

# Contribution to the Achievement of an Orthographic Culture in the University Graduate Orthographic

Fredesvinda Machado Barbary<sup>1,\*</sup>, Rogelia Marina Ineraite Pedroso<sup>2</sup>,  
Epifanio de Jesús Calá García<sup>3</sup>, Leonor González Rodríguez<sup>1</sup>, Norma Milagro Portal Denis<sup>1</sup>,  
Ana Gloria Aparicio Albelo<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Health Rehabilitation, Health-Nursing Technology, University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara, Santa Clara, Cuba

<sup>2</sup>Language and Literature, High School, Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas, Santa Clara, Cuba

<sup>3</sup>Veterinary Medicine and Zootechnics, Agricultural Sciences, Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas, Santa Clara, Cuba

## Email address:

fredesvindamb@infomed.sld.cu (F. M. Barbary), fredes.machado@gmail.com (F. M. Barbary), rogeliامي@uclv.cu (R. M. I. Pedroso),  
ecala@uclv.cu (E. de J. C. García), calagarciae@gmail.com (E. de J. C. García), leonogr@infomed.sld.cu (L. G. Rodríguez),  
normampd@infomed.sld.cu (N. M. P. Denis), anagaa@sld.cu (A. G. A. Albelo)

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** Spelling continues to be a problem at the university. The lack of awareness that surrounds this problem affects the general and professional culture of the university student, for that reason some consider that the general culture reached by the individual, if it does not correspond to good spelling, constitutes an inconvenience that can damage their professional image. In order to verify responses, professors from the Medical University of Villa Clara and the Central University of Las Villas promote, through research, activities aimed at achieving this purpose, which began in the period between the 2014-2019 academic years. The objective was to apply a system of actions that benefits the orthographic culture of university students. From the perspective of qualitative research, methods based on observation, interview, error analysis and triangulation were used, which led to the application of a system of actions that allowed corroborating progress in the problem studied and a greater understanding of the good use of the correct writing, this influenced in the decrease of errors. The actions applied favored the orthographic awareness of the university student community and its necessary knowledge. Benefits were evidenced that favored the training of students as future professionals.

**Keywords:** University, Spelling Skills, Error Analysis, Spelling Culture

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## 1. Introduction

When we talk about orthographic culture, a question assails us: Is it related to the general culture reached by the individual with spelling? I could answer from "how considerably polysemic the concept is", reflects Kloskowska, A., (1968: 14), in Navarro, D. [1]. But we will focus, on the one hand, on the socialization that is achieved during the learning process and, on the other, on the result that is achieved by obtaining that knowledge, a result that would favor the cultivation of the orthographic culture. Authors such as Ruiz and Miyares, (1986: 33) [2], consider that in the

Spanish language "graphic expression is influenced and modified by oral expression. (...). This explains the phenomenon of spelling mistakes frequently made by those little cultivated people", in this regard León and Tamayo (2018: 47) [3], argue that in what is expressed, both when speaking and writing any text the general culture emerges that it is possessed, all of which is intimately related, they indicate, with "the spelling competence that reveals, through the signs of the language, the so-called encyclopedic culture or universe of knowledge that every user of the language possesses."

For Álvarez (2020: 15) [4], "[...] spelling is one of the

manifestations of the solidity of a culture, not of individual culture in the sense of good behavior, but of culture as a sign of identity of the peoples”.

The lack of an orthographic culture, despite efforts and studies, remains a serious problem for universities. “Spelling care is everyone's responsibility. Learning any subject requires the correct use of the language”. (Herrera (2020: 15) [5]. Pedagogues and scholars of the subject propose different strategies to solve it, among them: Herrera, (2020) [5], Suárez, S., Muñoz, A., Guisado, J. and Suárez M. (2019) [6], Fernández-Rufete, (2015) [7], Balmaseda, O. (2005) [8], among many others.

All of the above leads to affirming that “The university is obliged to create learning situations so that these studies are carried out and graduate from their professional classrooms with competence and command of the written language”, according to Herrera (2020: 15) [5], who later, referring to writing, adds: “Correct writing, good use of the vocabulary and mastery of grammatical rules constitute the three main areas that regulate the norm of a language.”

Yes, as stated by González and Carnero (2019, third para. Introduction.) [9] “The value of its use transcends the limits of the linguistic sphere (...) to enter the formative aspect inside and outside the school environment (...) as a resource for communication (...)” it is vital to face it with the transversality and interdisciplinarity required addressed in studies and research on the subject.

Some authors such as Morell and Ramos (2016) [10], affirm that “the problem lies in the teaching of the written language of which the spelling is part and not in the very nature of the spelling itself Spanish [...] is a problem of didactic approach” or what is the same, teach the student to consciously form and reconstruct the knowledge of his spelling correctly, in this way a more adjusted and flexible didactics would prevail, in accordance with the observed reality.

“Spelling at university is above all a problem of attitude, of the desire to write texts and vocabulary without fault.” (Gómez, 2008, cited by Suárez et al, 2019: 141) [6]. Its teaching and learning must be a constant and priority concern and occupation of education, working with it is an essential aspect to attend to in order to achieve the graduation of a more comprehensive and competent professional in the use of the written language.

Interested in the good command of the Spanish language and literature, and the quality of this teaching, the President of the Republic of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, (2020, January 29) [11], in a meeting held with Professors from the “Enrique José Varona” University of Pedagogical Sciences, in Havana, stopped in the analysis of methods that could contribute to raising the educational teaching process as an essential component of the nation's culture; aspect in which spelling occupies a relevant place. The country's concern, expressed by the President of the Republic, indicates the need for educators to apply more effective procedures aimed at developing efficient and effective spelling skills in students of different educational levels.

The analyzes carried out so far justified the search for more effective procedures in the levels of spelling performance in students of the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara and the Central University of Las Villas, following the path outlined by scholars of the subject, in order to obtain successful and more sustainable results.

Objective: Apply a system of actions aimed at achieving an orthographic culture in the university environment.

## 2. Methodology

*From the conception of qualitative research, “due to the need to fully understand and interpret the phenomenon” (Niño, 2011: 30) [12], the open interview was used, carried out with teachers and students involved in the sample, direct observation and open to collect information on the preparation of these students from the orthographic point of view and to control the outcome of their learning, mainly the control dictation was applied. The error analysis method was used to facilitate the student consciously detecting their deficiencies, the critical attitude towards the spelling component and, at the same time, the development of skills necessary for correct writing.*

*The triangulation made possible the control of the regularities that would contribute to the achievement of the objective.*

*It was determined to take the courses from 2014 to 2019 focusing attention on the spelling issue.*

*Participants and sample:*

*Two universities in the Villa Clara province participated with the intention of knowing the spelling situation, both of university students of the health system and of specialties of the Central University.*

Three groups of three different careers in the Faculty of Technology-Nursing were selected at random. From the “Marta Abreu” Central University of Las Villas, two groups, one from the Faculty of Secondary Education and one from the Veterinary Medicine and Zootechnics career, from the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences.

The sample consisted of 145 students from the five groups. From the Bachelor's degrees in Spanish Literature, and Veterinary and Animal Science, 100% of the enrollment was taken from both groups. In the Medical Sciences groups we worked with students with spelling problems. Of 22 enrolled in the career of Degree in Optics and Optometry, 16 students were taken; 18 out of 25 in the Bachelor's Degree in Imaging, and 35 out of 48 in the Bachelor's Degree in Speech and Language Pathology. Each of the six professors who are members of the research team and 10 professors of different subjects teach classes in all of them, two for each group. The instrument applied to these teachers was the open interview, for which the pedagogical experience and knowledge they possess was taken into account.

*Instruments:*

Programs concerning first-year Spelling, as well as elective courses taught in 4th and 5th years and the verification dictates carried out.

### Procedures:

Observation of spelling procedures and data collection.

The process was organized in three stages:

First stage: Course 2014-2015

Second stage: Course 2016-2017

Third stage: Courses 2017-2019

First stage: Course 2014-2015. The Control Dictation was applied to diagnose the main spelling difficulties of the students. The orthographic coefficient survey showed the main errors, methodological indications were established to specify the type of error, its frequency, its nature and causes that cause it.

In the diagnosis, the following was observed:

More than 50% of the studied sample made accentuation errors and incorrectly used capital letters.

Graphemes were omitted or added.

Cases of hyposegmentation or condensation of paragraphs and to a lesser extent hypersegmentation or segregation, according to the classification of Balmaseda (2005) [8], were observed, the latter observed in students of the Veterinary and Zootechnics career.

The results of the spelling errors were displayed as follows:

In the careers studied: Speech and Language Pathology, Optics and Optometry and Imaging at the University of Medical Sciences of Villa Clara, in the first year with a sample of 35 students, in the case of the first and fourth years of the remaining two, with a sample of 16 and 18 respectively, the greatest problems were observed in accentuation, with 64%, 50% and 55.5% in order of appearance. In the case of the Spanish Literature Career at the Central University of Villa Clara, in its first year, with an enrollment of 40 students, 50% made serious accentuation errors. Same This behavior was observed in fifth-year Zootechnics and Veterinary students from the same University, in this case more serious, considering that they are students in their last year, out of 18 enrolled, more than 61% made accentuation errors.

The same behavior was observed, following the nomenclature proposed by Balmaseda, (2005: 91) [8], in errors related to substitutions, 52.8% of the total, omissions, 46.4%, insertions 34.6% and improvisations 54.3%.

In general, the most relevant errors were classified according to the Scale for the Qualitative Assessment of Spelling Competence, by Balmaseda (2005: 93) [8], as:

- I. Anarchic: Total lack of spelling control. His frequent mistakes are condensation, segregation and improvisations. He has no notion of the most elementary rules. Punctuation is messy or may be missing from your texts. (It was initially observed, with a greater presence, in 1st year students of the pedagogical career of Spanish Literature.
- II. Unsure: Tends to confuse the spelling configuration of words. The orthographic memory is very sensory. Its score is limited to some mandatory standards, mainly in 4th and 5th year students.
- III. Stable or safe (with lapses): Tends to confuse the

spelling configuration of words. The orthographic memory is very sensory. Your scoring is limited to some standards of compulsory nature, observed mainly in students of the Speech and Language Pathology Career.

IV. Skilled or expert: Absolute control Habit of revision.

High spelling awareness (...). Not observed in the sample under investigation.

The causes mentioned were considered multifactorial, because marked factors had an impact on some, for not paying attention to spelling and on others for an incorrect methodological procedure in the treatment of this issue in terms of listening, writing, reading and analyzing. Point of view indicated by Balmaseda, (2005: 80) [8], in the analyzes carried out with students of the middle level of general education.

Second stage: Course 2016-2017.

At this stage, the application of the Error Analysis method is intended, whose peculiarity lies in seeing the error as the main way of accessing the knowledge of the learning subjects. This method "involves an individual reflection exercise for each student, specifying their cacographic vocabulary, identifying the causes of the mistakes they make and choosing the didactic resource that provides the best solution to their spelling problems" (Sánchez 2010: 153) [13], and (Gómez, H. 1993: 42) [14], (Suárez et al, 2019: 141) [6], that is, according to these authors, it refers to an orthography based on the analysis of the errors of the expressive vocabulary written. The application of this method is efficient to a greater degree, when the student and his shortcomings are known. For this reason, learning was directed towards the most used words, taking into account the internal difficulty they pose. We worked so that students considered a minimum group of rules that cover the largest number of frequently used words, an opinion supported by numerous authors on the subject such as León and Tamayo (2019) [3], Herrera (2020) [5], Balmaseda (2005) [8].

In an interview with teachers included in the sample, the need to reflect on individual and group characteristics and pay more attention to preventive activity when addressing spelling learning problems emerged, so the work was focused on preventive and corrective activity.

Actions applied to promote preventive activity:

1st. They formed a basic vocabulary from the selection of those of very frequent use and those of the specialty, of all subjects or areas, which were worked unified by the participating teachers of the five groups, previously guided in methodological meetings, with texts of the subjects taught by them, intending that they could be observed, understood, written, analyzed, heard and pronounced, making them reflect on the importance of correct academic writing. Suárez et al (2019) [6], Sánchez, (2010) [13], Gómez (1993) [14], Balmaseda (2005) [8].

2nd. Monthly meetings were established to evaluate the results and plan periodic evaluations that would reveal the progress made.

3rd. Words were cumulatively worked with previously

reinforced lists to be taken to the spelling record. This action made possible the periodic planning of competitive knowledge meetings that reinforced the spelling skills they were acquiring.

4th. Systematic exercise was cultivated through exercises that moved reasoned thinking, including crosswords, acrostics, among others, to avoid forgetting the orthographic content.

5th. The work was linked to the component of textual construction so that the students used the words in context and demonstrated their orthographic and semantic mastery.

6th. Throughout the stage, the development of attentive observation and listening skills was developed, practiced so that they would learn, using different resources aimed at the development of both skills, to review and correct the textualization of their own ideas and those of others in a "identify the error, its causes (...) choosing the didactic resource that would best solve their spelling problems" (Suárez et al 2019: 135) [6].

The applied triangulation facilitated the identification of regularities of the different sources: what was observed in students in university classrooms, previously systematized, the review of the preventive, corrective and control dictates used, (Balmaseda 2005: 70) [8], as well as the interviews carried out with teachers involved, confirmed the need and use, due to its effectiveness, of the error analysis method. *Third stage. 2017-2019.*

*The actions applied in this stage were conclusive and proving the work done up to that moment. They focused on:*

1. Sufficient and varied exercise that included the realization of different types of dictations, especially those of a preventive nature to promote listening comprehension, reinforce the graphic image and promote the proper use of punctuation marks and use of capital letters. In these dictations, words in which the students had presented greater difficulties in textual construction exercises were taken into account, linking them with subjects of their specialties.
2. The systematic work with the medical record for the words written with errors was continued, and "the record of difficulties made to control the result of the implemented actions" was incorporated. (Suárez et al, 2019: 141). [6]
3. Independent work was encouraged as a method to "direct and control the assimilation of knowledge effectively, [in order] to provide the student with the necessary skills to solve certain spelling knowledge" (Balmaseda, 2005: 74). [8]
4. Analysis of successes and errors in the exercises carried out at the beginning of the experience contrasted, according to the criteria of theorists consulted, with the results achieved in this stage, with greater emphasis on substitutions, insertions, omissions, condensations, including the treatment of words not subject to rules from homophones, synonyms, antonyms, paronyms, etc., both from the individual and group point of view.

5. Exploratory tests were applied to verify the progress in monthly meetings with the teachers.

6. In each class taught, activities were carried out that stimulated learning, such as knowledge contests, spelling skills, among others.

### 3. Results

In the actions carried out, substantial progress was observed in group competitions, in competitions with students, in the reduction of spelling errors in periodic exams and in the recognition, by the rest of the teachers of the groups studied, for the achievement 92% of the students with a notable decrease in spelling errors, observed mainly in the fourth year and in the pedagogical career, as well as greater spelling awareness and motivation towards spelling.

The actions implemented were based on the application of a sufficient and varied exercise based on the difficulties detected and on the demonstration of how to proceed to eliminate errors. In this way, absences due to accentuation decreased, from 56.6%, to 8%; omissions, both of punctuation marks, change of graphemes, concordance errors or others, of un 46% a un 12%. The most marked difficulties were observed in students of the Zootechnics and Veterinary studies, which is attributed to the characteristics of students of these specialties where, according to the participating professors, the importance of the subject is not sufficiently valued.

From the preparation sessions of the teachers who interacted with the groups contemplated in the sample, a cohesive work strategy was assumed around the spelling component with a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary language, which made possible a greater and more efficient concretion in the work..

In general, it was possible to achieve favorable linguistic, communicative and learning environments for the achievement of a culture of good saying and writing, which conditioned the motivation, interest and responsibility of each student towards their own learning in relation to language, such as favoring the academic success or failure of each of them, which influenced a more comprehensive training.

This stage made it possible to specify causes of the problem, in its most general sense. The analysis led to ratify the hypothesis that the spelling error, both due to frequency, type and nature, does not always occur by chance, but rather by the methods used in their learning, due to the characteristics of the subjects. que los cometen, due to the scant interest shown by some teachers of other subjects and by all the people involved in the process, including both the family and society, aspects in which there is agreement with different scholars of the subject, among them: León, and Tamayo (2019) [3], Herrera (2020) [5], Suárez et al (2019) [6], Medina (1994) [15], Sánchez (2010) [13], Morell and Rivero (2016) [10], Balmaseda (2005) [8], Gómez (1993) [14], Ruiz and Miyares (1986) [2], Uribe (2015) [16], among others.

## 4. Discussion

According to Uribe (2015: 15) [16], "All people are involved in the teaching-learning process who they are, students, teachers, family, friends and the media", although apparently those involved have not yet reached the level of sensitivity necessary to get involved and understand the importance of the issue. Some authors, emphasizing the role of the family, consider it a very influential element in the education of children in the different phases of their lives, (Calá, E. and Machado, F. (2014, Introduction, last para.) [17], so the integration of the family members into the process is very valuable.

Spelling constitutes one of the aspects of the language that should "include- [itself] in the classroom routine", according to Fernández-Rufett (2015: 11) [7], which would contribute to concern and involve everyone in function of the correctness, coherence and unity of the Spanish language.

Although the error analysis method "has not solved the problem of teaching and learning modern languages", according to Sánchez, (2010: 108) [13], a statement that raises recurring questions: Why is it? but it also makes the student aware of the error analysis and "the most frequent difficulties can be addressed with different strategies (...)" according to Gutiérrez M. et al. (2010: 3) [18], (Rodríguez and Balmaseda, 2014: 1, para. 3) [19], among others. But above all, the integration, involvement, interest and commitment of the teaching staff is very important. Different studies affirm that the problem lies in the didactic approach, in the way in which spelling is taught: Ruiz and Miyares (1986: 45) [3], Gómez, A. (2005) [20], González and Carnero (2019) [9].

Different language specialists point out, among them (Fernández-Rufett (2015: 8) [7], that spelling "has not been a priority issue, despite the great shortcomings in its didactic application and the need for its renewal "therefore it is necessary" a global treatment using more than one method, technique and even strategy. (Gómez, 1993: 39) [14] However, from the didactic point of view, there is currently a trend towards the integration of different methods, because without referring to the error analysis method, it is used, as it is implicit in the variety of procedures that are applied in its teaching, (Morales, F., 2016) [21], Balmaseda (2005) [8], Gutiérrez et al (2010) [18], Palombo and Cuadro, (2019) [22], since in the reaffirmation many variants are intertwined so that its teaching is pleasant and useful. However, when analysis is used as a method errors, a greater understanding of the problem is achieved from their individuality, in addition to It must be an effective way for students to make them aware that the proper use of spelling constitutes a necessary skill for their development as individuals.

Spelling has an indisputable social value, affirms Grijelmo (2016), cited by Álvarez (2020: 15) [4] who considers that our own image is transmitted through writing, on the other hand, Alcalde, (2019: 156) [23], wonders if it is a new cover letter on social networks, because it "is a symptom of

neatness, education, culture, therefore, it can and should be corrected and cultivated." All university graduates and of other professions of all the society must understand it.

To achieve that university graduates reach an orthographic culture that responds to the requirement of being more comprehensive, "we will have to be able to instill respect in our students towards spelling", Medina (1994: 78) [15] has expressed. Be more systematic, demanding and consider it as what it is "the element that most firmly maintains the unity of a language spoken by many people (...)" (Uribe 2015; 15) [16].

## 5. Conclusions

Spelling has enormous importance for the language, but it is not yet clearly understood or rather, the necessary awareness has not been reached in general, by teachers, students, managers and the family as a social institution, when addressing its treatment in the educational process and assume it as a contribution to the solution of a problem that must be achieved among all in the university community, understand teachers of all subjects, managers and teachers in general, which would be an effective way for students to become aware that the Good use of spelling is a necessary skill for their development as individuals.

Understanding the problem would transcend to all areas of society if it was considered an indispensable element in vocational training in all of them. For this reason, the search for different methods and procedures for their learning from the educational institution, must be preceded, supported or strengthened by a community interest that encourages the effort of knowledge of their knowledge.

The university is called upon to ensure that all its graduates achieve the worthy spelling performance that the graduate professional aspires to achieve.

## 6. Recommendations

1. Continue to deepen the application of effective methods that motivate the student to learn spelling.
2. Include in the topics to be dealt with in the methodological preparation of the professors, the need for spelling knowledge as part of the general culture of the university professional.
3. Carry out research on the impact of the results achieved by the applied Action Plan.

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