

# Spelling Progress Bulletin

**Dedicated to finding the causes of difficulties in learning reading and spelling.**

**"A closed mind gathers no knowledge\*, an open mind is the key to wisdom."**

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## Governors Express Interest in Proposed National Spelling Commission

Governors of many of the nation's leading states have expressed interest in the proposed national legislation which would create a national spelling commission with authority to publish an official dictionary in simplified spelling. No one would be required to use this spelling except government employees in writing official reports.

Legislation to accomplish this was introduced by Rep. Harlan Hagen and continued by Rep. Bob Mathias. The plan was conceived by Homer W. Wood, longtime Porterville publisher of the Evening Recorder, who has been actively working for it for several years.

After unanimous approval by the Calif. State Senate of a resolution supporting the plan and calling on the President and Congress for adoption of the proposal, Sen. J. Howard Williams of Porterville, who introduced the resolution in the Senate, sent copies of the resolution to all the Governors of the 50 states.

Response from the governors has been gratifying to Sen. Williams and Publisher Wood. One of the enthusiastic responses came from Gov. William Quinn of Hawaii, who wrote to Sen. Williams as follows:

"The material you sent me on simplified spelling has been reviewed by the State Dept. of Public Instruction. They favor any reform that will simplify the spelling of our English language and make it easier for children to learn to read and write. The staff of the Dept. of Public Instruction tells me that various individuals have been working on simplified spelling for 700 years. Perhaps we can accomplish by legislation what scholars and others have failed to do."

"Since you are proposing that national action be taken on this matter, would it not be better to forward copies of the materials to members of Congress and the President of the United States. While I cannot speak for our representatives in Congress, I am certain that they would support any movement to make reading and writing of English simpler."

In acknowledging receipt of the Calif. resolution, Gov. John Volpe of Massachusetts wrote, "I have read this resolution with interest and have turned it over to Frank Lapin, who is my legislative secretary, so that he may look into the matter and give me a report before our legislature convenes in January."

Gov. Grant Sawyer of Nevada praised the Calif. Senate's resolution and commented that "It seems to be so well worded and covers the subject matter so adequately it could well serve as a model for a similar resolution in the Nevada legislature."

Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York sent the resolution to his State Education Department, where Ewald B. Nyquist, deputy commissioner advised, "I am sure that the resolution adopted in the Calif. State Senate and which urges the President of the United States and the Congress to initiate and support legislation to establish a National Spelling Commission for the purpose of developing a United States Official Dictionary with reformed and simplified spelling as well as pronunciation, will be of interest to use in the State of New York as we continue our deliberations on related matters."

Governors of Pennsylvania and South Dakota reported that they were asking their legislative counsels to consider the proposal, while Gov. J. Millard Tawes of Maryland indicated that he would study the resolution with great interest.  
*(continued in next issue)*

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### **California School Children lack the Incentive to Read, by Caspar W. Weinberger\***

A considerable storm of comment, criticism and publicly expressed unhappiness has blown up following the disclosure that California's elementary school pupils do not read very well.

Earlier this month the State Board of Education received a report showing that primary school pupils; when compared on the basis of national tests, are lagging behind comparable national scores by about three months. This was not only a great blow to educators, professional and otherwise, but unfortunately confirmed what a great many parents and others have been saying for some time. Actually, the national average is not particularly high. The fact that California pupils are well under

this average is even more disquieting.

Explanations are obviously in order, and they are starting to emerge from the organizations, governmental and private, which are primarily concerned. We are now told that probably the reason for the reading gap is that our children spend fewer hours each day in school than "a significant segment of school districts located nationally."

The conclusion then is automatically drawn that more hours in school for each child would mean better readers, or at least that we would catch up with the national norm. I think there is some fault with this logic.

The five-hour day that California uses for primary grade children, out of which must be taken time for physical education and, in some cases, other non-academic work, may or may not be too short a school day, but it certainly does not follow that more time spent in a classroom is necessarily going to increase a student's reading ability. The real difficulty is that in far too many schools most pupils have far too little training or practice in reading.

Opinions as to the quality of the formal "reading course," and the ability of teachers to teach reading vary widely, but most would concede that no one is going to learn to read in a really satisfactory way unless he has both a great deal of practice and something that strongly stimulates his desire to read.

Much of the school instruction today tends to discourage, or even eliminate the need for, reading in many subjects. Classroom recitations, special projects, various visual aids that require very little if any reading, frequent use of outlines and a minimum of homework requiring reading of any substantial nature - all these tend to diminish the student's opportunity even to practice reading or to learn to recognize it as the most vital of all instructional tools.

It cannot be denied that part of the fault at least stems from the home. There is no question but that in the average home, perhaps in the vast majority of homes, there is little if any inducement or encouragement for reading on any scale. Television is a remarkable medium which could be, but is not, used to encourage or train readers; in fact, for the most part, television has precisely the opposite effect: it contributes to the atrophy of reading skill.

If we seriously want to improve the reading skills and abilities of our school children, and, far more important, to instill in them the habit and the desire to read in and out of school, something far more vital must be done than adding a few minutes to each classroom day, or authorizing \$10million worth of new textbooks for reading courses as the State Board of Education did recently.

The whole thrust of education, not just in the usual reading courses, should be to require and encourage wide- spread reading and(tho children and possibly their parents may not agree), homework assignments with the definite objective of instilling the reading habit should be given each night. It undoubtedly will require a substantial effort, particularly with children from deprived areas where the problem is seen at its worst. But economically deprived areas are by no means the exclusive habitat of poor readers.

The effort is more than worthwhile. The degree of enrichment and the breadth of the new worlds of imagination, of hope, and achievement that comes from improved reading abilities simply cannot be measured. The child who learns to read and enjoy it becomes a man who will never really be unhappy.

\* Newly appointed State Director of Finance. Member of the State Legislature 1952-57. Chairman

of the joint Senate-Assembly subcommittee which reorganized the California Alcoholic Beverage Control setup. Was Chairman of the Assembly Government Organization Committee. Currently Chairman of the Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, the so-called Little Hoover Commission.

Received his LL.B. from Harvard Law School in 1941. Has taught at Hastings College of Law and Golden State College, of which he is a trustee.

Widely known thru his newspaper columns and his weekly T-V public affairs program in Northern California.

### Comments by Helen Bowyer

As you see, Mr. Weinberger's statement on reading in California comes in two devastating stages;

- a. the state itself falls below the national average;
- b. the national average is itself not high.

This last statement is putting the matter very mildly. Anyone who has read Arther Trace's *What Ivan Knows that Johnny Doesn't* is aware of how *not high* our average is compared with that of the USSR. Not to mention the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Holland, and Japan.

We are glad Mr. Weinberger doesn't make the teachers the scape goat for our sorry national showing. Undoubtedly some are less successful than others in getting one, *done, gone - loan, bone, sewn - come, home, comb, gnome*, into the heads of their charges, but the wonder is that most of them succeed as well as they do. We accept, too, his opinion that, in the case of California, it is not her mere five hour school day which lands her below the rating of so many of her sister states. Rather it is that she spends so much of that brief time in activities which do little to develop skill in reading, or a genuine love of it.

We bless him, too, for sparing us the now so wearying attack on *Look n' Say* as the villain in our nation's humiliating showing, and any lyric expectations that *Back to Phonics* will make everything hunky-dory. What phonics we ask, could you use with *me, tea, key, knee, coterie*, or with *you, do, two, blue, grow, shoe, Hindu, bamboo, pooh?* We call to mind that phonics was the usual teaching method thruout our land till 1925-30. It was because it was making so poor a showing that *Look n' Say* took over.

We too would like to see the school assign a reasonable stint of homework for at least the Monday to Thursday evenings of the school week and get the genuine co-operation of the parents in getting it done. One simple device for this, as Mr. Weinberger suggests, would be no watching television till the reading, spelling, memory verses, grammar, etc. had been disposed of to the critical satisfaction of mother or dad, or whoever was in charge for the evening. In those deprived areas where few homes have a grown-up capable of that critical appraisal, we open in the early evening with a teacher or two in *loco parentis*.

But what really gripped us in Mr. Weinberger's column was the two sentences with which he finished it. Would that we could win him over to what seems to us the only way of implementing them. That is to say by consigning our present chaotic spelling to the appropriate museum and blessing our schools with a wun-sound-wun-sien spelling more or less like that set forth in the article, *Spelling and the Dictionary*, in the Spring, 1967 issue of SPB. Just think, we could thereby not only give our whole national education such an upswing as no mere *back to phonics* could dream of achieving, but we could earn the fervent gratitude of the whole foreign world for

liberating it from the burden of the orthographic anarchy with which, willy-nilly, they have to struggle now in the interest of their commerce and industry. In such a wun-sound-wun-sien medium, Mr. Weinberger's last sentence would read much like this:

thə chield hoo lernz too reed and enjoi it,  
bikumz ə man hoo will nevər bee reeəli unhapi.

It was with such a "dictionary key" almost identical with the one here used that Dr. Helen Bonnema had 40 of her kindergartners lurning too reed and get the meening ov aulmoest evrithing thae themselvz kuud sae or understand from uthər lips. We are sending Mr. Weinberger these two issues of SPB which deal with this joyously basic solution of "the reading crisis."

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 3-5]

(\* indicates letter/s, usually digrafts, that are joined in i.t.a. but for which there is no keyboard character.

(In the table, the last 5 IPA characters are not quite right.)

### **Treatment of Language Sounds and Spelling in the Design of an Initial Teaching Alphabet, by Sir James Pitman, K.B.E.**

The first stage in this project is to ensure that the purpose of the medium has been determined precisely. In this task fresh thinking is particularly needful, for there are a number of traps for the unwary, the first being to follow the path of the phonetician and develop a *writing* system. There have been many honourable precedents for starting from the sounds of speech and seeking to represent them visually, and it is hard to recognize that the purpose of any initial teaching alphabet is the very opposite of this: the aim is to construct not a *writing* system but a *reading* system, which is something altogether different. The correct pair is therefore: listening and reading, instead of speaking and writing.

Long ago Isaac Pitman cut himself away from this particular error and thus brought a fresh approach to the problem. The famous scholar and linguist, Prof. Max Muller, wrote at the time:

"What I like in Mr. Pitman's system of spelling is exactly what I know has been found fault with by others namely, that he does not attempt to refine too much, and to express in writing those endless shades of pronunciation, which may be of the greatest interest to the student of acoustics, or of phonetics, as applied to the study of living dialects, but which, for practical as well as for scientific philological purposes, must be entirely ignored. Writing was never intended to photograph spoken languages; it was meant to indicate, not to paint, sounds.. Language deals in broad colours, and writing ought to follow the example of language, which, though it allows an endless variety of pronunciation, restricts itself for its own purpose, for the purpose of expressing thought in all its modifications, to a very limited number of typical vowels and consonants. Out of the large number of sounds, for instance, which have been catalogued from the various English dialects, those only can be recognized as constituent elements of the' language which in, and by their difference from each other convey a difference of meaning." [1]

It is perhaps difficult for the teacher without knowledge of a specialized branch of both linguistics and phonetics to appreciate the full implications of this special and unusual approach. It is helpful, however, if one has a clear understanding of the difference between the linguistic terms: phoneme

and diaphone. A phoneme is a *particular* sound which, in being conventionally linked in a word to a particular character, constitutes part of a writing system; a diaphone is a *generality* of differing phonemes which, notwithstanding their variety, are understood by a *listener* as having a particular meaning in that conventional language. [2] In short, a writing system is a record based on the *phonemes* of those who send *spoken* messages; a reading system, one based on the *diaphones* of those who receive these spoken messages. A writing system is based on a *particular reality* which was unique for the particular speaker on a particular occasion; [3] a reading system based upon a *generalized abstraction*, is postulated on the premise that all will be able to read and understand it, - whatever their pronunciations." This principle of the diaphone maybe carried to a great length. For instance, while no one in the world normally would speak the word *sældier* in the precise character-to-sound relationship of those seven characters, [5] all would understand it when they read them as written just as they would understand any speaker were he to speak the word in his own pronunciation of all those characters. We read and listen as others (not we) write and speak: what differs phonographically from the reader's own speech is in fact sometimes more easily understood by all. Four readers who, when speaking, make the following pairs of words sound as homophones: *book, buck; saw, sore; cot, caught; bomb, balm;* would nevertheless have no difficulty in understanding one another in a quadrilateral conversation. Similarly, they would not only have no difficulty in reading these eight words, whether printed in T.O. or in i.t.a. (bom, bam, b\*ook, buck, s\*au, sor, cot, c\*aut) but would find the reading actually easier, once the appearance of the words had been mastered. This explains why an initial teaching medium not only may safely disregard dialect (or regional "accents") but ought also to aim at the generality of a reading system and avoid the particularization of a writing system.

Particularly is this true of an initial teaching reading system where the intention is to preserve all that may be preserved of that medium to which the transition will need to be made.

Moreover it is clearly impractical to vary the spellings of words to fit the multitude of different pronunciations used by readers who in fact have not as yet spoken the words they will be reading and who will, if they read them aloud, speak them differently (i.e. as their own), having clothed each word with the unique sounds of their own individuality, on an occasion that is also unique. Those who read pass in a reading direction from characters through diaphones to their own phonemes with a degree of variety so infinite that only with a super-elaborate phonetic alphabet like that of the I.P.A. would it be possible to represent each variant with precision when passing from phonemes to characters in the opposite (i.e., writing) direction.

This fact is demonstrated in the following table for which I am indebted to Miss Audrey Bullard, Lecturer in Speech Training at King's College, London University, and a foremost coach in Britain to actors and actresses cast in dialect parts. She has inevitably been restricted in her attempt to portray the great variety of phonemes (even in such broad differences of easily recognizable different dialects) by the lack of discriminable characters, but the point will nevertheless be taken that in any writing system which attempts to portray the living quality of speech, the printed page *must* vary with the speech.

**Table 1**

A table of at least 23 Phonemes which are covered by 4 of the 40 Diaphones of i.t.a. The 4 groups of phonemes have been allocated under the 4 diaphones and so of the 4 i.t.a. characters with which, respectively, each range of phonemes are associable and representable. The characters used to represent the phonemes are (except in the case of the *t* in *postman*) those taken from the Reference Table of Phonetic Symbols or "Specimen grid" of the International Phonetic Alphabet, printed in Varitype 197, published by the Dep't of Phonetics, London University, University College.

i.t.a. character as representing the diaphone	Dialect	Phonemes*
æ	Received Pronunciation (i.e. upperclass)	ei
	Australian	ɛi
	Northern English	ɛɪ, ɛə
	Scottish	e
	Cockney	ai
*ie	Received Pronunciation "Refined"	ai æi
	Irish (Dublin) and Lancashire	ai
	London Cockney	ɔ
	American (Southern)	a
	Yorkshire	aɪ
r, *r	Received Pronunciation (before a vowel sound)	ɹ
	Scottish and French-Canadian speakers of English	r
	American and Canadian	ɹ
	French speakers of English	ʁ
t #	Received Pronunciation (post)	t
	Received Pronunciation (postman)	t̚
	London Cockney	t̚s
	London Cockney (but not initially in stressed syllables)	?
	Indian	t̚
	American American	d d

# As represented by the International Phonetic Alphabet, plus the special symbol for *t* in "postman" by Daniel Jones in his *An English Pronouncing Dictionary*.

To have even six characters for the single first syllable of, say, the word: *able*, would of course be both unacceptable and impractical in the teaching or in the practice of reading, and it becomes necessary to accept for any reading system:

1. that the choice of the form must be based not on any supposed single, "right" pronunciation [6] of each and every word, since no such form exists in the widespread language. [just try arguing to an American that our Received Pronunciation is *the* correct speech, or to an Englishman that Middle West American English is to be imposed, or try suggesting to anyone but an Englishman that our Received Pronunciation of *fau* is the correct pronunciation of *for!*]

2. that the correct parallel must be the corresponding listening system, that is to say that the criterion must be one of comprehension - though tinged nevertheless with a dash of what is culturally *comme il faut*. [7]

All that is required is that the learner should be able to read the meaning of the sentences by obtaining enough clues from what his eyes see in order to identify the words, just as in a listening system the learner should be able to hear the meaning by obtaining enough clues from what his ears receive in order to identify the words.

I have spent much time (e.g. my paper of 23 November 1960 to our Royal Society of Arts) in

emphasizing, that the actual sounds are subordinate to meaning, and that what the listener needs is not a reproduction of what he speaks, but a meaningful message in which the meaning in context so dominates the form that he is virtually unaware of form. An Englishman landing in New York or an American landing in London does not have to learn a fresh language, as would a non-English-speaking visitor, but needs only to adapt his hearing to noticeable variant phonemes within a few diaphones. In that paper I printed, using the International Phonetic Alphabet, the following sentences both in an English (R.P.) pronunciation and in a generally accepted American pronunciation in order to indicate the degree of difference in speech and to demonstrate the great differences in the printed forms for words which would be inevitable in *any writing system* - differences that can be avoided only by designing a *reading system*, of which T.O. as well as i.t.a. are examples (see lines 1 and 4):

**Table 2**

1. T.O.: Paul passed her forty fertile acres of newly
  - 2 Am: pɔl pæt hər fɔrti fərtl eikərz əv nu:li
  - 3: Eng: pɔ:l pɑ:st hə: fɔ:ti fə:tail eikəz əv nju:li
  4. i.t.a. p\*aul pɑst he\*r forty fert\*ie1 æcer\*z əv n\*uely
- 
1. T.O.: grassed pasture not long after Mary got there.
  2. Am. græst pæstʃər nɒt lɒŋ æftər meri gɒt ðær
  3. Eng: grɑ:st pɑ:stʃuə nɒt lɒŋ ɑ:ftə meəri gɒt ðeə.
  4. i.t.a. grast pɑst\*uer nɒt lɒŋ afte\*r mæry gɒt \*thær.

The first requirement of an initial teaching medium for the learning of reading is that it must not attempt to represent too accurately the speech of the reader, or even of any reader. I have reminded my readers and audiences that just as Pitman's Shorthand has proved for now over 120 years that *standard* outlines are read in a broad Scotch, Welsh, Irish, or American accent - or even in a Cockney or Brooklyn one - by those who have only their reading, but not their speaking habits in common, so any reading system - T.O. as much as i.t.a. - inevitably bases itself on diaphonic, not phonetic foundations.

This is very easily verified in that the topmost as well as the lowest of the above four lines will be read aloud in their own regional and even individual regional accents, by all who have a reading skill, and they will be understood by any listener, whatever his pronunciation, provided the pronunciation of the reader is any of those many which are effective in general communication. [8]

Little children, all the world over, are reading i.t.a. words in the standard i.t.a. form, because it is a reading system. They pronounce the words not merely in the pronunciation conventional in their particular linguistic environment but also in a manner peculiarly their own, so that their mothers, even though blindfolded, would be able to recognize who was reading.

[1] *Fortnightly Review*, pp. 556-79, Vol. 25, April, 1876.

[2] The following definitions in the *Glossary of Linguistic Terminology* by Prof. Mario Pei, Ph. D., Columbia Univ. Press, New York, 1966, are helpful:

*Diaphone*: All the variants of a phoneme occurring in all the utterances of all the speakers of a language. (Webster III)

*Phoneme*: The minimal unit of distinctive sound-feature. (Bloomfield)

[3] For instance, my pronunciations of the words for (in the sentence "*For* heaven's sake what did you do it *for*") would vary as to the vowel - in the first case *schwa*, and in the second the \*au. I do not myself pronounce any consonant following the vowel in either form.

[4] Bernard Shaw rightly urged the trustees of his will to bear in mind:

"... that the Proposed British Alphabet does not pretend to be exhaustive as it contains only 16 vowels whereas by infinitesimal movements of the tongue countless different vowels can be produced all of them in use among speakers of English who utter the same vowels no oftener than they make the same fingerprints. Nevertheless they can understand one another's speech and writing sufficiently to converse and correspond..."

Will of the late George Bernard Shaw', Clause 36.

[5] It is interesting to compare and note how closely the following resemble one another when spoken quickly:

(a) S\*eei\*ng \*the œld y\*eer in

(b) S\*eei\*ng \*the œl j\*eer in

thus œldier and œldyer are virtually the same, and both almost the same as œljer.

[6] It is not true that I have based the spellings of i.t.a. on our British pronunciation called Received Pronunciation. I have denied it frequently. It is interesting to note that M. Sylvere Monod, in his analysis of i.t.a. in *Cahiers Pédagogiques*, #44 Octobre, 1963 (L'Orthographe), writes (p. 59): "Un texte en i.t.a. ressemble davantage à de l'anglais américain ou écossais (prononciation de l'R final, par exemple) qu' à de l'anglais d'Angleterre."

Moreover no one with a vestige of linguistic knowledge would suggest that i.t.a. could have been based upon the standard British pronunciation (R.P.). Nevertheless, this misunderstanding has persisted. It is to be hoped that this audience will henceforth be armed with a greater knowledge and recognize that the pronunciation is an all-embracing, notional one that will not be found in the speech of any one speaker, or of a majority of speakers from any one language group.

Dr. J. A. Downing rightly emphasized, in his *Current Misconceptions about i.t.a. (Elementary English*, May, 1965) that "i.t.a. is an alphabet designed for *teaching beginning reading* (his italics) in any part of the English-speaking world, and for this reason i.t.a. cannot be expected to reflect regional differences of pronunciation."

However he proceeds to say, "Like the traditional orthography (T.O.) it is a standardized writing system." Unfortunately T.O. is far from a regular system; moreover i.t.a., which is indeed a system, is not standardized, and ought not to be standardized when children write in it; it is only when it is a reading system that standardization is relevant.

[7] b\*oidz for birdz is discarded as culturally unacceptable variant, even if (which it does not) it were to have afforded a reading form more beneficial at the transition.

[8] The film directors and television producers of the world understand this very well. They will allow on the sound track or on the air only those utterances which are easily understood and widely acceptable throughout the English-speaking world. In the world of the cinema, experts such as Miss Bullard coach the "stars" to help them conform to just such an effective and acceptable form of communication.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp5-9]

## **A Phonetic Code used in Hong Kong for Teaching English, by Frank C. Laubach, Ph.D.\***

\*Frank C. Laubach, Syracuse, N.Y.

In the last five months of 1967, we had the most exciting adventure in teaching English to Chinese that I have had in a long life time. This adventure would have less significance if it were not preceded by some background. Go back with me to the year 1930.

In Mindanao, Philippine Islands, I reduced the Maranaw language to writing. It needed only 16 letters, for it has only 16 sounds. The problem then was to teach the Maranaw people to read and write their own language. In a few months we developed a phonetic method of teaching which was so effective that practically everyone could learn how to pronounce every written word in his language in a few hours or a few days. It all depended on how long it took them to learn the code - the letters for the 16 sounds. From there on it was only a matter of speeding up. Within a year, several thousand Maranaws were reading our four page newspaper in their language.

The Superintendent of Schools for the Philippines invited me to devise the same "key word" method for the other Philippine dialects, all of them Malay dialects with 16 to 20 sounds. It was then child's play to learn to read any of these dialects.

This resulted in invitations to various parts of the world to make phonetic lessons. My associates and I have made phonetic lessons in over 300 languages, in 103 countries. We found that every perfectly regular alphabet could be taught quickly and easily. Arabic proved to be more difficult because its writing was confusing.

But far and away the most difficult of all languages to teach was English, because its spelling is so chaotic and misleading. Half of the words in English are spelled one way and pronounced another. So there is no reliable way to pronounce them.

In the Summer of 1943, in the office of the famous Professor Ed. L. Thorndike, in Teachers College, Columbia University, we began a new approach to teaching English phonetically. Prof. Thorndike had shown deep interest in our experiments in teaching the Philippine dialects phonetically. Unfortunately he died in 1942. This first exploration gradually developed into what we called "Streamlined English," which down through the years has gone through many editions and is now published by the Macmillan Company. It is the book used by Laubach Literacy in its program "Each One Teach One" throughout the United States, in which thousands of volunteer teachers are now involved. These teachers were pleased with *Streamlined English*, but I was not satisfied. For it had done nothing about the irregular spellings except to timidly respell them once phonetically over the old spelling, like this:

wunss therr waaz u bridj  
"Once there was a bridge"

So about 15 years ago we began experiments quietly on a small scale with a radical new approach, going the whole way, throwing out the irregular spellings. We call it "English the New Way." At first it was a "one for one" phonetic alphabet of 42 letters because we consider there are 42 sounds in English, and we wanted one letter for each sound and one sound for each letter. Most of the Romanic letter alphabets employ "ae, ee, ie, oe, ue" to indicate the long vowels. This makes vowels

pile up so they are difficult to visualize in words like: *vaereeaeshon, gradueaeshon, deeveeaeshon, creeaeshon*, and about a hundred other such words. So we began to use a slanting line after the long vowels: *so/ we/ be/gan*, just because it was convenient on the typewriter. We were experimenting with this in New York City with about 50 volunteer teachers. These teachers were enthusiastic. Dr. Robert Thorndike, representing Teacher's College, and the City of New York, asked the Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare of the U.S. Government for \$75,000 to try an experiment with this *English the New Way* in the five Boros of New York City. I think the Federal Government might have granted this aid, for they wrote favorably about it, but I withdrew the request and decided to abandon the "/" for a/, e/, i/, o/, u/, because it had met with too much opposition, and replace it with the macron over the long vowel, which is used by every dictionary: ā, ē, ī, ō, ū.

We made another change which has turned out to be of tremendous importance. We began to try our best to press up just as close to old traditional spelling as regular spelling can go. We explored English spellings to determine which could be called regular and which must be rejected as irregular. We found that there are 54 spellings which occur frequently enough to be considered as regular as: ā, ē, ī, ō, ū. These you can see in our Phonetic Code of 96 regular spellings. "ae, ai, ay, a-e" are just as regular as ā. In fact more words are regularly spelled with the 54 alternate regular spellings than with the 42 basic spellings.

When we use this code of 96 symbols, we can spell every regular spelling in the English language! If you confine yourself to only 42 letters, you throw out MOST of the perfectly regular spellings as they are found in the English language. You cut out three-fourths of the good apple in order to get rid of the rotten spots, the irregular spellings. But our purpose is not to reform good spellings, but only to reform the bad irregular spellings. So we include all these 96 good regular ways of spelling. This includes some 60% of all English words.

The other 40% are irregular at some point. In our effort to come as close to old spellings as possible, we try to make the regular correction look as nearly like the old spelling as possible. Often we accomplish this by using doubled consonants which, thankfully, are always pronounced the same as single consonants.

When we did this we found that we could make these words regular in most cases by changing only one letter. These you can see in our book called *Bridges to Old Spelling*. Here is a sample line from that book:

good new spelling: *hedd bredd redd (p.t.) dredd reddy.*  
bad old spelling: *head bread read dread ready.*

But why, you may ask, use double-d? Why not *bred, red, led...* ? For two reasons:

1. If you read *red, led, bred*, in a sentence they suggest a quite different meaning. In new spelling we save every semantic difference just as we do in old spelling.
2. Our experiments prove that the eye stumbles when it runs across a word with one letter missing. But good reading forbids stumbling, it demands instantaneous comprehension.

With our 96 symbols and our double consonants we have been able to bring new spelling so *close* to old irregular spelling that our students of new spelling can guess correctly the pronunciation of 90% of the irregular spellings. About 1/3 of our irregular spellings are bad in two letters. Here is a list taken from our book:

good new spelling: *graet, baer, braek, paer, swaer, waer.*  
old bad spelling: *great, bear, break, pear, swear, wear.*

Our students have no more trouble with *great* than you have with *graet*.

Now behold the enormous short cut which English the New Way achieves! When a student learns the sounds of the 96 symbols in our code, he can pronounce 60% of all English words without help, if he has the proper accent. Our "Glossary" shows the regular way of pronouncing the 40% which are irregular, and our student can read all these without help. He has become master of English pronunciation.

It takes a student about two months to become so proficient with the 96 letter code that he can say every sound instantaneously. After that he can pronounce 5000 words, 10,000, 100,000, all the words in the dictionary. Compare that with the primary schools where children learn 350 words the first year.

In August, 1967, we took the lessons in *English the New Way* to Hong Kong to see how the non-English-speaking Chinese would learn. Rock House Publishers printed our *English the New Way* graded series. We tried them with men and women at the Chinese YMCA who knew no English.

Book 1 of *English the New Way* was not useful for these students, because they knew no English words. The basic principle of teaching is to go from *what the students know* to *what we wish them to know* by short, easy steps. But the Chinese students did not know the simplest English words.

So we prepared a chart of four pages to teach the basic English sounds from the Cantonese dialect. There are 29 of our English sounds which are in Cantonese. For each of these we found a good Cantonese noun, and derived the sound from it. The first was "maamaa" which happens to be a Cantonese word. On the left side is a picture of a maamaa with her child, next the Chinese character for "maamaa", next the English word "maamaa!" Then we cover all of "maamaa" excepting the last two letters - which is our way of spelling *aa* as in *faafher* and *maamaa*. (We pronounce *a* as in *cat* and *aa* as in *maamaa*, and *ā* as in *tāble*. We never have two sounds for the same letter or digraph.) (See *English alphabet for writing Chinese words: laubach.gif*)

It is astonishing how swiftly the Chinese learned the English sounds from that Cantonese-English chart. In fact it was astounding how swiftly they learned the sounds of the entire 96 symbols in the code.

Then they read *The story of Jesus* written in new spelling with the utmost ease, then another book in new spelling.

Before two months were up they were all reading the *Glossary of 5000 Words*, down the right column of each page where each word was spelled the regular way. Each long word had the accent mark. The students read every word unaided, as clearly as any speech expert, while the teacher had nothing to do but sit in silent, open mouthed amazement! And after only two months!

They did not know the meaning of the words. But they had an English-Chinese dictionary, and copied the Chinese character beside each word in the glossary, to show its meaning. Thus they were not only reading independently, but were making their own dictionary! They would read from 3 to 8 pages of these words a day, as many as the teacher had time to hear. The students never grew tired and never wanted to stop, for they were reading every word alone, and they were tintinabulating with excitement! And well they might, for we teachers kept asking ourselves, "Did this ever happen before in the history of the English language?" Perhaps it did, but I do not know where.

There was another tremendous group of Chinese in Hong Kong besides the non-English-speaking Chinese. They were a million students in the primary, middle and higher schools of Hong Kong. They too, needed our course in the "96 letter code." For they were learning to read English and appreciate Shakespeare and Chaucer and to write good essays, but most of them could not

pronounce the words they had learned to read, nor could they carry on any sort of conversation. English was learned as we learn Latin or Greek, as a written but not as a spoken language.

It is clear how this happened. They were studying essentially the same books as the children in England study. But what a difference in their background! The English children heard impeccable English spoken from the day they were born until they went to school. By the time they entered school at the age of six it was entirely unnecessary to teach them to speak English for they could do so beautifully. All they needed was to read and appreciate it, and to learn to write as well as they talked. With the Chinese child in Hong Kong, the situation was quite the opposite. He knew next to no English before he entered school at the age of six, and if he had learned any English, it was poor and ungrammatical. So he was handicapped when he took the same course as the English child, having none of the excellent background in spoken English which the English child had enjoyed for six years.

This explains why there was so much interest in our course *English the New Way* in most of the schools in Hong Kong. Principals and teachers of many schools came to see how we did it. They were particularly excited about Peter Chum, a 17 year old boy who escaped from Red China last August and began studying with me in the middle of September. When I took him in, he could not say or understand one word of English. Yet by December 1, he had read every one of the 5000 words in the glossary, and had written their meanings with Chinese characters, and he talked and laughed incessantly. He was utterly unafraid to appear before regular meetings of missionaries or teachers and read any page of regular spelling they asked him to read.

Hong Kong Baptist College and Augsburg Lutheran College threw out their British courses between December and January and adopted our *English the New Way* course. Six other schools said they would do likewise when I left Hong Kong on the 21st of December, 1967.

Timothy Yu, a prominent citizen of Hong Kong, and head of the Department of Communications in Hong Kong Baptist College, thinks this 96 symbol code and *English the New Way* could be "the greatest breakthrough in teaching English in 200 years." He may be right.

(In the tables below, *h, c, x, y* should have macrons instead of those diacritics.)

With these 96 "Key" spellings, you can pronounce every regular spelling in the English Language.  
Key to Correct Regular "New Spellings"

The 42 basic sounds						words illustrating these sounds					
b	c	d	f	g	h	big	car	did	fix	get	hat
j	l	m	n	p	r	jump	leg	man	now	pin	run
s	t	v	w	y	z	sun	ten	very	will	yet	zip
x	a	e	i	o	u	six	at	end	it	hot	us
ā	ē	ī	ō	ū	er	able	even	child	over	united	her
oo	uu	or	aw	ow	oi	food	book	for	saw	now	oil
sh	ch	zh	ng	th	th	she	much	measure	sing	this	thing

#### 54 other regular ways to spell

basic	other regular ways to spell				words illustrating these spellings			
i	y				pity			
ā	ae	ai	ay	a-e	grate	maid	day	made
ē	ee	ea	ey	e-e	bee	eat	key	complete

ī	ie	igh	ŷ	i-e	tie	high	mŷ	wide
ō	oe	oa	ow	o-e	toe	load	lōw	hope
ū	ue	ew	yoo	u-e	value	few	yoo	tune
o	aa	ah	ar	orr	faather	Jōnah	car	sorry
a			arr				carry	
er	ur	urr	ir		burn	hurry	bird	
ēr	ear	eer	irr	ere	hear	cheer	mirror	here
ār	air	aer	err	are	hair	baer	merry	care
aw	au	ong			autō	song		
or	oar	ōur	ōor	ore	roar	fōur	flōor	more
oo	ww	w			tw (2)	tw (to)	too	
c	k	ck			kill	kick		
ĉ	s				ĉent	plaĉe	ĉity	
kw	qu				quick			
x	cks				checks			
x	egz				eggs	exactly	example	
ow	ou				out			
oi	oy				boy			
ng					singer			
ngg					fīngger			
f	ph				phōtōgraph			
ul	le				apple			
th	tth				bretth	thing		

English alphabet for writing Chinese words

	媽 媽	maamaa	aa	maamaa	
	吉	gut	u	up	
	氣	hā	ā	tāble	
	區	ē	ē	ēvening	
	叻	tī	ī	chīld	
	老	lō	ō	ōver	
	廟	mū	ū	mūzic	

This page, and any other "New Spelling" matēreulz and buuks, may bē obtained from Frank C. Laubach, Syracuse, N. Y.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp9,10]

## **An Experiment in Teaching Methods Using the i.t.a., by Beatrix Tudor-Hart\***

\*Reading Research Unit, University of London Institute of Education, London, Eng.

The initial teaching alphabet of Sir James Pitman is an excellent reconstruction of the Roman alphabet which has, in the course of years, deviated from its original purpose. In all alphabetic languages, in fact all languages except Chinese and Japanese, letters are intended to be the graphic representations of the sounds made in spoken speech. It is this characteristic which enables people to learn to read relatively quickly by learning letters and letter sounds and building them into words. A language such as Chinese, which has to be learnt through the recognition of each visual character (about ten thousand of them) takes years of hard work. I have been told that children take four years to master 2000 characters, the minimum for any reading.

When, however, an alphabet such as ours, deviates too much from its original purpose, and letters, and groups of letters represent now one and now another sound, children find it impossibly confusing to learn to read. The initial teaching alphabet has corrected this irregularity. It has also maintained the visual appearance of the ordinary alphabet sufficiently for children to be able to transfer their reading ability to T.O. without any difficulty, as soon as they have reached the fluency of sight reading.

When, however, reading is taught as if the language were a character language - that is, ignoring the role the letters play, which is what we are in practice doing in the 'look-say' method - then the value of Sir James' alphabet is largely lost. It is expecting too much of little children to deduce on their own from examples that each letter represents a certain sound.

An experiment in reading method using the i.t.a. was initiated in 1965 at my suggestion at the Reading Research Unit of the London Institute of Education. When the unit was closed down in 1967 owing to lack of funds, the Schools Council undertook to finance the final year of this experiment which will finish in July, 1968. The experiment consists of two groups of school entrants (five years old in England) of 400 pupils each, both being taught reading with i.t.a. One group began with 'look-say' learning a 51 word vocabulary in the first four books of a reading series. When the children had learnt these words by sight, they were introduced to the letter sounds and word building and continued reading the later reading books in that series.

The other group of children began with letter phonics, word building, short sentences and then long sentences, all illustrated, and finally went on to reading any of the books in the series used for the 'look-say' pupils when they themselves felt ready to read them.

The Harrison Stroud Reading Readiness Profiles was used to make certain that all the children started at the same level of visual and auditory recognition. This test also necessitated that all the children should have the same kind of reading readiness preparation. The teachers of both groups therefore gave their pupils both 'sound' and 'visual' discriminating games to prepare them to pass the test satisfactorily. The final test given in this experiment is a comprehension test given at the end of the children's last term in their infant school. This is always the July in which the children's age range is between 6 years 11 months and 7 years 10 months. Some children have had only 2 years of school, some have had up to 3's. Up to date, only 200 'look-say' pupils have had this test and 250 'phonic' pupils. It is therefore too early to judge the final outcome. But all the children have now had their reading readiness test and their first reading test. All but 9 of the 'phonic' children and all but 27 of the 'look-say' children have had their second and last reading test before the final comprehension test. The results of these tests are very interesting on the light they throw on the

value of i.t.a. The distribution of intelligence, in so far as this is demonstrated by the age of reading readiness was even throughout the two groups. Taking children in 4 monthly age groups, almost the same number on both sides of the experiment, were reading ready at different ages between 4 years 8 months and 7 plus years.

The first reading test consisted of two lists of words; one, with the 51 words learnt by the 'look-say' children, and one with the 42 monosyllabic concrete nouns which the phonic children learnt to build with the letter sounds. This test was given to the 'look-say' children when they had not yet been taught the letter sounds. It was given to the 'Phonic' children when they had learnt letters and monosyllabic word building in the 42 nouns, but had not started on sentence building.

So far then, the 'look-say' children had learnt 51 words by sight in i.t.a. without any knowledge of the sound values of the letters. The phonic children had only learnt to build 42 monosyllabic nouns but had not read anything else. At the test, both groups of children were first asked to read their own list of words. When they had read this, they were asked to try to read the other list and were told that the list consisted of new words they did not know. The 'look-say' children made no attempt at all to read the monosyllabic nouns and usually explained that they could not do so as their teacher had "not told me what they are." They all recognized the two words that the lists happened to have in common, namely, 'cat' and 'house.' There were 428 in the 'look-say' group who reached this test and 12 who left the infant school at 7 having failed to learn the 51 words. They had taken from 1 to over 12 months to reach the test. The 'phonic' children, of whom there were 419, who had the test (only one was not reading ready until one term before she left the infant school at the age of 7 years 6 months), were quite excited at the suggestion they should read a strange list of words. Altho these children had not yet tried to read any abstract word, that is one which carried no meaning by itself, nor any two syllable words, they tackled every word in the list, none of them reading less than 30, a majority reading over 40. This word list had 13 nouns as against 38 pronouns, verbs, prepositions and articles, and 13 two syllable words. The fact that such very young children, the majority just under or just over 6 years of age, could, and did, tackle so many of, to them, difficult words is proof of the usefulness of the initial teaching alphabet. These children were only able to do this because the letters were regular and reliable. Each one always made the same sound in whatever word the child found it. On the other hand, the look-say children's inability to read the monosyllabic nouns is clear proof that the regularity of visual letter-sound patterns is not obvious to anyone who has not become aware of the existence of separate sounds which, when blended, make up words. Children do not gain insight into letter sounds through sight reading of whole word patterns even when the alphabet is as regular as the initial teaching alphabet is.

There was another interesting and unexpected result of the first reading test. For the quickest learners, those who took only one month to reach test one from the beginning of learning, there was a very significant difference between the look-say and the phonic children. There were only four of the former who learnt the 51 words in one month. On the phonic side, 29 children reached test one in one month. And of course, these children knew *how* to read even if they found some words difficult. The four look-say children had only learnt to recognize 51 word patterns and nothing more. Half, as many again of the phonic children as the look-say children, had test one after two months of learning. But for those who took three or more months to reach test one after beginning to learn, there was little difference between the two groups. For all but the brightest children, it is just as difficult (or as easy) either to learn 51 words by sight (and not read) or to learn basically how to read. For the small minority of very bright children it is *easier* and *quicker* to learn to read than to memorize a few words by sight.

The second reading test, the Schonell Graded Word Reading Vocabulary (in i.t.a.) was given to both groups of children six months after test one. During those six months, the look-say children had been given their letter sounds and had had practice in word building. They used for this the

same material as the phonic children had used at the beginning of reading-illustrated alphabet and word cards. The phonic children had read short and long illustrated sentence cards and started story reading (in the same series as those of the look-say children) when they wished to do so.

The Schonell Test results - for 348 look-say and 376 phonic children - are significant for i.t.a. in general and for method in particular. The 717 children tested were under 7 years of age, with the exception of 22 look-say and 31 phonic children who were between 7 years and 7 years 11 months; half of them were between 6 years 2 months and 6 years 6 months. Of the 342 look-say children, 189 were above average for the seven-year-old on the Schonell scale; 20 of these could read fluently. 56 however, were poor readers or even non-readers. Of the 375 phonic children, 346 were above average and of these 60 read everything fluently; 29 were slow readers but none were non-readers. Only 53 children in all were over 7 years of age.

These scores, even those for the look-say children, are well above the average for children learning with T.O. As soon as all the children had been given the key to deciphering, they got on quicker than children learning with T.O. because of the symbol-sound regularity and consistency in the i.t.a. How then does such a significant difference appear between the two groups of children? According to the theory that 'sight' reading is easier to learn for the very young child and helps later on with phonics, one would expect the look-say children to read much better than the phonic ones at the Schonell test. However, just the reverse actually happened. The phonic children read very significantly better than the others. The clue to this difference became quite clear during the actual testing. During the time the look-say children had been learning to memorize words as visual patterns, they had learned in writing practice, the names of the letters. When they began learning letter sounds, they confused *names* and *sounds* of the letters. During the test, when these children came to an unfamiliar word, their immediate reaction was to make a guess. Their guess rarely bore any relationship to the word; if they were reminded to 'build', they would then mix up letter names and letter sounds and so once more fail to decipher the word. In general, most of these children were still very slow at word building syllabically. The look-say beginners had had from one month to sometimes 18 months of looking at whole word patterns and now trying to memorize them. For them this was what reading consisted of. Now, for six months after, they had to learn to do something completely *different*, to pull to pieces each whole word pattern and put it together again! No wonder they confused the 'whole' with 'pieces' and letter names with their sounds.

The phonic children, on the other hand, had not had two different methods of learning. They became familiar with single letters as meaningful sounds (those at the beginning of words) before they began learning words, and their first whole words were those they built from known letters. In fact, these children expected to have to sound letters in order to discover what a word was. They had been doing this, not just for six months, but for the whole time they had been learning to read. During the whole of this time, also, their teachers had been encouraging them to 'sight' read each time they had built a word. It was not at all surprising that, by the time they reached the Schonell test, most of the children in the phonic group built monosyllables with ease and speed and were beginning to read syllabically. This was the reason why, in the mechanics of reading, the phonic children did so much better than the look-say beginners. But critics will, very rightly, say that the purpose of reading is to understand, not just decipher. Comprehension is the end result. The results of the comprehension test in this experiment will be available next July. In the meantime, it should be remembered that without correct deciphering there can be no comprehension at all.

### **The Schonell Reading Test Results**

Group	Population	non-readers	poor	average	above	fluent
Phonic	376	-	-	32	284	60
Look-say	348	19	40	100	169	20

The Schonell average for 7-year-olds is 20 words. Included under the average heading are the children who scored between 11-20 words; above average, all who scored between 20-40 words; over 30 the number of words begins to have no meaning for such young children; so the fluent ones are those who can read words they cannot even understand.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §19.6 pp263,264]  
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp11,12]

### **Illiteracy - Its Cause and Cure, by Reginald Deans**

Every year, half a million children in this country begin their school careers with the object of learning, above all, to read and write. Yet after ten years on intensive effort on the part of their teachers, at least a fifth of them - 100,000 - will leave school almost unable to write correctly a simple essay.

A test of reading ability made not long ago on 5000 children between the ages of 9 and 10 in a large English city showed that nearly 1000 were unable to read as well as children of 7 or 8. Of these, 7% were unable to read *at all*, though most of these were not unintelligent. When they reach the age of 20 or 25 years, 20% will be almost illiterate, that is, they will not be able to read as well as the average child of 9.

This affliction is not confined to Great Britain alone. Recently 450,000 high school pupils throughout the U.S.A. were tested. Only one in a hundred could write a five minute essay without making mistakes in spelling or grammar. In Chicago, in a survey of 6000 pupils in the 9th grade, 22% were below 7th grade in reading ability. Similar results could be quoted from every English speaking country. But poor spelling is not confined to children. We could give glaring examples of bad spelling by college and university students even in their final honours papers. If poor spelling were a test of intelligence, most of us would have to confess to stupidity now and then.

It is impossible to overstress the importance of the problem, or for the average person to realize the handicap it is for others. A quick accurate reader possesses a key which opens for him vast stores of knowledge. A poor reader soon acquires a feeling of inferiority and disappointment which he carries over to other subjects. (Hence older pupils are rarely backward only in reading). The problem of guessing at illogical spellings distracts his attention from the meaning. Soon his interest turns to dislike, not only of reading but of school, often leading to truancy and even delinquency. When he leaves school, he will find it difficult to mix with educated people and to a large extent he will be cut off from cultural activities. Because spelling is no satisfactory guide to pronunciation, a poor reader rarely speaks "good" standard English, and finds himself excluded from the most satisfying jobs.

The fault cannot all be with the teacher or the method of teaching. Recognizing the difficulty of the task, teachers have experimented with all kinds of methods of teaching reading. More time and money is spent on this subject than on any other. For a long time children began by learning "to say" their ABC's and then *some* of the sounds the letters "said." But because many words are still spelt as they were spoken hundreds of years ago, they now have to be taught to recognize words as whole ideographs, regardless of the spelling. Hence, pupils do not realize that the order of the letters is of importance. The method is called "look and say" and has taught the children to guess the sounds of words instead of trying to analyse them, a habit they have carried over to other studies. How would you teachers like it if the pupil were to guess the answer to an arithmetic problem

instead of trying to figure it out? The "phonic" method pays some attention to the sounds of the letters, but in spite of every effort and every way it has been tried, it is not possible to feel well satisfied with the results. This is because the basic cause of the difficulties has not been eliminated. It is the vast difference between the sounds in words and the many ways that these sounds are spelt. It is unreasonable to expect children to *write a language* they do not speak or to speak a language they *do not write*. It is the unaltered spelling of Caxton's time that that does not reflect the many changes in pronunciation occurring since then.

What then is the remedy? It is to teach them to read *only in the language they speak*, not in an obsolete language not spoken for a thousand years. They must have specially printed books in which every word is spelt exactly as it sounds in proper English speech, with each letter (or letter combination) representing a generally recognized speech sound. If every letter or letter combination had only one fixed and unvariable sound, instead of the hundreds of conflicting sounds pupils would learn to read in a few weeks, long words as well as short, *without having to learn to spell each word individually*. Then having no trouble with misleading spellings, they will not be distracted from the meaning of what they read (i.e., say to themselves). Moreover, when words are written just as they are pronounced by cultured people, children will soon acquire the proper way of speaking.

Only when they have learnt to read and write with the most fluency need they be allowed to read our archaic spelling. Then, so familiar will they become with words, phrases and grammar that they will be able to guess what the old English spellings mean. But this does not mean such a delay as you might think. Since children will learn to read fluently in a few months instead of their limited and very restricted reading ability now acquired after several painful years, a net saving of 1½ to 2 years will result. Often the child will make the transition by himself, because sufficient words in the old English spelling will be almost the same as in the new, thus giving him a basis to use the context to figure out the meanings of irregularly spelt words. Even when the child continues to use the simplified spellings, which they probably will because they are logically devised, it can easily be read by anyone of moderate intelligence and goodwill, without instruction.

Dr. Michael West, in *Learning to Read*, wrote: "If it were possible to teach children to read, (of course with correct pronunciation) sufficiently fluently to make him enjoy reading, and read a reasonably large amount before permitting him to attempt any great amount of speech, a child would, when he came to speech lessons, have a sense of the language and a feeling of what is idiomatic which would greatly diminish his liability to error and greatly accelerate his progress."

The purpose of speaking and writing is to give information. Hence no useful purpose is served by writing bare-spoken sounds, such as the *e* in *open* or the *o* in *button*, or the unnecessary silent letters in: *know, kick, friend, listen, often, plumb, wring*, and more than 800 others. There should be no double letters unless they are actually pronounced. Hence it would be much easier and quicker to learn to write than what Bernard Shaw called Johnsonese.

Another advantage of a scientific spelling is that it would enable foreigners to learn our language more easily and to pronounce every word correctly. Indeed this scientific spelling could be used as a world language. There are well over 2000 languages in use today. In Africa there are at least 700 and in India 180 as well as innumerable dialects. The ease with which people can travel from one country to another makes a common language absolutely essential if people are to live in peace with one another. Already English is the intermediate language for hundreds of races. Surely it is our duty to remove from it all those difficulties for which there is no longer any justification.

According to Sir Joshua Fitch, M.A., L.L.D. lecturer in teaching and H.M. Inspector of Training Colleges: "our anomalous alphabet has every fault an alphabet can have. A perfect alphabet should have a single and fixed character for every single indivisible elementary sound... The notion of the

extreme importance attached to orthodox spelling is comparatively modern."

Prof. Leonard Bloomfield, in his book: *Language*, said: "There would be no serious difficulty about devising a simple, effective orthography for all types of standard English. The use of it would save enormous amount of time and labour and far from injuring our language, raise the general level of standard speech, both by reassuring native speakers and by removing the tendency to spelling-pronunciations."

For more information about this scientific system of spelling write to the World Language Association, Leeds, England, or to Dr. D. N. Everingham, Queensland, Australia.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §19.1 p p249-251]

## **Section 19**

### **English as the World Language**

**Not just attempts to establish English as the World Cup language, but the reasons why this goal has been advanced and why it has been partially successful in spite of its handicaps.**

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp12-14]

### **An International Language as a Major Civilising the Influence, by Dr. L. J. J. Nye\***

\*A talk given at International Convention of Rotarians, 1962

\*(M.B., Ch.M., F.R.A.C.P., F.R.G.S.A. A leading consultant physician in Brisbane Australia, he has published two monographs and numerous papers on medical subjects. Being interested in improving human relationships, in collaboration with Prof. John Bostock, he published two sociological books: *Whither Away*, and *The Way Out*.

You may recollect that Cliff Randall, when he became President of Rotary International this year, sent the following message to Rotarians thruout the world -

"I am urging you to ask yourself - as I have asked myself - 'What can I do, here and now, to make Rotary more meaningful to myself and others?' Mankind stands on the threshold of a great decision, to shape the future toward friendly living with peace, plenty and progress for all nations, or to be overwhelmed with the problems of a new age. We cannot shape the future by ourselves but we can help - and help to a degree of which none of us dreamed - if we will concentrate our efforts upon the most important needs we face. At the opening of this Rotary Year, I call upon you to accept your responsibilities as Rotarians to *Help Shape the Future* to begin now, where you are, to make our tomorrow the answer to our hopes for a better world."

After reading this challenging message, I asked myself - How can we Rotarians help to "shape the future towards friendly living, with peace, plenty and progress for all nations?"

If one reviews the story of mankind it appears that there have been five outstanding factors in the civilization of the world.

The first was the perfection of the alphabet in 1200 B.C. by the Phoenicians. This made it possible for any person to read and write. Before then all records were written by scholars in hieroglyphics, pictograms or ideograms. It is interesting and significant to us to note that it was not the scholars who introduced this revolutionary advance in social progress but the traders and business men, who wanted to economise in their overhead expenses by employing clerks on low wages instead of highly paid scholars.

The second factor was the spread of the teachings of the great religious leaders of the world. All of these played and are still playing an important part in building a code of ethical conduct, the purpose of which is to teach people those principles which are essential for social harmony.

The third factor was the invention of the printing press in Germany in 1446 A.D. This made knowledge more freely available (the Chinese had invented block printing in 868 A.D. but it was not of great value because they had no alphabet).

The fourth factor was the invention of the aeroplane which brought the peoples of the world closer together.

The fifth factor was the League of Nations with its successor, the United Nations, which first brought many of the nations of the world together to discuss their problems around a conference table.

It is my opinion that the sixth great civilising event will be the creation and the acceptance of an international language which the schools of every country of the world will teach as their second language. Such a language would not displace the national language which will always remain the first language of every country.

The present inability of people of different races to talk with one another is the greatest barrier to harmony and good will. This can and must ultimately be overcome by the use of a common language.

The harmonious integrating effects of a common language are shown in the U.S.A. with its mixture of people whose parents came from most of the countries of the world. Because they speak the same language, they are all united in their loyalty to the Stars and Stripes. Also again because of our common language, the harmony and understanding between them and the British is such that a war between us is unthinkable and we Britishers, when travelling in their country, feel as if we are amongst our own people. On the other hand, when we travel across the border into the French section of Canada, we experience a very different and not so friendly psychological reaction because the English-speaking visitor feels himself to be a foreigner, which is in fact how he, naturally, is regarded by the French-speaking Canadians.

One of the best examples of harmonious integration of races by a common language is seen in Hawaii where 400,000 workers - Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Filipinos, Puerto-Ricans, Portuguese and Germans - were imported to work on the cane and pineapple farms. In two generations, in spite of their contrasting ethnic and cultural backgrounds, they have become almost universally American in loyalty and outlook. Their loyalty is so overwhelmingly American that, in World War II, in a population ethnically 36% Japanese, not one act of sabotage was recorded, although after the destructive attack on Pearl Harbor it was expected that the Japanese would invade the Islands. Also, a Japanese volunteer regiment composed mainly of second generation Japanese from Hawaii was one of the most highly decorated units in the whole American Army and earned the respect and admiration of every unit with which it served. This loyalty and unity has come about almost solely because they all speak the same language. There has been such a progressive spiritual fusion as well

as a biological amalgamation of all of these races that the Hawaiian people are considered by some sociologists to be probably the most democratic people in the world. They certainly are the happiest I have ever lived amongst.

In the recent Middle East crisis we have observed the increasing unity of Arab nationalism. This is due mainly to their common language of Arabic which makes them loyal to one another in spite of their different racial stocks and religion. The dark-skinned Egyptians who follow the Mohammedan faith are Arabs, and so are many fair, blue-eyed Christians in Jordan. In Yemen will be seen people with long noses and curly hair; they too are Arabs. So are the black-skinned Mohammedan dervishes. On the other hand, altho Mohammedanism is the main religion of the people of the nations in the Baghdad pact (Turkey, Iran and Pakistan) they do not speak Arabic. If they all spoke the same language as the Arabs, it is probable that they all would have been loyal to one another and would have combined in a common defensive alliance.

This evidence suggests that the establishment of an international language offers the most effective practical answer to President Randall's message.

I therefore submit to you a proposition that Rotarians should initiate a movement to raise funds from all Rotary Clubs throughout the world for the purpose of establishing such a language.

The all-important question is, what language should be taught as the universal language. Originally it was my opinion that a selection should be made from the many artificial languages which have already been created but after visiting the East and discussing this question with many well-informed people, I am convinced that because of human apathy and inertia an artificial language will never succeed.

This is confirmed by the sad experience of all the idealistic reformers who have seen the need for an auxiliary international language in order to bring the peoples of the world together. One of the earliest attempts was made by Monseigneur Schleyer in 1879. He borrowed roots from Latin, Anglo-Saxon and Germanic languages and combined them to form a simple usable language which he called *Volapuk*. Within a few years there were over a million converts and five newspapers were printed in *Volapuk*.

Eight years later, another man of great intelligence and idealism, Dr. Zamenof, created *Esperanto* from Indo-European components mostly Latin and Teutonic. Over 40 years ago I was a member of an Esperanto Club and at that time it was being so enthusiastically supported that I felt sure that when I traveled abroad I should be able to converse freely with educated people in every country of the world. Alas, in spite of the enthusiasm and missionary zeal of thousands of ardent supporters in many countries, there appears to be some less interest in Esperanto today than there was at that time.

Then we saw the emergence of another group of philologists who found so many shortcomings in Esperanto that they invented their improved *Ido*; then came a host of others and quite recently the International Auxiliary Language Association, with considerable financial backing, created *Interlingua*. None of these has had any practical success because, with few exceptions, humans will not make the effort to learn anything *unless they expect to derive some personal benefit from it*.

This apathy is confirmed by the attitude of children of foreign migrants in this country. The parents usually wish their children to speak their language as well as English, but it is unusual to find an adult of the first generation who can converse freely in his parents' language and extremely rare in the second generation.

This attitude of mind explains why it has been noted throughout the history of mankind that the language most used internationally is that of the race which holds the supremacy in trade and culture. In the pre-Christian era Greek was the international language. Later Latin became the common tongue for intellectuals throughout the Western World. Two centuries ago, French was spoken by every person who wished to succeed as a trader, diplomat or scholar. The present dominance of English today is doubtless due to the supremacy throughout the world of the American and British people.

I had further convincing proof of this on a recent visit to East and South Asia where I spoke to Rotarians and other people interested in internationalism but I could get no support for the concept of an artificial international language. I had many interesting and highly intellectual discussions but, almost without exception, they maintained that English was now the accepted international language for commerce, science, diplomacy and travel, and was being taught as a second language in most of the secondary schools in the world; it was the language with which the people of the East - the Chinese, Japanese, Indians (with their mixture of languages), Pakistanis, Indonesians, Thais, Burmese, etc. - can anticipate being able to converse with one another, and they had no intention of undertaking the extra burden of an artificial language. They frequently recommended, however, that English should be made phonetic so it is easier to teach.

It is bewildering, for instance, that the "ough" of *plough* is pronounced "ow" (plow) yet in *cough*, *enough*, *through*, *though*, *thought*, *rough*, etc., it has a completely different pronunciation.

Their practical approach to the problem of an international language was confirmed a few days ago when travelling on a Cathay Pacific Airways plane in which the passengers were mostly Chinese, Japanese, Thais, Malays, and Indians with only six Europeans. Altho the crew were Asians, all the instructions to passengers over the broadcasting system were given in English alone.

I experienced the same reaction from a Chinese audience in Hong Kong when I gave a talk to a United Nations meeting on the right of all people to be able to converse freely with one another. They, too, would give no support to an artificial language. They had accepted English as the international language, but suggested that besides making it phonetic, the name "English" should be changed to a U.N. name in order to eliminate the adverse psychological effects of national prejudice.

National prejudice is a very real obstacle. It was well demonstrated by the people of South Africa where the official language was English until, on gaining independence, they expressed their anti-British sentiment by creating their own language (Afrikaans). This action was very shortsighted and has adversely affected their national progress for, since very few people in the world speak Afrikaans and relatively few books are published in that language, any person who wishes to be well educated must learn English or some other language as well as Afrikaans. It has merely given their people an extra educational burden to carry. Ireland has reacted the same way and cut themselves off from the numerous books in English. Ceylon also has recently displaced English with Sinhalese. India and Malaya in spite of the enormous disadvantages involved will soon oust English as their Official language. While part of this change stems from a desire for a national identity, it is also due to the unreliable nature of English spelling. If the name of the proposed reformed (phonetic) English is changed to a United Nations name, such as Unlingua, national sentiment would be appeased and all nations could adopt it without losing face.

Looking at this important question of an international language objectively, it appears that the only practical solution would be to follow the advice of our Eastern friends and advocate a reformed English with a United Nations name as an international language. The academic purists will hold up their hands in horror at the thought of interfering with our traditional English, but as it was with the

Phoenicians, so it will be with us - the practical men with vision will carry the day. You are aware that some practical American editors have for years been using simplified phonetic spelling for such words as: *tho, altho, thorofare, thru, sulfa, nite, folo, catalog, etc.*

Professor Ogden made a praiseworthy attempt to simplify English for international use by creating Basic English which is a remarkable achievement in simplicity. Its vocabulary contains only 850 words, 600 of which are nouns and only 18 are verbs, and these are in the simplest form. But this also has received little support. It is so restricted that it loses its usefulness. It becomes like one of the artificial languages and once again human apathy has relegated it to the records of frustrated hopes. Language can never be limited or static; it must be living and elastic for new words are constantly being born and others dying out.

You are doubtless aware too, that one of the greatest thinkers of our time, G. Bernard Shaw, was so bent on having English made a phonetic language that he left some of his fortune for this purpose. Altho his wishes have not been carried out to the full extent, his trustees have given a prize for creating a new alphabet, and perhaps a reformed English may ultimately be based on this new alphabet. In a scathing criticism of our language, Shaw wrote: "The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it. They cannot spell it because they have nothing to spell it with but an old foreign alphabet, of which only the consonants - and not all of them - have any agreed speech value. Consequently, no man can teach himself what it should sound like from reading it; and it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him."

Shaw, Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Roosevelt, Carnegie and many other great men agree that, this reform must come sooner or later. It is not a mere dream of idealists. It is far more realistic, far more practical and far more desirable than space travel towards which so many of the world's best brains are being directed and on which huge sums of money are being expended. The Russian and Chinese Governments are awake to the need to simplify their languages and are at present making strenuous efforts to reconstruct them for international use and it is probable that in the next century there will be three international languages - all phonetic - English, Russian, and Chinese. Which one will be used the most depends upon which is perfected first.

It appears to me that Rotarians throughout the world have before them the opportunity of sponsoring this worthy project of reforming English to make it more readily acceptable for international use. The English speaking people would need to learn conventional English as well as the U. N. reformed English, but just as there has been a change from Chaucer's English to modern English, so will there be a gradual change from conventional English to the reformed English.

If Rotary International would seize this outstanding opportunity for giving service to mankind, it would become one of the greatest civilising events in man's history.

Raising sufficient funds for the purpose should impose no hardships on any members. Donations could be invited and subsequently those members who wished to do so could pay a few extra cents at each luncheon until sufficient money was raised to finance the project. For us an extra three pence per week or the price of two coffin nail cigarettes should suffice.

These funds should be handed over to Unesco, which is the only body in the world with sufficient international status and goodwill to direct such an undertaking. They should be asked to appoint a committee of four carefully selected language experts - two philologists, one representing the West and the other representing the East, one educational psychologist with practical experience of teaching children (for chairman).

Besides making English phonetic, they should be asked to simplify the grammar and because some English words are very difficult for foreigners to pronounce, they should also be asked to substitute these by simpler words from foreign vocabularies.

When completed, it should be passed on to U.N. for implementation so that every school in every nation in the world will be asked to teach this reformed English with a United Nations name, as their second language.

Before concluding, I should like to summarise the observations and recommendations which have been presented to you. I believe these facts are unchallengeable.

1. The free use of an international language would be one of the major civilising influences in the history of mankind.
2. Artificial languages have been shown to be impractical owing to human apathy and insufficient books printed in them.
3. English is the generally accepted international language for commerce, diplomacy, science and travel, and is being taught as a second language in most of the schools of the world.
4. Because English is not a phonetic language, it is unnecessarily difficult to learn. Reforming it phonetically would make it the easiest language to learn.
5. To overcome national prejudices, this reformed English should be given a United Nations name.

Rotarians throughout the world have the opportunity of sponsoring this reform which will make the world a more harmonious and a safer dwelling place for all mankind. It will bring to fruition President Randall's challenge as well as Paul Harris' ideal of living together in *kindness, neighbourliness, friendship and peace*.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §5.1 pp77-78]

## **Section 5**

### **Countering arguments against Spelling reform**

This section is devoted to showing rebuttals to some articles in Section 2.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp14-16]

#### **The Case Against Spelling Reform, by Godfrey Dewey, Ed.D.\***

\*Lake Placid Club, N.Y.

\*Being Appendix C of a monograph presented at the 4th International i.t.a. Conference, Oct. 1967, McGill Univ., Montreal.

The principal arguments against spelling reform, with their corollaries, are summarized, with appropriate comments and quotations:

1. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would obscure the derivation of words.  
*From the Corollary*: To memorialize historic facts of a language is a legitimate or primary function of a current orthography.

*Comments*

The primary purpose of spelling is to record speech, which *is* the language.

"The true and sole office of alphabetic writing is faithfully and intelligibly to represent spoken speech" American Philological Assoc., 1876 report.

The etymologist is the first to repudiate the argument in the corollary.

"In the interests of etymology we ought to spell as we pronounce. To spell words as they used to be pronounced is not etymological, but antiquarian." *Walter W. Skeat*.

Phonetic spelling would give a continuous picture of the whole history of each word, whereas fixed conventional spelling gives, at best, only a single picture of one episode.

"The real etymologist, the historic student of language, it is wholly independent of any such paltry assistance, and would rejoice above measure to barter every 'historical' item in our spelling during the last 300 years for a strict phonetic picture of the language as spoken at that distance in the past." *William Dwight Whitney*.

Even such etymologic information as is suggested is often in error; the result of some superficial wrong assumption, e.g.,

*comptroller, debt, delight, haughty, island, sovereign, sprightly*

Such accurate information as present conventional spelling gives is now securely preserved in innumerable books, regardless of present or future spelling. The scholar does not need, and the average layman does not appreciate or understand such information.

2. *Statement:* Phonetic spelling would cause serious confusion between words of like sound (homophones), now distinguished by different spellings, e.g.,

right, rite, write, wright	buy, by, bye
cent, scent, sent	hear, here
road, rode, rowed	hour, our
sew, so, sow	knew, new
to, too, two	one, won, etc., etc.

*Corollaries:* A spelling *is* a word. Such distinctions are an intentional and desirable feature of English spelling.

#### *Comments*

Context makes clear such distinctions in speech, which has no spelling to give help; still more so is it used in the more deliberate processes of reading, with opportunity to glance backward or forward if necessary.

As against a few hundred homophones now distinguished more or less fortuitously by different spellings, there are in traditional orthography many thousands of words of like sound *and* spelling (homographs), and there is no demand to create artificial distinctions for these. A few suggestive examples are--

*bay* (a color, a tree, part of a building, a body of water, a dog's howl)  
*fair* (good weather, impartial, an exposition)  
*right* (a privilege, opposite of left, opposite of wrong)  
*sound* (a condition, a noise, a body of water)

*spring* (a season, a leap, an elastic device)  
*state* (to express in words, a condition, a unit of government)  
*can* (to be able, a container).  
*down* (a direction, soft feathers)  
*note* (a musical tone, a monetary obligation)  
*pool* (of water, a game)  
*present* (a time, a gift)  
*well* (a state of health, a hole in the earth)

Fries reports that for the 500 most used words of English the *Oxford Dictionary* records 14,070 separate and different meanings - an average of 28 different meanings for each word.

There is another group of homographs, spelled alike but pronounced differently, occasionally confused in reading, which phonemic spelling would clearly distinguish, e.g.,

*bow* (boe, bou); similarly, *mow*, *row*, *sow*.  
*close* (cloes, cloez); similarly, *excuse*, *house*, *use*, etc.  
*aged* (æjd aejed); similarly, *blessed*, (*blest*, *blessed*), *beloved*, learned.  
*lead* (leed, led); similarly, *read*  
*live* (liv, liev); *tear* (taer, teer); *wind* (wind, wiend);  
*wound* (wuund, wound); *primer* (primer, priemer), etc.

3. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would require all existing books to be reprinted.

#### *Comments*

Most current reading matter is ephemeral. Books of enduring worth are constantly being reprinted in current spelling.

No one but the linguistic scholar today reads Chaucer, or Spenser, Shakespeare, or even Milton, in the original spelling.

Compatibility makes a *reading* knowledge of traditional orthography relatively easy.

4. *Statement*: Phonetic spelling would require a fixed standard of pronunciation, which does not exist.

#### *Comments*

Accurately *phonetic* writing is neither necessary nor desirable. At the phonemic level, there does exist an acceptable standard, increasingly established by national and international radio and television. As early as 1935, the British Broadcasting Corp. had successfully established a standard, *Broadcast English*, for announcers. [1]

So far as regional differences are concerned, the individual tends to project on to the phonemic symbol his own interpretation.

The few broad differences in pronunciation between British and American usage, i.e., *either* (iether, eether), *clerk* (clark, clurk), *leisure* (lezher, leezher), will be no more confusing in phonemic spelling than in speech, or than differences in choice of words such as *lift* for *elevator*.

Phonemic spelling would be a strong conservative factor in preventing deterioration or corruption of language. Present lack of any clearly discernible relation between the written and the spoken word conduces strongly to variation.

5. *Statement.* No one has authority to tamper with the language. "The language of Shakespeare and Milton is good enough for me.'

*Corollaries:* The written word *is* the language.

The language (or spelling) used by past masters of English has remained substantially static, or

Language (or spelling) evolution is a natural process, independent of human control.

*Comments*

Our language is speech, not spelling; the spelling is, or should be no more than a picture (now too often it is a cartoon) of the spoken word. Change, both in language and, until recently, in spelling, has been continuous, both before and after Shakespeare and Milton.

Phonemic spelling would conform to and record actual change and, incidentally, would tend to reduce change by giving guidance as to pronunciation, now wholly lacking.

All evolution in spelling, thus far, has resulted from conscious, deliberate, individual choice or action.

6. *Statement.* Phonetic spelling is ugly, uncouth, grotesque.

*Comments*

No one would seriously claim that the particular configurations of traditional orthography, the succession of ascending, descending, and middle letters, possess any intrinsic esthetic value. The true charge against phonemic spelling is its strangeness.

Many proposed phonetic alphabets have been esthetically unpleasing, due to diacritics, wrong fonts, inverted letters, non-Roman characters, etc., but there is no inherent reason why a phonemic alphabet cannot be made as esthetically pleasing as the present Roman alphabet, if it observes the same canons of design; e.g., the Simpler Spelling Association Phonetic Alphabet.

The i.t.m. technique, which accustoms the eye to rational reforms, is one important element in breaking down the next generation's resistance to spelling reform.

7. *Statement:* It's too much trouble. I have learned to spell.

*Comments*

This, the inertia which dreads the effort of the change, is the main reason why the present adult generation should not be expected to change.

"It is the generation of children to come who appeal to us to save them from the affliction which we have endured and forgotten." *William Dwight Whitney*

[1] For American, see Bender, James F., *N.B.C. Handbook of Pronunciation*, New York, Thos. Y. Crowell Co, 1944, 289 pp.

[Spelling Reform ed Newell Tune t21.7 p293]

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 p16]

## Scenes on a Playground - English Orthography Illustrated

A letter addressed to: John Sharp, Friends' School, Park Lane, Croydon, 7th Mar. 1844

'Twas a fine winters day - their breakfast was done  
And the boys were disposed to enjoy some good fone;  
Sam Sprightly observed, "'tis but just ½ past eight  
"and there's more time for play than when breakfast is leight,  
"and so I'll agree that so cold is the morning,  
"We'll keep ourselves warm at a game of stag worning;  
"I'm Stag" - with his hand in his waistcoat he's off,  
And his playmates are dodging him round the pump-troff.  
Sam's active but still their alertness is such  
That 'twas not very soon ere one he could tuch.  
The captive's afrailed with jokes, buffets laughter  
By a host of blithe boys quickly follows aughter.  
But joined hand in hand their forces are double;  
Nor for jokes or for buffeting care they a bouble.  
All's activity now, for high is the sport,  
Reinforcements arrive from the shed & shed-cort.  
More are caught & their places they straightway assign  
At the middle or end of the lengthening lign.  
To break it some push with both shoulder and thigh,  
But so firm is the hold that vainly they trigh;  
Oh! 'tis broken at last, now scamper the whole  
To escape their pursuers & get to the gole.  
All are caught now but one of the juvenile hosts  
And he, a proud hero, vain-gloriously bosts,  
But hark! the clock's striking & then by the rules  
They must quickly collect for their several schules.  
We'll leave them awhile at their books & their sums  
And join them again when the afternoon cums.

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Now dinner is over - "Sam Sprightly," says he,  
"Let us form a good party for cricket at thre;"  
Says Joseph, "I wish you'd begin it at two,  
"For after our dinner I've nothing to dwo."  
But Thomas would rather 'twere fixed an hour later  
Because he's on duty as dinning room water;  
And so they agreed to meet punctual at four,  
On the green just in front of No. 1 dour,  
& they thought they should muster not less than a scour.  
Sam goes on recruit, "Will thou join us my hearty?"  
"Yes" says Richard. "I'll gladly make one of the pearty."  
"And William must join, he's a capital bowler,"  
"He'll have finished his work by that time as bed-rowler."  
"Come Joseph, thou'll join" - but Joseph languidly said,  
"I can't for I've got such a pain in my haid,  
"I think I should find myself better in baid."

"There's Alfred", says Sam, "I know he will choose."  
 He said he was sorry the pleasure to loose,  
 But he was appointed to black the boy's shoose.  
 They next ask a boy of more sober demeanour,  
 But he too's in office - they call him knife-cleanour,  
 "Well Jim thou'll go with us." "No, asking thy pardon,  
 "I'd rather by far go and work in the gardon,  
 "For there we get pay - perhaps a nice root,  
 "Or what I like better - a handful of froot.  
 "So you'll not enlist me - I'm not a rectoot."  
 "There's Charles." but alas! poor unfortunate wight,  
 He's confined to the lodge, - he regretted it quight.  
 Tho' Frank's a long lesson of grammar to learn,  
 He'll set it aside not to miss such a tearn;  
 Some join in the party - but some are too busy.  
 One does not like cricket, it makes him so dusy.  
 But now there's enough - so says Sam, "Now my boys,  
 "Just listen to me - don't make such a noys;  
 "The High field's the place - & I do not despair  
 "If the teachers we ask, they will let us play thair,  
 "So while I get the bats & the ball I propose,  
 "That Alfred or Richard or somebody gose,  
 "And presents our request - making this a condition,  
 "We'll all be good boys if they grant us permission.  
 "Here's the ball & the bats - just look what a beauty.  
 "Well Taff, what reply from the master on deauty?"  
 "Oh! granted" - "That's right - that is capital news;  
 "Indeed I knew well they would never refews."  
 So now they're at play - and I think you've enough  
 Of such spelling, such rhyiming, such whimsical stough,  
 And therefore lest you gained from my verse should inveigh,  
 I'll bid you farewell, leaving them to their pleigh.

John Smith, Akworth Yorkshire  
 from the library of Sir James Pitman, K.B.E.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 p17]

## **Book Reviews**

### **Elements of General Phonetics, by David Abercrombie\***

Pub. by Edinburgh University Press, 1967, \$4.95.

\*Dept. Phonetics & Linguistics, Univ. of Edinburgh, Scotland

While there have been many books written on phonetics, this subject is still not as well known as it should be. Probably this is because the subject is not taught in all colleges and is not a required subject. This book is based upon a course given at Edinburgh University, Scotland. And not unstrangely, it does not teach the dialect of Scotch-English spoken there. It is a more fundamental book - one that starts with a discussion of the relationship between the little black marks on the printed page and their relation with the various noises they are supposed to indicate. Are these

noises we call English speech solely a human attribute? No, because machines are in progress of being developed that can simulate this speech.

One called P.A.T. (Parametric Artificial Talking device), designed by Walter Lawrence, of the Ministry of Aviation, can be made to speak continuously for as long as a minute and it has produced utterances in a half-dozen languages. Machines of this kind are used as instruments of research into various aspects of speech, dialectic differences, etc. They also have important applications to the problems of telecommunication. Other synthetic speech machines are at the Haskins Laboratories in New York, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and at the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. Radio Corp. of America also is in the process of developing a phonemic response machine. It should be noted that a synthetic speech machine is vastly different from a synthetic hearing and deciphering machine.

The properties of the written medium, aesthetic, legibility, rhythm, timber and pitch are discussed. It shows how alliteration is used to make more effective sentences.

Poets have for centuries been aware of its value, and now advertising copy writers are also taking advantage of the musical properties of our speech. Notice: "One man-one vote; Builds Bonny Babies; Guinness is good for you; Du bo, du bon, Dubonnet; Players Please." This latter could have three different meanings depending on whether it is: a statement, an order, or an admonition. (Players is the name of a British cigaret).

The chapter on the organs of speech is very thoro and informative. While it gets rather technical, this is necessary to give the complete anatomical picture and a thoro description of all speech sounds and how they are made. The phonology of English - the different ways of combining the anatomical movement - complexes into sequences is treated in a clear and understandable manner. Typical features of voice dynamics considered are: loudness, tempo, continuity-junctures, rhythm, tessitura, register, pitch fluctuation. Tone and whistled languages are also discussed.

Since an intelligent discussion of refinements of speech requires a good phonetic system of symbols, several phonetic notations are discussed and the better historical ones examined, including of course the International Phonetic Association Alphabet known as I.P.A.

Assimilation takes on a new meaning in the chapter by that title. Finally the book ends with application of the knowledge gained in the studies of the book. Valuable also are the 291 references to works quoted or mentioned in the text.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 p17]

**Four Speller's Dictionaries, and Phonetic Spelling for College Students,  
reviewed by Abraham Tauber, Ph.D., Yeshiva Univ. N.Y.**

1. *The Bad Speller's Dictionary*, by Joseph Krevisky and Jordan L. Linfield, Random House, New York, 1967, \$1.
2. *The Awful Spellers Dictionary*, Compiled & edited, by Joseph Jordan, British edition revised by Oliver Stonor, Wolfe Pub. Ltd., London, 1964, 8/6.
3. *A Handbook for Terrible Spellers: The Backwards Dictionary* by Innovation Press, New York, 1963.
4. *SPEL (Society for Phonic English Letters) Lexicom Diction Speller-American Word Finder*, (If you can't spell it, how can you find it?), 1957, \$1.pub. Frank Epperson, Truckee, Calif.
5. *Phonetic Spelling for College Students*, by Ralph M. Williams Oxford University Press 1960,

\$2.45

These five books are all offered as aids to poor spellers - called "bad spellers", "awful spellers," "terrible spellers," or merely "college students"! The *Awful Spellers (sic) Dictionary* is an abbreviated British version of the *American Handbook for Terrible Spellers*.

The theme of the first four books is best expressed in the cover blurbs of *The Bad Speller's Dictionary*, the latest and best of the genre: "How do you look up (or find) a word in a dictionary if you can't spell it?"

The helpful nature and method of this little book are revealed in the formula for its use: "In *The Bad Speller's Dictionary*:

You look it up here as you think the word is spelled:	You find the correct spelling here:
acomplish	accomplish
farmacy	pharmacy
Minasota	Minnesota
sinnic	cynic

The text fulfills the promise of the cover offer. A brief introduction faults the orthography of the English language for its heterography. It uses the Shavian "ghoti" and "ghoughpteighbteau" as illustrative examples of a medley of eccentric graphemes for the familiar phonemes of two words: laugh, women, notion for /fish/ and hiccough, though, ptomaine, neigh, debt, bureau for /potato/.

The introduction explains the book's simple arrangement and technique: in Alphabetical order, a list of words in two columns, the *incorrect*, phonemically spelled - and next to it the *correct* spelled in conventional or traditional orthography.

Unfortunately, there is no code that is consistently or uniformly followed in the incorrect column, so that:

*incorrect* "adishon" is *correct* "edition";  
*incorrect* "adition" is *correct* "addition";  
*incorrect* "ambbiquous" is *correct* "ambiguous."

If a user looked up "eggzagerate," in the *incorrect* column, he'd not find it - except under "exagerate" - almost as bad as a dictionary, to have to know that the second letter is an "x."

Each letter section of the little book has a helpful set of homonyms, homographs, homophones, called "Look-Alikes or Sound-Alikes," such as: "accept-except," "adapt-adept." Of course, there are omissions and oversights: *incorrect* "ile" is *correct* "isle," but where is "aisle"? (It does appear in the alphabetical "Quick list of Correct Spellings" at the end of the book - but then again, "How do you find a word ... if you can't spell it?")

The most significant of the books is *Phonetic Spelling for College Students*. Its significance lies in the fact that we are still teaching English spelling to students at the college level! What a commentary on the waste of English Heterography, as Godfrey Dewey calls it, in his book of the same name, presenting in organized form the problems of English graphemes and phonemes, and as Paul Hanna has similarly shown.

Dr. Williams has written a valuable book, from which students will profit, whether or not they learn to spell infallibly. They will learn about "phonetic (phonemic?) generalization" and the linguistic

facts of life. Chapter 33, "English as a Phonetic Language," is an excellent summary of its history and development of the language, even approaching, tho not quite preaching, the virtues of "phonetic spelling." After a section on "mnemonic devices," and the usual list of spelling demons, the author turns tail and puts the onus on the speller, rather than on the language - "The fault, dear Brutus, is in ourselves..." An index would be a helpful addition to this edition.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 p19]

**Essential Spanish by Association of Ideas, by Robert Montero**

Pub. by Carleton Press, New York, 1968, \$2.95

One would not expect but would be surprised that this is not just another run-of-the-mill Spanish grammar, dealing tirelessly with the formal structure of the language while merely nodding to those qualities which bring a language alive. Robert Montero is concerned with the every-day use of Spanish which will make the language a useful tool for all those who have the need or desire to communicate effectively. Finding the usual, more formal course academic rather than practical, he has devised this new system through which the busy person can acquire a quick but substantial grasp of conversational Spanish. Simplicity is the keynote!

Taking advantage of the resemblances, differences and associations with English, this method of language study is easily assimilated for practical use. The portion of the title, "- by Association of Ideas" emphasizes the basic method, which takes advantage of what is already known, of what can be adapted, and of what can be easily recognized, plus presenting pertinent vocabulary in its related sequence. The niceties of formal language study are left for those who have time for it.

The author has carefully researched and tested this practical approach. The result has been the cutting away of much that is extraneous to useful knowledge. Sentence formation is encouraged from the beginning. What remains for the student is an ever broadening basis of usable Spanish.

The author is to be congratulated on constructing a series of lessons into a form that is succinct and compact. It is a complete basic Spanish course that fills a need for all those interested in learning Spanish. Students will profit by its use. Teachers will enjoy it.

-o0o-

**Learning to Read - the Great Debate, by Jeanne Chall, reviewed by Newell Tune**

Pub. McGraw-Hill, 1967, 372 pp. \$8.50

The furor created by this latest book of Jeanne Chall is almost as great as that made by Rudolph Flesch with his angry book (as he called it), *Why Johnny Can't Read*. But in this case the author aimed her book at educators rather than parents and showed her vast knowledge of the subject of reading, an enormous amount of research and good organizing ability to present all the data to America's educators in the style and language they understand and appreciate.

Among the many magazines and bulletins which commented on Chall's book is the Carnegie Quarterly, devoted 3½ pages to an analysis of it, and called it the great confusion, rather than the great debate - meaning that our educators are more confused than ever. Not one of the hundreds of teachers and administrators interviewed by Dr. Chall ever mentioned making a change in teaching method because of research studies. The article concludes with the sage observation: "The debate on how to teach reading will probably go on forever. But it will continue to ask the wrong questions

and get the wrong answers in the absence of long-term, longitudinal, genuinely scientific research."

One should also note the comments of the C.B.E. Bulletin, "The conclusions reached by Mrs. Chall will cheer those who have long been convinced that present methods of reading instruction are producing millions of poor readers. Among other recommendations the author suggests that code-emphasis (phonics) rather than "meaning" should be the first step in learning to read, that we should re-examine the notion of the restricted vocabulary, and that good literature rather than family-centered stories should make up the basal readers." Further comments were in the Dec. issue, and in the March, 1968 issue, "we found it disappointing here, as in other cities, there was no questioning of the fundamental approach to reading instruction." (My comment is that is basically what is wrong with Chall's book).

The Phi Delta Kappan (March, 1968. p. 404) says, this book "took a mountain of courage to write and may well live up to John Gardner's prediction that it is the most important book about education in ten years..." "She is concerned primarily with a critical analysis of existing research comparing different approaches to beginning reading (p.5)." And she indicates that the code-emphasis programs not only enable children to obtain better word recognition at the end of grades 1, 2, and 3, but also result in better comprehension scores on standardized tests.

But she doesn't find any one method of teaching reading sufficiently superior to be used successfully with all children. Why? Isn't it logical to conclude that phonics instruction works only on phonetically spelt words; look-n-say works only until the pupil begins to develop too large a vocabulary of sight words - and it fails with similar appearing words, as *convert* and *convent*. Why doesn't it dawn on her that methodology is neither the only cause nor the most important cause of ineffective reading instruction? Surely she has seen Downing's and Mazurkiewicz' and Tanyzer's reports on the results of teaching reading in England and America? In the two countries, opposing types of methods of teaching reading were used on two large groups of classes. Downing used Look-n-say and found that the i.t.a. pupils were superior to the T.O.-taught pupils in many respects: confidence, use of longer words, writing longer stories, speed and comprehension, and having larger written and recognition vocabularies. And he says, "There is no doubt that the traditional orthography of English is a serious cause of reading difficulty in the early stages of learning to read and write." And also: "a program of research on improving the alphabet itself should have the highest priority in the next stage of investigation."

Mazurkiewicz also says that there is no doubt that the irregular nature of English spelling is an important cause of reading failure and the difficulty of pupils to have confidence in their ability to analyse new words.

Robt. E. Zachrisson, Prof. of English at the Royal Univ. Upsalla, Sweden, said, "The greatest bar to the wider spread of English lies in its spelling which is to such a degree unrelated to its pronunciation as inevitably to mislead."

Why is it that no such conclusion was even mentioned by Chall in her book? Yet spelling reformers have for years been loudly claiming just that. Mario Pei mentions that in his Preface to Tauber's book. He also notes that no such difficulties occur in such countries as Italy, Finland, Czecho-Slovakia, Turkey, where the languages are phonemically spelt. In fact, in these countries and in Russia, a dictionary is never needed for spelling and is seldom found in grade schools because its only use is to determine correct meaning-not pronunciation because that is automatic on sounding out the letters. Why can't we have that advantage over here?

[Spelling Reform Anthology §6.10 p104]  
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 pp18,19]

**Preface by Mario Pei, to the book by Abraham Tauber,  
Better English thru Simplified Spelling - a History of Spelling Reform,  
Philosophical Library, Fall, 1968**

When I first came to America as a boy of seven, one of the very few good laughs I got out of my slightly unhappy situation as an immigrant schoolboy trying to learn the language of my adopted land was the way that language was handled in written form, and the antics both teachers and pupils had to go through to establish the necessary mental links between the spoken and the written thought-symbol.

I had already learned to read and write my native Italian. There the process is simple. You are taught the alphabet, then you are given sequences of spoken and written syllables: *a, e, i, o, u; ba, be, bi, bo, bu;* and so forth. True, there are a few confusing moments when you are taught to insert an *h* after *c, g* and *sc* if you want to represent a velar sound before front vowels, an *i* after the same consonant symbols if you want to represent a palatal sound before back vowels. Beyond that, your ear is a guide to your spelling; provided, that is, you are speaking standard Italian. If you are speaking a dialect, then the problem is one of learning what amounts to a different language from the one you speak at home. But even then, you emphatically do not "learn to spell." In fact, the word "spell" does not exist in the Italian vocabulary, which is a clue to the entire situation. At the most, you can say: "How do you write that word?"

Here in America, there are flash cards with written words that you were called upon to identify and pronounce, spoken words that you were asked to take down in correct spelling, spelling-bees in which whole rows of pupils went down as if mowed by machine-guns, wearisome lists of words whose spelling you had to memorize as part of your homework.

I quickly got to be the best speller in the class, by using the simple expedient of memorizing the written form of the word as it would be pronounced in Italian. There were some jaw-breaking combinations, like "catch" that had to be memorized as *katc*, and "enough" that came out as *eh-know-ugh*, but in the main the system worked, proving, presumably, the advantages of bilingualism.

The English spelling-pronunciation is one of the world's most awesome messes. No one can really estimate what it costs in the way of wasted school-time that could be more profitably used in mastering factual subjects instead of thousands upon thousands of arbitrary combinations that are inaccurate correlations between the spoken sounds and written words.

It is quite possible that the responsibility for this state of affairs rests with the spoken language or, better yet, with its speakers, who in past centuries distorted their originally clear vowels into a series of grunts, groans and wheezes, or, to be more charitable, into a host of bewildering diphthongs and bafflingly unclear glides. It is also possible that we are paying the penalty for rejecting the services of a language academy, that would proclaim one English variety to be the "standard" language and all variant forms to be "dialects," so that we would not have to stand for Appalachian mountaineer pronunciations being palmed off as official in supposedly serious works on phonetics and phonemics.

But all this is water over the dam. What has been done up to the present to remedy the situation? More important yet, what is being done, and what can be done?

This book gives us a history of the problem, and points out the attempted solutions, past and

present. The author's sympathies evidently lie in the direction of some sort of reform. The spoken language is what it is, and little, if anything, can be done to change it, altho a good deal can and should be done in the way of teaching the speakers to speak it more clearly and intelligibly, and to avoid those dialectal and slang excesses which are deplored by even the most ardent advocates of the doctrine of usage.

The written language is something else again. There is not, to my knowledge, any spoken variety of English that runs much beyond 40 phonemes, all of which are represented by appropriate IPA symbols. To achieve phonetization of written English, we must first of all accept one spoken form (dialect, if you prefer) as the official standard, something which is going to be extremely difficult of achievement, English speakers being the sort of people they are. Next we have to apply to this spoken norm either the IPA symbols or their equivalents in terms of the standard alphabet (in the latter case, we may even have to use some digraphs). The resulting written form is going to look strange indeed to adult speakers raised in the current tradition, but it is going to work miracles for their descendents, in terms of quickly making them literate and keeping them that way, and in saving them untold time and labor which could be profitably expended on more factual fields of knowledge.

It is my personal feeling that anything short of complete phonetization is a mere waste of time. Of what avail to use a few simplified spellings like *nite* and *thru*, while leaving untouched all the real stumbling-blocks that are seldom mentioned (*proceed*, *precede* and *supersede*, *believe* and *receive*, *whether* and *weather* are only scattered samples)? To judge from the historical account presented in this book, there was as violent a storm of opposition over 40 words as there would be over the sort of radical reform I favor. But complete phonetization would have the merit of being 100% logical, integral, and scientifically based, so that it could be defended on proper grounds, instead of being apologetically offered to a skeptical and derisive audience. If carried through, it would leave no backlog, no residue of problems to be solved in the more or less distant future.

How and when this sort of solution (or, for that matter, the far less drastic and far less satisfactory partial solutions offered by others) will ever, if at all, come into being, I do not know. Languages in which drastic orthographic reforms have occurred are spoken by single countries, and these countries all seem to have been run by dictators at the time of reform. Languages spoken by two or more nations (like the Portuguese of Portugal and Brazil) not only barely skirt the problem of phonetization, but flounder about considerably by reason of lack of a unified directive. English is faced with two main divisions, British and American, plus a very large number of sub-dialects, and the countries that speak it are all, fortunately, democratically run. This definitely does not add up to the two main requirements for phonetizations, even of an incomplete variety: that one spoken dialect be selected and accepted as "standard"; and that to this dialect a symbol-for-sound system of writing be applied, with universal acceptance.

Pessimism, however, need not deter us from curiously examining the historical aspects of the problem and envisaging its possible solutions. And, that, after all, is all that this book attempts to enable us to do.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1968 p20]

[The diacritics are more like single and double quotes than acute accents and umlauts.]

## World Language

Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

### *Sistemizd English*

#### ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT *Sistemizd English*

Quotation marks can be used as diacritics.

Pronounce:

a -- as in -- ma

á -- as in -- at

ã -- as in -- ate

e -- as in -- get

ẽ -- as in -- me

i -- as in -- it

ĩ -- as in -- bite

o -- as in -- not

õ -- as in -- note

u--- as in -- full

ú -- as in -- but

ü -- as in -- blue

r -- as "ur". "ir", and "er"  
in "curtain", "firm", and "her".

Double consonants and double  
vowels are not used unless  
they are absolutely necessary.  
The combinations "th", "sh",  
and "ch" are retained.

*Tri it. It's ẽzẽ.*

#### WORDS ARE WRITTEN JUST AS THEY SOUND

iz --- is

wr --- were

wrcën --- working

lrn --- learn

bucs --- books

wún --- one

scül --- school

bõiz --- boys

grlz --- girls

rīt --- write, right

dánts --- dance

āj --- age

awr --- our

pánz --- pans

wär --- where, wear

iër --- year

chrch --- church

shöfr --- chauffeur

thot --- thought

tẽ --- tea

sosej --- sausage

júj --- judge

*If iü liv júst for iorself,  
Iü wil lánd úp on this shelf;  
And nö wún wil cär,  
Or wil evr drēm iü wr thär.  
Lif on rth cán bẽ sö gránd,  
And if iü wud únderstánd:  
Bĩ düèn tü wún  
ás iü wont dún tü iü,  
Thú wrld wil sẽ iü thrü.*

Send one dollar for other printed matter.