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# Is This Author Intelligent? The Effect of Spelling Errors on Perception of Authors

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Is This Author Intelligent?

The Effect of Spelling Errors on Perception of Authors

Rachel Schloneger

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### Abstract

This study seeks to understand how the presence of spelling errors affects readers' perceptions of an author's intelligence and writing ability. Undergraduate students and professors read a short essay and completed a sixteen-question questionnaire concerning their perceptions of the author and the essay. The number of spelling errors present (zero, five, or ten) in the essay was manipulated by the researcher. Participant perceptions of the author and the essay suffered as more spelling errors were found. Participants in the five- and ten-error conditions judged both the author and the essay more harshly, giving it lower scores. Further, intelligence ratings suffered as a result of more spelling errors. No strong correlation was found between perceived spelling ability and perceptions of the author and essay. These findings suggest that readers base their perceptions of both an author's intelligence and an essay's quality on the absence of spelling errors, but not on how well an individual thinks he or she spells.

## Is This Author Intelligent?

### The Effect of Spelling Errors on Perception of Authors

Spelling is exceedingly important in today's world. An anonymous writer and self-proclaimed bad speller says, "If you don't believe that being known as a bad speller can eliminate some employment opportunities, you are not a bad speller" (X, 1991, p. 65). Paige Kimble, director of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, agrees, saying, "Spelling absolutely counts. What we know is that good spelling is a tremendous reflection on an individual's overall knowledge and attention to detail" (as quoted in Barker & Puente, 2013, n.p.). Bad spelling can plague an individual throughout his or her entire life. The anonymous bad speller goes on to say that, "these are just surface\*<sup>1</sup> errors, not meaning errors" (X, 1991, p. 70). They may just be surface errors, but they could also have an impact on both the career and reputation of an individual. Such errors could affect the perceptions others form of him or her. When writing, it is especially important to appear intelligent and knowledgeable to one's audience. Spelling errors in writing can negatively affect the perceptions that readers form of authors. Readers may assume that spelling errors indicate lower writing ability or even lower cognitive abilities (Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, & McClin, 2002). Despite evidence that spelling can affect reader perceptions, very little research has been done on the extent to which spelling errors affect a reader's view of an author's abilities and intelligence. More studies need to be done investigating this area. The current study attempts to provide more evidence concerning the extent to which spelling affects a reader's perception of authors.

### Literature Review

Perception of intelligence is a highly subjective process. Data shows that such perceptions are formed on very little evidence. In fact, people make judgments of other

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<sup>1</sup> \* Used by the author to indicate words he found hard to spell.

individuals' intelligence based on seemingly trivial aspects such as physical beauty and height (Cann, 1991). Cann (1991) goes on to say that perceived competence is also a determining factor in perception of intelligence. High competence is related to high intelligence ratings (Kreiner et al., 2002). As language is an important cognitive function, verbal and language performance greatly affect judgments of cognitive abilities and intelligence (Kreiner et al., 2002). Written communication is one way that some people will make inferences about the author's intelligence (Figueredo & Varnhagen, 2005). All relevant information is taken into account when forming an attitude or opinion (Figueredo & Varnhagen, 2005). Individuals consider more than the content of a writing sample when forming perceptions of intelligence. Spelling and other areas of mechanics of writing can be indicators of intelligence. Poor spellers are often stigmatized as sloppy and lazy thinkers (Varnhagen, 2000).

The importance of spelling in the minds of children and adults has been shown in two studies. Rankin, Bruning, and Timme (1994) found that children and adolescents thought spelling was important for doing well in school, getting into college, writing well, and getting a good job as an adult. It was found that students viewed their ability to spell as related to the effort they expended (Rankin et al., 1994). Many educators and parents consider spelling essential for literacy development (Rankin, Bruning, Timme, & Katkanant, 1993). It is believed to be the key to good writing and to be foundational to the development of writing skills (Rankin et al., 1993). Spelling ability and instruction is a "critical, foundational subskill upon which the higher-order process of writing must be grounded" (Rankin et al., 1993, p. 156). Rankin et al. (1993) found that perceived writing ability is directly affected by spelling ability, both perceived and actual.

Improper spelling distracts readers and affects their judgments of both writing quality and ability (Kreiner et al., 2002; Varnhagen, 2000; Figueredo & Varnhagen, 2005). Two studies have looked into how spelling errors affect the perceptions of readers toward the authors. Varnhagen (2000) studied children's attitudes toward spelling and found that they think it is important. Children found stories with spelling errors less interesting, less memorable, less well constructed, and less understandable (Varnhagen, 2000). The children also considered the authors of the stories containing spelling errors to be less careful writers and less strong in language arts (Varnhagen, 2000). Varnhagen (2000) found no negative perceptions in areas unrelated to language arts and no differences in perceptions of likeability. Children disassociated an author's spelling ability from their math ability or whether the author would make a good friend (Varnhagen, 2000). Kreiner et al. (2002) studied the effect the presence of spelling errors had on adults' perception of three aspects of an author's intellect: writing ability, logical ability, and intellectual ability. Kreiner et al. (2002) concluded that a large number of spelling errors led to negative perceptions of the author's writing abilities, but had no effect on perception of their logical or intellectual abilities. Varnhagen (2000) and Kreiner et al. (2002) found that both children's and adults' perceptions of an author and his or her writing can be negatively affected by the presence of spelling errors.

Further studies have shown that readers view different types of spelling errors differently. Tat and Azuma (2012) have studied how well misspellings are remembered after reading a passage. Sentences containing misspellings can easily be read if the spelling error does not disrupt the overall structure of the word (Tat & Azuma, 2012). Some misspelled words (*messge*) can even be restored subconsciously to their correct form (*message*) (Tat & Azuma, 2012, p. 216). Kreiner et al. (2002) identify two categories of spelling errors: phonological and

typographical. Phonological errors are those in which a word is still pronounceable, but has a non-standard spelling that could be expected from a child or a nonnative speaker of English (*weerd* for *weird*). Typographical errors render a word unpronounceable as an English word and may be expected as the result of hurried typing or poor motor control (*descriptoin* for *description*) (Kreiner et al., 2002, p. 7). Figueredo and Varnhagen (2005, p. 444) have introduced another category: homophone errors such as *there* for *their*. Kreiner et al. (2002) found that readers considered both phonological and typographical errors indicative of poor writing ability. Some of the data indicated that phonological spelling errors had a negative impact on intelligence rating, but this was not replicated in further experimentation (Kreiner et al., 2002). Figueredo and Varnhagen (2005, p.454) found that “readers differentiate between errors that are true misspellings compared to errors involving a homophone” and “are more critical toward true misspellings in text.”

Spelling is seen as a vital aspect in writing. It has been found that student work that is free from spelling errors is graded higher and thought of as better quality (Steward & Grobe, 1979; Grobe, 1981; Rafoth & Combs, 1983). Steward and Grobe (1979) found a positive correlation between quality ratings and lack of spelling errors. Teachers were insensitive to syntax when judging quality, but found the absence of spelling errors to be a consistent indicator of quality (Steward & Grobe, 1979). Grobe (1981) found that graders regularly gave higher scores to essays without spelling errors. Rafoth and Combs (1983) say that factors such as correct spelling, grammar, and word choice have a greater influence on judgments of quality than syntactic structure does.

The present study is designed to further investigate the influence spelling errors have on a reader’s perception of an author. It is hypothesized that spelling errors negatively influence a

reader's perception of the author, with more misspellings leading to a more negative perception. It is also hypothesized that self-perceived good spellers will be more sensitive to spelling errors and therefore judge the author more harshly. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that professors will view spelling errors more negatively than students. The study aims to answer the following questions:

- Does the presence of spelling errors make the reader think less of the author's writing ability and intelligence?
- Do more spelling errors cause the reader to perceive the author more negatively?
- Do the reader's perceptions of their own spelling ability affect how they view an author?
- Do professors and students view spelling errors differently?

### **Methods**

Participants were drawn from a small, Christian university in the Midwest. Two groups participated in this study. One consisted of undergraduate students from the university and the other consisted of professors from the same university. The group of undergraduate students was made up of seven males and nineteen females ( $N=26$ ) who participated on a voluntary basis. Students were drawn from various years of study and various majors. The first language of all of the student participants was English. The group of professors who participated did so on a voluntary basis and was made up of two males and one female ( $N=3$ ). They were drawn from three different departments. The first language of each of the three professors was English.

Participants completed a questionnaire with a short essay and a few questions regarding the essay. After answering preliminary questions about gender, major or profession, year in school or highest level of education attained, and whether English was their first language, participants read the essay, answered sixteen questions, and then went back to the essay to circle

the spelling errors they found. Participants were not supervised while filling out the questionnaire and were permitted to do it on their own time.

The essay consisted of a short paragraph written by the researcher about the history of English spelling. There were three forms of the survey (labeled Form A, B, or C) which differed only in the number of spelling errors in the essay. See Chart 1 for a list of the errors in each questionnaire form. The essay was exactly the same in all other aspects. Form A had no errors, Form B had five, and Form C had ten errors. All other sections of the three forms were identical. Approximately equal numbers of participants were assigned each form: eight students completed Form A (n=8), eight completed Form B (n=8), and ten completed Form C (n=10). Of the professors, one had form A (n=1), one had form B (n=1), and one had form C (n=1).

Participants responded to fifteen of the sixteen questions using a provided five-point Likert-scale with the options of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree for each question. The last question asked participants to give the essay a letter grade. They were asked to circle their choice from the options of A through F, with plus and minuses. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were given the opportunity to provide any further comments about the essay, the author, or their own spelling ability.

See Appendices A-C for copies of the questionnaires with spelling errors marked.

## **Results**

In this study, the researcher investigated the readers' perceptions of an author's intelligence, writing skills, and written material. The number of spelling errors in the essay was manipulated by the researcher while keeping all other aspects of the study the same. The dependent measures were the participants' responses to the eleven questions pertaining to essay quality and author attributes.

Answers to questions were converted to a numerical points system in order to calculate mean, standard deviation, and to perform statistical analysis. Strongly agree corresponded to a score of five, agree to four, neutral to three, disagree to two, and strongly disagree to one. The grades were also converted to a numerical system. The grade of A corresponded with a score of twelve, A- with eleven, B+ with ten, B with nine, B- with eight, C+ with seven, C with six, C- with five, D+ with four, D with three, D- with two, and F with one.

In an initial analysis, no significant difference was found between the students' responses and the professors' responses. The professors' responses were analyzed with the student responses of the same form. Form A had nine members ( $n = 9$ ), Form B had nine members ( $n = 9$ ), and Form C had eleven members ( $n = 11$ ). Responses were subsequently collapsed into one group of twenty-nine individuals ( $N = 29$ ) for other parts of the analysis. Responses to the five questions about personal spelling ability were also analyzed as a single group. No significant difference was found between responses to those questions on the different forms. See Table 1 for the means and standard deviations for the responses to all sixteen questions from the questionnaire based on form. See Table 2 for the combined ( $n = 29$ ) means and standard deviations for the five spelling self-perception questions.

Four participants gave false positive responses in which they indicated correctly spelled words as incorrect. Three out of the four individuals thought the word coincided was misspelled. Not including false positives, the participants with Form A found a mean of 0 errors ( $SD = 0$ ), the participants with Form B found a mean of 2.9 errors ( $SD = 1.7$ ), and the participants with Form C found a mean of 8.7 errors ( $SD = 1.4$ ). The majority of participants with Forms B and C did not find all of the errors, but some participants with each form found all the errors. The number of errors found was positively correlated to reliance on spellcheck to catch spelling

errors ( $r(29) = .37, p < .05$ ). The number of errors circled was negatively correlated to the following question items: finding the essay well-written, the author's command of English, the author's GPA, the author's performance in class, the author's intelligence, whether the author edited the essay, ease of reading, ease of understanding ( $r_s(29)$  ranging from  $-.31$  to  $-.79, p_s < .05$ ), and the grade given to the essay ( $r(28) = -.73, p < .01$ ). See Table 3 for the correlation coefficients and  $p$ -values for each question.

Separate one-variable analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed for each question pertaining to participants' evaluations of the essay and the author's ability based on the number of errors in the essay. The answers from each form were compared with those from the other forms. Statistically significant effects for the number of errors were found for the following items: finding the essay well-written, the author's command of English, the author's GPA, the author's intelligence, whether the author edited the essay, ease of reading ( $F(2, 26)$  ranging from  $3.96$  to  $11.41, p_s < .05$ ), and the grade given to the essay ( $F(2, 25) = 8.56, p < .01$ ). See Table 4 for the mean perceptions of the authors as a function of number of spelling errors.

To evaluate the effect of a reader's self-perception of his or her spelling ability on his or her perception of the author, correlation coefficients were calculated separately for each form. For Form A, perceived spelling ability correlated positively with perception of the author's GPA, the author's performance in class, whether the essay was edited, and the grade given to the essay ( $r_s(9)$  ranging from  $.33$  to  $.58$ ). Perceived spelling ability correlated negatively with the author's command of English and the author's knowledge of English history ( $r_s(9) = -.29$  and  $-.17$ ). There was no correlation for the following items: the essay being well-written, the author's intelligence, if the author is a man, ease of reading, and ease of understanding ( $r_s(9) = 0$ ).

For Form B, perceived spelling ability is positively correlated with whether the essay is well-written, the author's GPA, the author's performance in class, the author's intelligence, whether the author is a man, ease of reading, and ease of understanding ( $r_s$  (9) ranging from .17 to .52). Self-perception of spelling correlated negatively with the author's command of English, the author's knowledge of English history, and the grade given to the essay ( $r_s$  (8) ranging from -.06 to -.19). There was no correlation between perception of spelling and whether the author edited the essay ( $r$  (9) = 0).

For Form C, perception of spelling ability is positively correlated to the essay being well-written, the author's command of English, the author's GPA, the author's intelligence, the author's knowledge of English history, whether the author edited the essay, if the author is a man, ease of reading, ease of understanding, and the grade given to the essay ( $r_s$  (11) ranging from .11 to .59). It is negatively correlated to whether the author's performance in class ( $r$  (11) = -.06). See Table 5 for correlation coefficients for each form.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The current study investigated the effect of spelling errors on readers' perceptions of authors. The results indicate two principle conclusions. First, the presence of spelling errors causes readers to form negative perceptions of an author's intelligence and writing abilities and an essay's quality. Participants with Form C consistently scored the author and the essay lower than participants with either Form A or Form B. Second, the number of spelling errors affected the degree of negativity in the perceptions of the author. In particular, the presence of more spelling errors caused readers to form more negative perceptions of the author.

The results of the study support one of the three hypotheses. The hypothesis that spelling errors negatively influence a reader's perception of the author, with more errors leading to a

more negative perception was supported by the research. The hypotheses that both self-perceived good spellers and professors will be more sensitive to spelling errors and judge the author more harshly were not supported by the results of this study. No significant difference was found between professor and student perceptions of authors on the basis of spelling errors. The correlations between perceived spelling ability and author intelligence ratings were low and random, without any consistent pattern.

The results of this study agree with previous studies investigating readers' perceptions of authors' intelligence and abilities based on spelling errors. Like Varnhagen (2000), Kreiner et al. (2002), and Figueredo and Varnhagen (2005), this study found that readers view the author and the essay more negatively in the error conditions than in the control condition. Readers' scores of the author fluctuated based on how many errors they personally found in the writing sample. Readers who found more errors tended to judge the author more harshly and negatively than those who found fewer errors or were in the control condition. In contrast to Varnhagen (2000), Kreiner et al. (2002), and Figueredo and Varnhagen (2005), this study found some evidence that spelling errors can affect reader perception of items unrelated to either spelling or writing. An increased number of spelling errors led to more negative perceptions for the following items: finding the essay well-written, the author's command of English, the author's GPA, the author's intelligence, whether the author edited the essay, ease of reading, and the grade given to the essay. Neither an author's GPA nor his or her intelligence is necessarily related to spelling or writing skills.

Participants rated the author's intelligence higher in the no-error condition than they did in either of the two error conditions. The average intelligence rating for Form A was 3.89, the average intelligence rating for Form B was 3.78, and the average intelligence rating for form C

was 2.27. Forms A and B had very similar averages across the board, leading to the conclusion that the presence of only five errors did not have a strong influence on the readers' perceptions of the author and the essay. For a few of the questions, participants with Form B scored the author and essay higher on average than participants with Form A (See Table 1 for the average scores for each question). On the other hand, the averages of the responses to Form C were consistently lower than those of either Form A or B. From this it can be concluded that the ten-error condition is judged more harshly than the zero- or five-error conditions.

The professors' responses showed no difference from the student responses of the same form. This was surprising because of the research that stated that teachers view the spelling of a paper as a reliable indicator of quality. The small number of professors surveyed may have led to inconclusive results.

The correlations between a reader's self-perception of spelling ability and his or her perception of the author were also inconclusive. With the exception of the author's GPA, none of the items had a consistent positive or negative correlation to perceived spelling ability between forms. Many of the items had no correlation to spelling ability or very weak correlations. Further research needs to be done to corroborate these results, but the initial analysis indicates that perceived spelling ability has no influence on a reader's perceptions of an author's intelligence or writing ability. See Table 5 for correlation coefficients of the relationship between perceived spelling ability and perception items.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the current study include the limited time available and the limited scope of participants. Only twenty-six students filled out the questionnaire. Due to time constraints, the researcher was not able to pass out more questionnaires. Some students filled out the

questionnaire, but did not notice the back side and failed to complete it. These questionnaires were discarded and the information was not used. Student participants were pulled from friends, classmates, and classmates of friends. That leads to a concentration of students from certain majors and a lack of students from other majors. The majority of the participants were female. This does not negate the data collected, but it makes it more difficult to generalize the results to the whole population. It may not be a fair representation of the campus as a whole or the college student population as a whole. Other limitations included the small number of professor participants and the necessity of passing out the questionnaire by hand. The questionnaire could not be emailed or sent over the computer because word-processing technology would have indicated the misspelled words, defeating the purpose of the survey.

Because only three professors completed the questionnaire, the results from their responses are inconclusive. In order to truly tell if professors view spelling errors more harshly than students, it would be necessary to have a larger sample size to analyze and compare with the student responses.

This study is further limited because only one method was used to gather data. In order to test the truth of the questionnaire responses, other methods should have been employed to collect more data. Additional methods that could have been used include: interviews about perceptions of spelling errors or personal spelling ability and spelling tests to test actual spelling ability. To look more deeply into the how poor spellers and teachers view spelling errors, interviews with both populations would be informational and give more insight into possible differences in perception.

Further research is needed to duplicate the findings of this study in different settings and with a larger, more varied sample population. Further studies with more methods could find

correlations and patterns that this study failed to observe. Other areas of interest that proceed from the findings of this study include: the difference between student, professor, and professional perceptions of spelling errors in writing samples, perception of spelling errors in different contexts ranging from formal to informal, when the number of spelling errors becomes important in perception formation, and how students view professors' misspellings in class notes, handouts, or emails.

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Chart 1

Spelling Errors Present in Form A, B, and C of the Questionnaire

	<b>Form A</b>	<b>Form B</b>	<b>Form C</b>
<b>Errors</b>		cronicle langauge evenchually writen seperation	kronicle essenitally Engsh rite evidnece prefrences ceries improtance lanuagge agian

Table 1

Mean (Standard Deviation in Parenthesis) Perception of the Author as a Function of Number of Spelling Errors and Self-Perception of Spelling Ability ( $n = 29$ )

Question	Questionnaire Form		
	Form A	Form B	Form C
Essay well-written	3.1 (0.8)	3.0 (1.3)	1.9 (0.8)
Author has good command of English	3.3 (1.0)	3.6 (0.9)	2.3 (0.8)
Author has good GPA	3.3 (0.8)	3.5 (0.7)	2.7 (0.6)
Author does well in classes	3.4 (0.9)	3.5 (0.9)	2.7 (0.6)
Author seen as intelligent	3.6 (1.0)	3.5 (1.2)	2.4 (0.5)
Author knows English history	3.6 (0.9)	3.9 (0.8)	3.6 (0.7)
Essay edited	3.5 (0.7)	3.1 (0.8)	1.8 (0.9)
Author is a man	3.0 (0.7)	3.0 (1.0)	3.1 (0.5)
Essay easy to read	3.6 (0.7)	3.4 (1.1)	2.1 (0.5)
Essay easy to understand	3.4 (0.9)	3.4 (1.1)	2.7 (0.8)
Grade given	9.1 (2.0)	9.3 (2.6)	5.4 (2.6)
I am a good speller	4.0 (0.8)	3.6 (1.0)	3.9 (0.7)
I think less of bad spellers	2.7 (0.8)	2.8 (1.0)	2.4 (0.6)
I take pride in my spelling	3.1 (1.0)	3.3 (0.8)	3.1 (0.7)
I wish I could spell better	4.0 (0.7)	3.6 (0.7)	3.6 (1.0)
I rely on spellcheck often.	2.9 (1.2)	3.6 (1.2)	3.9 (0.9)

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation of Questions About Personal Spelling Ability ( $n = 29$ )

<b>Question</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
I am a good speller.	3.8	0.8
I think less of bad spellers.	2.6	0.9
I take pride in my spelling.	3.2	0.8
I wish I could spell better.	3.7	0.8
I rely on spellcheck often.	3.5	1.2

Table 3

Correlation Between Number of Errors found and Perception of Author ( $N=29$ )

<b>Perception Item</b>	<b>Correlation Coefficient (<i>r</i>)</b>	<b><i>P</i>-value</b>
Essay well written*	-.544	<.01
Author has a good command of English*	-.551	<.01
Author has good GPA*	-.446	<.01
Author does well in classes*	-.443	<.01
Author seen as intelligent*	-.696	<.01
Author knows English history	-.111	.283
Essay edited*	-.788	<.01
Author is a man	.095	.312
Essay easy to read*	-.651	<.01
Essay easy to understand*	-.313	.049
Grade given* <sup>2</sup>	-.732	<.01

\* Statistically significant ( $p < .05$ )

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<sup>2</sup>  $N=28$ , one participant did not answer this question. This was taken into account during statistical analysis.

Table 4

Mean (Standard Deviation in Parenthesis) Perception of the Author as a Function of Number of Spelling Errors ( $n = 29$ )

Perception Item	Questionnaire Form (Number of Spelling Errors)		
	Form A (0 errors)	Form B (5 errors)	Form C (10 errors)
Essay well-written*	3.1 (0.8)	3.0 (1.3)	1.9 (0.8)
Author has good command of English* <sup>o</sup>	3.3 (1.0)	3.6 (0.9)	2.3 (0.8)
Author has good GPA* <sup>o</sup>	3.3 (0.8)	3.5 (0.7)	2.7 (0.6)
Author does well in classes <sup>o</sup>	3.4 (0.9)	3.5 (0.9)	2.7 (0.6)
Author seen as intelligent*	3.6 (1.0)	3.5 (1.2)	2.4 (0.5)
Author knows English history <sup>o</sup>	3.6 (0.9)	3.9 (0.8)	3.6 (0.7)
Essay edited*	3.5 (0.7)	3.1 (0.8)	1.8 (0.9)
Author is a man	3.0 (0.7)	3.0 (1.0)	3.1 (0.5)
Essay easy to read*	3.6 (0.7)	3.4 (1.1)	2.1 (0.5)
Essay easy to understand	3.4 (0.9)	3.4 (1.1)	2.7 (0.8)
Grade given* <sup>o</sup>	9.1 (2.0)	9.3 (2.6)	5.4 (2.6)

\* Statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) with respect to number of errors

<sup>o</sup> Items in which participants with Form B scored the author or essay higher than those with Form A on average

Table 5

Correlation Coefficients ( $r$ ) for Relationship Between Perceived Spelling and Various Perception Items

Perception Item	Questionnaire Form		
	Form A	Form B	Form C
Essay well-written	0	.221	.156
Author has good command of English	-.289	-.190	.356
Author has good GPA	.346	.377	.135
Author does well in classes	.333	.171	-.060
Author seen as intelligent	0	.238	.281
Author knows English history	-.167	-.070	.346
Essay edited	.397	0	.588
Author is a man	0	.493	.553
Essay easy to read	0	.521	.288
Essay easy to understand	0	.521	.113
Grade given	.581	-.061	.452

## Appendix A

What is your major/profession? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your year in school?

**OR**

What is your highest level of education?

Freshman (1<sup>st</sup> year)

High School

Sophomore (2<sup>nd</sup> year)

Bachelor's degree

Junior (3<sup>rd</sup> year)

Master's degree

Senior (4<sup>th</sup> year)

Ph.D. or doctorate

Super-senior (5+ years)

Is English your native language? YES NO

Read this short writing sample, written by a college student.

It is hard to chronicle English spelling from 1100 to 1300 due to the dominance of French in England. English essentially went underground. The output of written English diminished as fewer and fewer people knew how to read or write it. English became a mostly spoken language. There is evidence that the West Saxon standard was maintained in the beginning but it eventually fell out of use. When English was written during this time, spelling was governed by regional dialects and preferences. Just when it seemed that French might take over, a series of events coincided that helped English regain its previous prominence. In 1204, King John lost his holdings in Normandy which led to a gradual cultural and linguistic separation from French. English nationalism was growing. The Bubonic Plague increased the importance of the laboring class and their language—English. Through these events, English became well-known again.

Please answer the following questions about the writing sample and the author.

1. This essay is well-written.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

2. The author has a good command of the English language.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

3. The author has a good GPA.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. The author does well in his or her classes.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. The author would be seen as intelligent by others.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
6. The author is knowledgeable about the history of English.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
7. The author edited this essay.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
8. The author is a man.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
9. This essay was easy to read.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
10. This essay was easy to understand.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
11. If you were a professor what grade would you give this essay?  
A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D+   D   D-   F

Please answer the following questions about your own spelling ability.

1. I am a good speller.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
2. I think less of people who misspell words.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
3. I take pride in my spelling ability.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
4. I wish I was a better speller.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
5. I often rely on spellcheck to catch spelling errors.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Please go back to the essay and circle any spelling errors you found.

Please write any other comments you have about the essay, the author, or your own spelling ability.

## Appendix B

What is your major/profession? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your year in school?

**OR**

What is your highest level of education?

- Freshman (1<sup>st</sup> year)  
 Sophomore (2<sup>nd</sup> year)  
 Junior (3<sup>rd</sup> year)  
 Senior (4<sup>th</sup> year)  
 Super-senior (5+ years)

- High school  
 Bachelor's degree  
 Master's degree  
 Ph.D. or doctorate

Is English your native language? YES NO

Read this short writing sample, written by a college student.

It is hard to crönicle English spelling from 1100 to 1300 due to the dominance of French in England. English essentially went underground. The output of written English diminished as fewer and fewer people knew how to read or write it. English became a mostly spoken langauge. There is evidence that the West Saxon standard was maintained in the beginning but it evenchually fell out of use. When English was writen during this time, spelling was governed by regional dialects and preferences. Just when it seemed that French might take over, a series of events coincided that helped English regain its previous prominence. In 1204, King John lost his holdings in Normandy which led to a gradual cultural and linguistic seperation from French. English nationalism was growing. The Bubonic Plague increased the importance of the laboring class and their language—English. Through these events, English became well-known again.

Please answer the following questions about the writing sample and the author.

12. This essay is well-written.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

13. The author has a good command of the English language.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

14. The author has a good GPA.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

15. The author does well in his or her classes.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

16. The author would be seen as intelligent by others.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

17. The author is knowledgeable about the history of English.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

18. The author edited this essay.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

19. The author is a man.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

20. This essay was easy to read.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

21. This essay was easy to understand.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

22. If you were a professor what grade would you give this essay?

- A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D+   D   D-   F

Please answer the following questions about your own spelling ability.

6. I am a good speller.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

7. I think less of people who misspell words.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

8. I take pride in my spelling ability.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

9. I wish I was a better speller.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

10. I often rely on spellcheck to catch spelling errors.

- Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Please go back to the essay and circle any spelling errors you found.

Please write any other comments you have about the essay, the author, or your own spelling ability.

## Appendix C

What is your major/profession? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your year in school?

**OR**

What is your highest level of education?

Freshman (1<sup>st</sup> year)

High school

Sophomore (2<sup>nd</sup> year)

Bachelor's degree

Junior (3<sup>rd</sup> year)

Master's degree

Senior (4<sup>th</sup> year)

Ph.D. or doctorate

Super-senior (5+ years)

Is English your native language? YES NO

Read this short writing sample, written by a college student.

It is hard to kronicle English spelling from 1100 to 1300 due to the dominance of French in England. English essenitally went underground. The output of written Engsh diminished as fewer and fewer people knew how to read or rite it. English became a mostly spoken language. There is evideece that the West Saxon standard was maintained in the beginning but it eventually fell out of use. When English was written during this time, spelling was governed by regional dialects and prefrences. Just when it seemed that French might take over, a ceries of events coincided that helped English regain its previous prominence. In 1204, King John lost his holdings in Normandy which led to a gradual cultural and linguistic separation from French. English nationalism was growing. The Bubonic Plague increased the improtance of the laboring class and their lanuagge—English. Through these events, English became well-known agian.

Please answer the following questions about the writing sample and the author.

1. This essay is well-written.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

2. The author has a good command of the English language.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

3. The author has a good GPA.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

4. The author does well in his or her classes.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

5. The author would be seen as intelligent by others.

Strongly Agree  Agree  Neutral  Disagree  Strongly Disagree

6. The author is knowledgeable about the history of English.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
7. The author edited this essay.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
8. The author is a man.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
9. This essay was easy to read.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
10. This essay was easy to understand.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
11. If you were a professor what grade would you give this essay?  
A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D+   D   D-   F

Please answer the following questions about your own spelling ability.

1. I am a good speller.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
2. I think less of people who misspell words.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
3. I take pride in my spelling ability.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
4. I wish I was a better speller.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree
5. I often rely on spellcheck to catch spelling errors.  
 Strongly Agree    Agree    Neutral    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

Please go back to the essay and circle any spelling errors you found.

Please write any other comments you have about the essay, the author, or your own spelling ability.