (Andover's Integrated Reading System), a mastery learning language arts program, contains a spelling module called "Structural Skills" that helps children to spell in this way. It is based upon the generalizations of eight structural skills: plurals, derived words, possessives, contractions, root words, hearing syllables, syllabication, and prefixes/suffixes.

With the AIRS program, students first learn a spelling *rule* by examining and discussing words that follow the same spelling *pattern*. For example, what common pattern do you see in the spellings of these root words?

START
BUZZ
CRISP
BLINK
LAUGH

All of them end with two consonant letters. If we wish to add a suffix, such as -s, -es, -est, -ed, or -ing to any of them, we can do so without altering their spellings.

STARTED
BUZZES
CRISPS
BLINKED
LAUGHING

The same is true for these words:

APPEAR
SEAM
COOL
TOOT
NAIL
BROAD

although they follow a different pattern. What is it?

Once students can recognize a spelling pattern and remember the rule that accompanies it, they can spell most words that they hear. There are a total of 39 structural skill rules in the AIRS spelling materials used in grades 3 - 8. That's fewer than two weeks' worth of things to remember, according to traditional spelling instructional methods.

DisPELLING can be fun!

Paula Cochran and Glen Bull's "spelling fuzzies" ("SpecialTalk," *Logo Exchange*, October 1986) are a wonderful way to reinforce correct spelling using Logo. The AIRS materials inspired thoughts about some interesting ways to help insure correct spelling by attending to letter patterns.

Each of the words in the first sample (above) ended with two consonants. Let's see how to tell Logo to check a word for that pattern.

First, we need a procedure to tell if a letter is a consonant. One way to get the computer to determine this is to ask it to check to see if a certain letter is *not* a vowel.

```
TO CONSONANT? :LETTER
OUTPUT NOT VOWEL? :LETTER
END

TO VOWEL? :LETTER
OUTPUT MEMBER? :LETTER [A E I O U]
END
```

To see how the CONSONANT? procedure works, type, for example,

```
PRINT CONSONANT "L
```

The computer prints:

```
true
```

The following procedure uses CONSONANT? as a sub-procedure to check for consonants as the last two letters of a word.

```
TO TWO.END.CONSONANTS? :WORD
OUTPUT AND CONSONANT? (LAST BUTLAST
:WORD) CONSONANT? (LAST :WORD)
END
```

Now you can type:

```
PRINT TWO.END.CONSONANTS? "TURTLE
```

and the computer will return:

```
false
```

Impelled to Spell

Did you figure out the second sample letter pattern mentioned above? All of those root words have two vowels appearing together, forming a vowel blend. Here is a procedure that uses the VOWEL? subprocedure to check recursively a word of any length to see if it has two vowels appearing in succession.

```
TO VOWEL.BLEND? :WORD
IF (COUNT :WORD) < 2 [OUTPUT "FALSE]
IF AND (VOWEL? FIRST :WORD) (VOWEL?
FIRST BUTFIRST :WORD) [OUTPUT
"TRUE]
OUTPUT VOWEL.BLEND? BUTFIRST :WORD
END
```

Now let's make the computer generate some root word and ending combinations that follow the vowel blend pattern.

```
TO DERIVED.WORD
OUTPUT WORD (PICK TWO.VOWEL.WORDS)
(PICK VERB.ENDINGS)
END

TO PICK :OBJECT
OUTPUT ITEM (1 + RANDOM (COUNT :OB-
JECT)) :OBJECT
END

TO TWO.VOWEL.WORDS
OUTPUT [COOL MAIL NAIL WEED TOAST
BREAD LEAP GROAN SEED LOAD]
END

TO VERB.ENDINGS
OUTPUT [S ED ER ING]
END
```

Type

```
PRINT DERIVED.WORD
```

and the computer might return NAILED or BREADING or GROANING. If you enter

```
REPEAT 5 [PRINT DERIVED.WORD]
```

what do you think will happen?

Pattern Power

Now, let's combine these procedures into a superprocedure that will help students to recognize and extend spelling patterns.

```
TO PATTERNS
HT
CT
PRINT [Here are some words:]
PRINT TWO.VOWEL.WORDS
PRINT.BLANK.LINE
PRINT [Please type a root word that
follows the same pattern.]
PRINT [(If you need a hint, type
HINT.)]
MAKE "NEW.WORD READWORD
IF :NEW.WORD = "HINT [PRINT [V V]
MAKE "NEW.WORD READWORD]
IFELSE VOWEL.BLEND? :NEW.WORD [PRINT
[Great! Same pattern!]]
[TRY.AGAIN]
END

TO PRINT.BLANK.LINE
PRINT CHAR 13
END

TO READWORD
OUTPUT FIRST
READLISTCC
END

TO TRY.AGAIN
PRINT.BLANK.LINE
PRINT [That's another spelling pat-
tern. Try typing a different root
word.]
PRINT.BLANK.LINE PRINT [Press any
key...]
IGNORE READCHAR PATTERNS
END
```

```
TO IGNORE :KEYPRESS
END
```

I encourage you to write a similar set of procedures that utilize the two-final-consonants pattern. And then, how about plurals? Words that end in silent e? Contractions?

Yes, 'dis spelling *can* be fun.

For more information about AIRS Reading and Language Arts materials, write to:

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An earlier version of this article was originally published in the April 1987 issue of *Logo Exchange* magazine.

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