

# Spelling Reform Anthology

## §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.

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

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

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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*.

*[Spelling Reform Anthology §19.2 pp251,252 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971 pp2,3 in the printed version]*

## **2. Ex Post Facto Deliberatio, by A. Lloyd James (Written as a preface to the 5th edition of *New Spelling*, by Walter Ripman & William Archer, 1940.)**

Since the first edition of this book appeared 30 years ago, much has happened in the world. The first Great War has faded into history, leaving the burden of its consequences to be borne by a generation which hardly remembers it. And among its casualties was thought to be the Simplified Spelling Society, that ardent band of scholar-reformers who laboured to achieve an end which they believed to be for the general good; they, like hosts of others, abandoned their cause for the greater claim of their country, and the Simplified Spelling Society sank into obscurity. Since then many of its stalwart champions who bore the burden during the heat of the former campaign, have died, among them Skeat, Furnivall, Lord Bryce, Andrew Carnegie, Walter Leaf, Sir James Murray, Charles B. Grandgent, Thomas Lounsbury, and Sir Geo. Hunter, the veteran ship-builder, who in the latter years of his life kept the cause alive with his zeal, and indeed with his money. But a cause supported by so much earnestness and depth of conviction cannot die; and whatever was to be said for Simplified Spelling a quarter of a century ago, there is more to be said for it today.

Our language is not only the mother tongue of millions scattered all over the globe, but is rapidly becoming the second language of millions of others. It is no longer the prerogative of those who live in the narrow confines of these islands, as it was in the days when the general principles of its orthography were laid down. It has become possibly to an extent that even we fail to estimate, the language of the world, and one of the main instruments in human relations. This, however much it may give us cause for elation, should also give us pause: for a language which spreads beyond the confines of its birthplace is always in danger of losing its entity. Today, however, when the spoken word is radiated throughout the whole world; when communication depends upon oral rather than upon written language; when telephone lines and wireless beams make speech with the further-most parts a matter of daily experience; there is hope that English will not follow the way of Chinese and Latin, great cultural languages which split into mutually unintelligible dialects. To us, brought up in the birth-place of our language, its history and its traditions are amongst our most cherished treasures. The idiosyncrasies of its spelling are as dear to us as are our ancient landmarks and national monuments. Its visual appearance is almost sacred, for there is hardly a feature of it that is not rich in history. If its sound had withstood the passage of time as stubbornly as its appearance, all would now be well: we should speak as we write, and write as we speak. But alas! sound is sound, and sight is sight. Would that the twain would meet!

To expect the hundreds of millions of English speakers, present and to come, in all parts of the world, to be burdened indefinitely with our traditional English spelling is to expect the worst. Sooner or later, progress must reach the most backward. Moreover, if we can give them a visual English that is more in accord with the spoken language than the present orthography, we shall have gone

a long way towards removing one, at least, of the reasons that lead to disintegration. A rational phonetic spelling will do much to steady our language in the perilous seas upon which it is now embarked, for, in these days when we hope for universal literacy, the visual language exercises a remarkable influence on the spoken language. It is the one constant standard, common throughout the world: the more phonetic it is, the more uniform will pronunciation tend to be. When men first began to write, they wrote as they spoke; now they tend to speak as they write – and we cannot blame them.

So it comes about that there now appears, after a lapse of 30 years, despite the outbreak of another war, the present edition of a remarkable little book, first printed in 1910. It takes up once again the cause of Simplified Spelling, and presents to a new generation the linguistic considerations that are involved in a scientific approach to the problem.

Scores of schemes of simplified spelling have been invented. How many of the inventors have studied the facts of the problem as minutely as the authors of this booklet, I should not care to estimate. But now that the facts are available, there is no reason for future inventors to rush in without study. This book is the Spelling Reformer's Vade Mecum; it is one of the most remarkable statistical investigations into English spelling ever undertaken, and must be reckoned with by all those interested in the subject.

The suggestions put forward in this book are to be regarded as suggestions mainly, and not as *ex cathedra* pronouncements. Those who advance them are ardent champions of our language, sincere in their reverence of its ancient monuments and its historical traditions, and anxious not only for the preservation of its past, but also for the welfare of its future.

They humbly suggest that the time has come for those who love our English language to consider whether zeal for the past may not now be tempered with anxiety for the future.

(Ed. note: the 6th edition (1948) of this 130 page hard cover book may still be available from Pitman Publishing Co. The price was approx. £1.00)

### **Addendum by Sir James Pitman, KBE, London.**

In pursuance of the above discussion, I am offering the following addendum which is intended as an introduction to the i.t.a. Word List and Spelling Guide.

Note should be taken of the words (in the i.t.a. Word List) marked with an asterisk. These words are not mistakenly spelled, even though they will appear so to those in the national language group – British or American – who pronounce them otherwise.



Children will, of course; write the words to correspond with their own speech. (Indeed this is what in fact happens). Teachers likewise will write on the board and elsewhere in the classroom, spellings to represent the local speech. That is the way it should be for beginners. It is only publishers and printers who will need to accept these spellings as "world spellings" on the two grounds:

1. That the speech variant which yields the spelling nearest to the existing spelling is to be preferred for the standard i.t.a. spelling. For instance, the pairs of spellings fertiel and æt, scheduel and clerk are to be preferred because they are closer to present day spellings than would be fertl and et, Jheduel and clark were the American pronunciation of the one pair and the British of the other pair to determine the standard spelling. After all the spellings chosen represent an alternative pronunciation with which children in the one or the other of the language groups will need eventually to become familiar, if they are to listen with comprehension at the "movies" or when sitting in front of a television set. Here is, then, an opportunity to teach both pronunciations – and of course, the meanings of such words.

2. That books printed by the thousand – and even hundred thousand – need to be acceptable, as much in the one language group as in the other – indeed English is a world language which needs to maintain a single standard of spelling as much when it is printed as a simpler learning medium as when it is printed as the medium for general communication.

Indeed, any other course which tolerated variant spellings in printed publications will not stop at American and British variants. English is used as their mother tongue by Malaysians, Chinese, Indians, etc., as well as by Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and Canadians, including French Canadians. The variety in pronunciations is much greater than is supposed, and if disruption of the language as a means of spoken communication (this disruption is sometimes referred to as a new Babelization) is to be avoided, the opportunity needs to be taken to resist variety of spellings in any form of printed matter, and *per contra* to foster during the period of learning certainly the representation of a single standard, one which is a good, indeed any good, pronunciation which is being frequently heard in mass communication. That pronunciation which is a good one and which most closely accords with the spellings in our traditional spelling will exert the strongest influence in maintaining the language as an effective means of communication in speech on a world scale, and that is why it is the one chosen for the i.t.a. spelling.

*[Spelling Reform Anthology §19.3 p253 in the printed version]*

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p18 in the printed version]*

### **3. English as a World Language, by Sir David Eccles**

#### **From a speech to the Commonwealth and American Clubs of Rome when he was Minister of Education.**

Let me come straight to a question which I hope will engage your interest and elicit your help. It is this.

Are those of us who speak English as our native tongue, doing half what we should to spread our language to all continents, till it becomes the common possession of the whole world, with all that that might mean for the replacing of suspicions and threats of war by peace and mutual understandings?

If we fail to make one world, there may be little left of civilization soon. While there is time, we must seize upon those forces which promote interdependence, friendship and unity, and give to all such good impulses all the help of which we are capable. For world disarmament and peace to be more than a dream, men and women everywhere must be able to read, write and speak a common language.

English used to be thought of, like any other language, as a national possession, belonging in our case to the United Kingdom, the Old Commonwealth and the United States. Today we reckon that while some 250 million people speak English as their native tongue, many more than this number use English either within their own country or as the channel of communication with the outside world.

English is much in demand now by ambitious young people who wish to keep in touch with the Anglo-American world. It is increasingly taught as the first foreign language in the secondary schools of all countries. In Soviet Russia a great many children learn English from the age of five or six. Already well over half of all pupils in the Soviet Union are learning English – more than all the children in school in the United Kingdom.

As you would expect and wish, English is being very widely taught throughout the Commonwealth to children who have a native speech of their own. English is one of the strongest bonds holding the Commonwealth together. But it is a bond that needs constant attention. Those who want to see the Commonwealth closer knit and capable of still greater influence, should rate no sacrifice too great to extend the knowledge and maintain the standard of our speech. I warn you, that unless we whose native language is English, exert ourselves far more than we are doing to help others to maintain the standards of good English, we shall have thrown away one of the greatest opportunities in history. The problem is very difficult. Millions of children are this very day, being taught English by teachers who have never had direct contact with any English-speaking country. The danger is very real that English will break down into Oxford English, New York English, Australian, Chinese English, and so on with ever increasing difficulty in understanding one another. This lays on us, who are English speaking by birth, the duty of providing standards, teachers and techniques, to meet as far as we possibly can the explosive demand of mass education throughout the undeveloped countries. We have got to get down to the job of preserving common meanings and standards of purity for the English language. If we fail in this duty, English can never become a truly universal language, and we shall have thrown away a great instrument for the creation of one understanding world. We shall never be forgiven for our foolish negligence and culpable want of clear thinking.

You may say that English has already broken down into too many variants, that meanings, pronunciation, and even the spelling of our words are too different to be reconciled. I refuse to admit defeat before we have even tried. The longer we leave this confusion, the worse it will become. Every day counts. Let us begin a great campaign this very year. We cannot hope to send abroad enough teachers from English speaking countries to meet the demand. We must therefore, look for other ways to achieve the same results.

If a sufficient number of people are interested and are willing to help, then our language can become the World Language within 50 years. But we cannot expect the rest of the world to learn a language that is full of difficulties, irregularities, rules and exceptions. Most of the people we want to learn English – and who are anxious to learn it – have had no experience in learning anything, so the world language must be one from which all difficulties have been removed.

The most obvious obstacle to learning English, is its spelling. For generations children have been taught that there is something sacred about the way words are spelt. Most beginners want to spell words as they sound but by punishment and ridicule they have to some extent, learned to think in a modern language, but write in a dead one – the one that some of their ancestors wrote hundreds of years ago. But foreigners have no interest in our ancestors. So it is surely our duty to offer them a language in which every word is spelt exactly as it sounds.

So we should begin by making the number of sounds in our language as few as possible. With no more than are necessary, each invariably represented in a consistent manner, it is possible to write English so that it can be read with the greatest ease, and understood by everyone who speaks English of any sort. Hence, we shall need no new letters. The English alphabet is, with a few modifications, used by everyone who writes any west European language. It is familiar, therefore, to at least 1000 million people already. Unfortunately modern letters vary in shape according to the whims of writers and printers. So for the sake of those who are not used to our sort of writing, we could very well limit ourselves to Roman CAPITALS or BLOCK letters. Indeed these are widely used for business names and advertisements in every country in the world.

Whilst block letters take longer to write, they are certainly easier for everyone to read. And even block letters could be further simplified so that they could be written more quickly without becoming illegible.

This improved way of writing English is called Simplified Spelling. Because every word is spelt exactly as it sounds in the best broadcast English, every written or printed word will provide a standard of pronunciation which will ensure that our language will never break down into local dialects or mutually unintelligible variants. With the help of Simplified Spelling, it will not be necessary to send abroad so many teachers whose native language is English. Foreigners will be able to learn from one another with ease and certainty, for if there is only one way of pronouncing each letter, it is most unlikely that words will acquire un-english sounds. With the help of broadcasting, English in Simplified Spelling will quickly become the second language for every nation in the world.

But Simplified Spelling fills another and equally important purpose. It makes it possible to teach English speaking children to read and write in a tenth of the time they now take to learn ordinary English. The saving in time should convince you of the value of this change. Time is one of our most precious possessions. We must not waste another generation while deciding to make this necessary and inevitable change.

[Spelling Reform Anthology § 19.4 p254, last two paragraphs missing in the printed version.]  
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1965 p14,15 in the printed version]

#### 4. Gullible's Adventures in Crazyland, by Howie Gona Soundit\*

\*assisted by N. W. T.

Let me tell you of the strange story of Alice Gullible. She has that peculiar type of subservient mind that is so well suited to becoming a teacher. Not only does she believe – as the gospel – all that was told to her in Teachers College, but she does not – and cannot – question any of the methods taught her as not being the most effective and efficient means of teaching reading. In other words, she cannot or dare not think for herself. If it is the method taught by high and mighty pedantic professors, it must be the best method. And who is she to question the judgement of the experts who have written books on how to teach reading? Besides, she knows or is warned that it is most important to get along with supervisors – don't dare do anything to arouse their ire or you're doomed to oblivion in Siberia – or worse even, no job.

In her travels through the ivy-covered halls of obtuse learning, she has been told that the easiest way for a child to learn to recognize a word is by the Look-and-Say method. Naturally, it starts with the shortest words. One of the rules is that two letter words ending in a vowel have the long vowel sound, such as: *go, lo, no, so, yo-yo, do* – but wait a bit, this last word doesn't have the long-*o* sound; its the long-*oo* sound. And so, come to think of it, does *to*, and the one syllable word *who* (*hoo*). So of eight one-syllable words ending in *o*, three of them are exceptions to the rule. Besides, what of those other one-syllable words that rhyme with *go*? Words which, according to the rule, should be spelled as: *bo, fo, ho, Jo, Mo. no, ro, so, to, tho, wo, who*, but which Alice must insist on the child spelling as: *bow, foe, hoe, Joe, mow, know, row, sow, (or sew), toe, though, woe, whoa?* Thirteen more exceptions to the rule; a total of 16 exceptions out of a possible 21, for a 24% effectiveness. Should we try with *e*? *Be*, but no *ce*, no *fe*, – *he*, but no *ge*, no *ke*, – *me*, but no *ne*, no *pe*, no *se*, and no *te*, then *we* and *ye*, but no *ze*. Only 5 out of a possible 14 that follow the rule. Surely now, Alice must realize she is in a crazy land where there is little common sense – where words don't consistently follow the rules. Should we go on? What's the use? The rule does not apply to words ending in *a, i* or *u* (with the exception of Hindu and Bantu, which are two-syllable words).

But Alice still has hopes that some of the rules will be found to be useful. So she tries this rhyming rule, "When two vowels go awalking, the first one does the talking" – as in *road, load, toad, board, boa* (oh! an exception), *boil, quoit, main, train, maintain, mountain, fried, friend, chief, wield*, (oh, dear –another idea that doesn't work well enough). By this time it should dawn on any logically minded person that no rules hold without exceptions, few or many, and it's for this reason that the Look-and-Say method exists. Every single word is a law unto itself only, and has to be memorized by its own configuration, *many* or *penny*, *mention* or *pension*, *ocean* or *motion*. Alice should now realize she cannot trust a new word to be sounded out by any old rules.

But wait again! There's a way out of this dilemma – or at least there seems to be. It's the word building game she learned at some reading conference. You begin with a two letter word and add a letter at a time to make new and longer words. So Alice starts with the simple word *be* and builds it up – *bet*, *beta*, *betal*. Not so good, is it? First the vowel *e* is long, then short; then long again, then short, then long again.

Alice should wonder why  
But she doesn't blink an eye.  
She accepts the status quo  
Because she is told it's so.  
She daren't question th' rationality  
Of any word's propriety.  
No wonder she stumbles blindly  
In her wild anxiety  
To try to find the way  
To teach, if she may,  
The rules for our spelling  
When there is no telling  
What may happen if you  
Add a new letter or two.

But we mustn't give up easily, she might try again: *do*, *doe*, *does*, *doeskin* – no better either. Let's try: *do*, *don*, *dont*, *donor* – no that doesn't work either; let's try: *pa*, *pat*, *path*, *pathos*. Not much better. Let's try again: *pe*, *pea*, *pear*, *pearl*. Or how about: *ye*, *yea*, *year*, *yearn*? Oh! Now she gets it! Every time you add another letter, the vowel sound changes – what a system – only Crazyland would have it. No wonder a foreigner coming here to earn our language questions our sanity. Who in his right mind would have conceived such a crazy concoction of unreliable rules? Yet the people who tolerate such a system (if indeed, such a complicated mess, could in all honesty be called a system) take pride in spending a lifetime in trying to master it. Was there ever an evil concoction of the devil (evil-devil) better suited to deceive and confuse the trusting, gullible minds of pupil and teacher alike? Also intended to destroy the budding sense of reasoning we try to develop in children by teaching them logical systems like numbers, mathematics, music, physics, chemistry? Does Alice ever wonder what destroys their developing sense of consistency, of analogy, of cause and effect, and consequently, destroys their self-confidence in their ability to analyse new words? And Alice does not know that foreign children in Spain, Italy, Czecho-Slovakia, Germany, Russia, Finland, Turkey, are not faced with such difficulties because their languages are more nearly phonetic. Also which have been overcome in the Pitman i.t.a. medium for teaching reading which has so joyously fostered in over a hundred thousand young Britishers who have had the good luck to start their education in that wun-sien-wun-sound bit of educational sanity.

Does Alice really know these facts? And if so, how much cerebration do they awake in her? Seemingly nothing more than that she must work harder to get, *one*, *ton*, *done*; *for*, *door*, *more*, *pour*; *him*, *been*, *busy*, into the eyes of children whose ears and tongues handle them as: *wun*, *tun*, *dun*; *for dor*, *mor*, *por*; *him*, *bin*, *bizi*. As for that matter, do her own eyes and tongue and those of

her principal and supervisor – yes, and those of the professors at the Teachers' College, and yes, again, those of all these How-To-books on reading.

So Alice stagnates in Crazyland and keeps her pupils there – and does her pitiful best with a devil's brew of spelling which should have no excuse for existing outside of hell. Does her best not only in her classroom, but tries to improve that best with special help in spelling. And the ones she can't reach are sent to remedial reading classes. Individual differences in visual memory patterns understandably have something to do with it – at least, so they tell her at these workshops and conferences. But why should there be these differences? Oh! There are a lot of reasons – one Chicago Reading Expert – author of Look-and-Say books, lists score after score of them. They range from economic and social home conditions, and I.Q. to dyslexia, dyslalia, disphonia, engrams, esophorea, undescended testicles, and other afflictions of which Alice has only the most confused understanding, as is probably the case with the Chicago expert herself. But heaven forbid that Alice should allow a doubt like that to enter her mind.

[*The following section was in SPB but not in the Tune anthology.*]

Spelling reform is still a dirty word with this Chicagoan and most other textbook writers (they have a vested interest to protect). But i.t.a. is doing a job on both sides of the Atlantic which they can't much longer hide or evade. It is proving that the main basic cause of reading difficulties is the unreliability of our spelling. When this realization finally sinks into the minds of Alice [1] and her thousands of sisters, will they do something about it? Such as writing to their Congressmen to demand that they act on the spelling reform bill now gathering dust for several years in the Special Education Committee. Or will they let China beat us to it? Perhaps they do not know that Chou En-lai several years ago submitted the proposal for reforming the Chinese written language, which was adopted by the National People's Congress. Now all that remains is for the final form of the spelling to be adopted – a monumental task, but far closer to realization than the easy task it would be for us to simplify our spelling.

So far, it is public apathy that has not spurred our Congress to act. Congressmen act only on such legislation as their constituents *demand*. It is the duty of every frustrated teacher and dissatisfied parent to demand action from their Congressman. Otherwise another generation will have to struggle needlessly thru our appalling spelling, to the shame of apathy.

[1] To be sure, Alice may have quite a struggle freeing her mind from the shackles imposed by her college indoctrination.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology* §19.5 pp255-263 in the printed version]

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin* Fall 1969 pp2-10 in the printed version]

## **5. The Future of English as THE World Language, by Yoshisaburo Okakura\***

\*Reprinted from *Studies in English Literature*, Vol. XII, No. 4. Copyright 1932, by Kenkyusha, Tokyo.

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### **1. My concern over the spelling of English.**

It seems as if it takes a foreigner to appreciate the simplicity of English grammar and to deprecate the anomalies of its spelling. But "Why this meddling hand on the trough, and that stretched out of the Far East? As if you were not aware of the fact that we already have had enough 'upsetters' both at home and abroad, you old 'boat-rocker!'" Perhaps a piece of eloquence of this description will be the only reward I might expect for all my pains. And yet the deep-rooted love in me of this sublunary life, with all its innocent vanities, would not allow me to enjoy it in peace till I could see English freed, if not from all, at least from its remediable evils. How could a physician as a true apostle of the noble "art of mercy," as his practice is called in the Orient, ever have one single hour of real rest, so long as he has within his easy reach a curable patient calling for his help? Just as if in his senses he will not (and surely ought not!) pass by a man with a bleeding arm without taking some immediate step to provide relief, so anyone with a heart to feel for human frailties in general, and some warm drops of compassion to spare for his fellow-travellers on life's solitary way, more especially one in the teaching profession, naturally will not, if made of the true metal at all, endure the piteous sight of the physical torture as well as mental energy wasted on an irrational spelling in an otherwise rational nation. Especially is this the case when the greatest sufferers are its tender members of the rising generation, and merely because their elders, who are under the narcotic influence of custom, are ready to feel in the deed a smack of patriotism and a dash of scholarly flavor into the bargain.

All this, however, may not be sufficient as a reason for my particular interest in English spelling, as, if one might with great reason say, the Japanese writing itself, with its own traditional usages of the native syllabics, and what is most lamentable, with an enormous number (12,000 at the lowest estimate) of the Chinese characters in their manyfold phonetico-semantic as well as calligraphic forms, it is this very hopeless condition of the native mechanism of the graphic expression of thought that strongly draws my attention towards the spelling question in English. For it is this language that is taught as one of the most important subjects of study in middle-grade schools all throughout Japan, and as such, every single item in English grammar (i.e. its phonological, orthographical, syntactical, and other linguistic as well as stylistic facts) has its special meaning as a means both of culture and training. The less tainted by linguistic and other unreason, the better of course for the learner. But alas for the young learners of English in Japan! After they have fought for six complete years against the most fearful orthological odds in the whole world, they have to face anew, poor things, a fresh set of spelling abnormalities that beset them on their entrance into secondary school. Only yesterday a young beginner of English in my household was overheard confiding his secret to his aunt concerning the right hits at spelling exercises, which was, according to his boyish idea, to go by contraries of what the logic of the literal arrangement most naturally suggested. This is simply horrible as a mental tendency, since it leads to a nebulous mind, so contrary to the way of thinking aimed at by educationists. A Japanese child just beginning his English first reader at school may in the truest sense be said to be leaping out of the frying-pan into the fire.

This state of things in our educational curriculum, as you can easily understand, is by itself serious enough to a thinking member of Japanese society; indeed too much so to let him look with indifference upon the appalling mass of heterogeneity whose name is English orthography. Is that not a sufficient reason for my claim to have a finger in the pie, even if I may thereby burn my nail off? But there is another consideration that has sharpened my interest in things English in their linguistic beatings. That, of all the modern European languages of wide political as well as cultural importance brought under our notice in the early years of the Meiji Era, English has come to be crowned with the glory of being the one officially sanctioned as eligible for introduction in practically all of the secondary schools and there taught with an almost pathetic assiduity, is perhaps to be attributed more to the result of the political status of Japan in those early days than to any act of prophetic foresight on the part of the men at the rudder. As good luck would have it, however, English, with all its orthological imperfections, has, during the last fifty years, been steadily making its triumphal march around the whole habitable earth, thus by gradual steps promising to win for itself the glorious prestige of being an interlanguage in no very distant future. That English happens to be the vernacular of two of the greatest world-powers on both sides of the Atlantic, is only one half of the explanation of her ascendancy. The other half, and a more enduring one, is to be found in the linguistic structure of the language itself in its modern development, which, notwithstanding its most erratic spelling, is pretty simple in pronunciation and highly analytic in its syntactic framework. When I speak in this manner about the ease that attends the learning of English, the reader will remember that I have in view some such influential languages of Europe as French, German, Italian, and Spanish as objects of comparison. If put side by side with any of these, you will find that *English always comes out the brighter for the test*. Statistical researches of the most impartial description have of recent years repeatedly revealed the undeniable fact that it has been fast gaining ground on all of the above-mentioned rival languages.

## **2. The Future of English as The World Language.**

The international disturbances that trouble us at present are chiefly the outcome of international misunderstanding. This latter is chiefly due to difficulties of communication between the peoples themselves. Some better means of international transmission of thought is necessary for the possible realization of world peace. Hence the need for an international auxiliary language. Attempts have been to produce an artificial language: Volapuk, Langue Bleue, etc. in the past, and Esperanto, Ido, Novial, Interlingua, etc. at present. Being artificial, and sponsored by no one country, they all seem doomed to go the same way as the Frankenstein monster – to be historical relics of vain hopes. Each of these artificial languages is the brainstorm of one person. Being human and not infallible, they all have their faults – so apparent to others but invisible to the complacent author.

Great Britain and the United States of America are undoubtedly the two most powerful nations on earth at present; with the biggest territorial extent. Though with the inevitable dialectic divergences in either of its two principal types, the language used by the educated classes of the two nations, viz, the English tongue, is, principally as well as practically, one and the same in its main linguistic features. English has, now for centuries, been regarded as one of the most influential and handy verbal auxiliaries for the international communication of ideas. Post-war conditions have been favorable to this tendency to a very marked degree. As an auxiliary for the international exchange of thought, English can by no means claim any such regularity and logical consistency as an artificial language specialty schemed for such features and advantages. English, however, has this advantage over Esperanto and all the other artificial languages now in use: that it is provided with every facility of its own, peculiar to a highly cultivated modern language made ready for further developments by centuries of embellishments, assimilations, and innovations. These offer several words with closely similar meanings, yet sufficient differing so as to provide several shades of meaning – something the artificial languages overlooked because they are geared to simplicity. The worst example of carrying simplicity to an extreme is Ogden's *Basic English*, where meaning is



distorted like a Chinese woman's bound foot, in order to have a minimal vocabulary to learn. Our regular and complete English has all the tools the word-merchant needs to express any condition of law, science, literature or emotion. In English, one can feel and be emotional just as well as think and be precise. It is, in its present state of development, quite simple in its grammatical structure, incomparably more so than French or German, which are its only potential rivals in the whole field of competition. Yet its phonetic conditions may be said to be much worse than any of its close competitors.

The chief obstacle (and a tremendous one it is) which hinders present day English from universal adoption as an international auxiliary language, is the lamentably chaotic conditions of its conventional spelling. Historical researches of scholars show us that most of the orthographical anomalies met with in English are simply the result of lifting of spellings from foreign words without respelling into the sounds of the spoken words. Greek spellings conflict with Latin, and these with French, German and Spanish – all of whom are heavily represented in Modern English. This makes it appear to be a capricious use, of the letters for whimsical and conflicting sound values – all of which must be learned by sight rather than by rules or sounding out the letters. *The amount of wasted time and energy that accompanies lessons in English orthography is simply appalling.* Along with the hardships gone through by the American as well as the British children, we must not forget the tortures those poor young foreigners suffer whose fate it is to swallow the bitter, and often poisonous, cup to the dregs; this being actually the case, for instance, with boys and girls in Japan, where English is obligatory in all the middle-grade schools. It is amazing to us foreigners that the English government, so logical and far-sighted in many respects, should be so slow to see the need for simplifying English spelling.

The movement for the simplification of English spelling has in recent years been severally started, so far with no appreciable results. Why are people so easily scared by an innovation in spelling which is different from the accustomed form, and prone to look askance at some such publications, for instance, as the "*Buletins ov the Spelling Reform Asoshiashun*, prepared and publisht under the ospises ov the Asoshiashun'z Publishing Comiti," which were started in 1887? The Simplified Spelling Society of England, which was brought into existence in London 25 years ago, has now dwindled into a mere name, though at its start it seemed rather promising, as it could count among its charter members many great names in different spheres of humanistic activity; Andrew Carnegie with his great love of peace and mankind, supporting the movement as one of its Vice-Presidents. Not any lack of ardour, but the disastrous consequences of the Great War, with perhaps a dash of well-meaning inadvertence in the system itself. The need for further investigations in this field of study is keenly felt, so that some workable system of spelling reform may be achieved. One fine morning in the not too distant future, we may be writing what one might tentatively call "World English" (or, shall it be christened "Brit-Americ"?).

Before the desired unification of the two, however, something else might be done besides rationalization of spelling in order to qualify present day English better for its exalted position as an (and eventually *the*) international auxiliary language. That something will naturally be done in the form of a thoro revision of the entire structure of English as a type of human speech, so that the lowest extent of vocabulary and grammatical mechanism absolutely necessary for our civic life may approximately be ascertained. Without this kind of linguistic survey, the unification and final establishment of English as a well-organized means of thought conveyance for cosmopolitan use, may necessarily be greatly retarded. The need for taking immediate steps in the direction of a thoro verbal as well as grammatical readjustment is urgent in view of the fact that English forms, in many Asiatic as well as European countries, a serious item in the school curriculum, bitter tears often being shed, merely because the language has never been properly altered to become a manageable means of linguistic expression well within the reach of a foreign learner, etc....

It was therefore no small satisfaction to me to find these somewhat dreamy ideas and conjectures of mine endorsed and numerically proved so thoroly in Dr. Erwin Ritter's pamphlet, *Die Sprache im internationalen Verkehr* (2 auflage, S. Braun, Karlsruhe, Baden, 1932), where the author winds up his argument with the following (trans.):

"In virtue of my experience in the Federal Assembly and the International Worker's Conference, I might personally attest that the English language is becoming a language of world-wide intercourse. The spoken English in Europe, America, and other parts of the world is related to the new *World English* in much the same way that official language is related to dialects.

The greater part of the delegates to international congresses already can speak English or at least understand it. Also, English is widely spread geographically: Not only is it the official language in England and the United States, but it can be found in Central and South America, in Australia, India, China, Japan, and South Africa as a trade language in practical use.

In the last hundred years its growth has surpassed that of all other languages. While, for example, in 1830 French and German had 32 million speakers each, whereas English had only 24 million speakers, the French statistics given on pages 5 and 6 show that on the 31st of Dec. there were 170 million English-speakers, while; German had 80 million and French 45 million.

Thus English enjoys many of the advantages that a world-language must possess. As shown on page 20, English grammar and syntax are very simple and easy to learn. There is only one form of the article for all genders, alike for singular and plural. The adjectives are uninflected. Except for the possessive in -'s, the nouns have only one case-form. The Latin alphabet is used, and there is no excessive capitalization [this refers to the way that all German nouns are capitalized].

However, it is obvious that English can become the world language, only if *thoroughgoing reforms* are undertaken. This particularly concerns English *orthography*, a very painful aspect of English – indeed, *the* reason why English has not enjoyed even wider diffusion throughout the world. Our basic principle must be: write as you speak! Also, English has numerous exceptions to its grammatical rules. An international language cannot afford such exceptions – in particular, it must not have irregular verbs!

Through a reform of English, the world would most swiftly and easily reach an urgently needed goal: a world language."

But whether a great living language like English will suffer in peace any such deliberate acts of artificial liberation at all, and if practicable, where and how and to what extent to begin the alteration, are questions to be settled by a competent body of scholars and experts, representative of peoples whose mother-tongue is English, with a number of those foreigners whose opinion may seem likely to have important bearing upon the research. Hence the urgent need and desirability of having some big international corporation with educational and humanitarian purposes that would stand by the noble cause, at once philanthropic and cosmopolitan!

In this connection, I feel it a duty here to call the reader's attention to the fact that an English scholar of international fame as the indefatigable editor of many important series of works on history, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and kindred subjects of study, and himself an author of no small caliber, Mr. C. K. Ogden, of Magdalene College, Cambridge, has just succeeded in giving the world what might cursorily be described as a "portable" auxiliary international language, cut with marvelous skill out of the whole rock-bed of solid old English. He calls the new vehicle of thought "Basic," the first idea of which was incidentally suggested to his vigilant mind in the course of his study of Jeremy Benthan's writings on verbal functions, and after painstaking research work

extending now over nearly 15 years, he was ready, in 1930, to face the general public with the first of his booklets on the new *lingua franca*, entitled "*Basic English*," a General Introduction with Rules and Grammar." The volume makes itself remarkable in this, that it is written entirely in Basic, a taste of which can be had from the following description of it in the opening words of Mr. Ogden's *Debabelization*:

"Basic English is an attempt to give everyone a second, or international, language, which will take as little of the learner's time as possible.

To the eye and ear it will not seem much different from normal English, which is now the language of 500 million persons.

There are only 850 words in the complete list, which maybe clearly printed on one side of a piece of note-paper. But simple rules are given for making other words with the help of those in the list....

It is an English in which 850 words do all the work of 20,000, and has been formed by taking out everything which is not necessary to the sense. *Disembark*, for example, is broken up into *get off the ship*.

By putting together the names of simple operations – such as *get, give, come, go, put, take* – with the words for directions like *in, over, through*, and the rest, 2 or 3,000 complex ideas, like *insert* which becomes *put in*, are made part of the learner's store of words...

In addition to the Basic words themselves, the learner has, at the start, about 50 words which are now so common in all languages that they may be freely used for any purpose. Examples are *radio, hotel, telephone, bar, club*.....

For the needs of any science, a short special list gets the expert to a stage where international words are ready to hand..."

From this we learn that "Basic" forms a detached world by itself like a small but fertile island in a calm sea, rich in marine products, where a reasonable amount of labor is sure to supply their daily necessities to the contented inhabitants. It is a complete, self-sufficient, independent entity of vocabulary and grammar, quite different from any arbitrary collection of words and phrases gathered into a mass merely because they happen or seem to happen to occur with greater frequency in the current writings.

(Editor's note: But it is not intended nor is it practical for a complex civilization of modern empires with manufacturing, politics, laws, and social problems.)

(A glance at a composition in Basic compared with our regular English reveals that Basic requires nearly twice as many words to poorly or incompletely express the ideas of any but a very simple writer. The awkwardness of Basic becomes noticeable in this comparison. But this main weakness is not its only weakness. Shades of meaning usually are not possible.)

"The 850 sounds (i.e. sound-groups, or words)," Ogden tells us, "being fixed by the gramophone records, their written forms can be memorized as individual entities, with no need for special emphasis on the principles, if any, by which they are related to an infinity of other unessential oddities. Phonetic (spelling) reform can thus be left to pursue its separate path. It may find Basic a useful ally, and Basic may later profit by its progress, but at this time I do not want to fight a revolution on two fronts. Hence the importance of Basic for educational work which cannot allow

itself to be involved in controversies such as any violent departure from the habits of centuries must always engender."

(Ed. comment: He is self-contradictory. What can be more controversial than changing the speaking habits of Englishmen, or the grammatical construction of irregular verbs, which have stood for centuries?)

But it happens that no small number (almost half) of his 850 words are anomalous in spelling, or just because the number of such anomalies unfortunately happens to be almost overwhelming, would it not be wiser for one whose interest in Basic is principally educational, to begin his approach towards it by thinking out some workable means of freeing it of its orthological aberrations? This is the more desirable when we consider that some of the "Basic" islanders, on their reaching manhood of linguistic attainment, are to be ferried over to the mainland where English speech is found in its fuller and much wider exuberance of growth. And it is, indeed, from this point of view, that I now ask the reader's permission to take a fresh start and consider the more important subject of this modest essay:

### 3. The latest moves in English Spelling Reform.

The history of English spelling reform is as long as it is complicated. Already in the latter half of the 16th century, pioneers are seen coming forth with their several ideas about an emendation of the English spelling as it was then practised, some reformers going in for phonetic script while others thought the step too radical and wanted to go on with their work unaided by any new sound-symbols. It is hardly necessary to mention that the new movement was called into life only because the anarchical state of English orthography, as bad in those days as at present, was too much for a thinking mind to bear in peace.

The cause of the curse, which is not very likely to disappear very soon, is not far to seek. In an admirable little book on "*English spelling, its rules and reasons*," (F.S. Crofts & Co, New York, 1927), Dr. Cragie tells us that the "irregularities of English spelling, and the difficulty of reducing it to any fixed rules, are in great part due to the variety of the elements of which the language is composed." Out of the whole world of heterogeneity, he distinguishes seven types, which are:

- A. The native English type (*sun, moon, heaven, earth, day*, etc.).
- B. The early French type (*cage, chance, chamber, circle, guard*, etc.).
- C. The adapted Latin type (*capital, censure, decision, effect, religion*, etc.).
- D. The unadapted Latin and Romanic type (*arena, formula, inertia, larva, spatula*, etc.).
- E. The Greek type, adapted and unadapted. (1. *aeronaut, aphorism, architect*, etc. 2. *asphyxia, hysteria, lithia*, etc.).
- F. The modern French type (*cigarette, bean, belle, bureau, crochet, machine*, etc.).
- G. The exotic element, miscellaneous in origin (*llama, manna, mazurka, pagoda, pajama*, etc.).

Actually this should be broken up into: Spanish, Hebrew, Russian, Chinese, Eskimo, African, Amer-Indian, to name just a few. When the winds are to blow simultaneously from these seven quarters of orthographical heaven, the head of the poor learner-cock is not likely to remain unmuddled in the constant whirl!

The turbulence, we are to remember, has been brought about not only because there happened to be more than one single letter for each sound, but because each single letter was necessitated to stand for more than two, nay often several sounds. Hence the pathetic sight of a "rough-coated, dough-faced ploughman from Poughkeepsie plodding homewards, puffing, coughing and hiccupping, through the streets of Scarborough!" In this connection, it may not be altogether out

of place to call the reader's attention to the number of ways the speech sounds now in use among those who speak the so-called "standard" English can be written:

1. p as in *pup*, can be written: *pup*, *happy*, *shepherd*, *hope*, *hiccough* – 5 ways.
2. b as in *bib*, *robber*, *cupboard*, *robe* – 4 ways.
3. m as in *man*, *summer*, *phlegm*, *autumn*, *lamb*, *attempt*, *home* – 7 ways.
4. t as in *tea*, *mitten*, *thyme*, *doubt*, *indict*, *late* – 6 ways.
5. d as in *deed*, *add*, *could*, *bdellium*, *dhow*, *mezzo* – 6 ways.
6. n as in *nun*, *penny*, *Wednesday*, *sign*, *knife*, *Lincoln*, *mnemonics*, *pneumatic*, *mane* – 9 ways.
7. k as in *kink*, *cant*, *back*, *account*, *monarch*, *acquire*, *hough*, *exception*, *make*, *ache* – 10 ways.
8. g as in *grog*, *egg*, *ghost*, *guest*, *exit* – 5 ways.
9. ng as in *ring*, *ink*, *handkerchief*, *tongue*, *gingham* – 5 ways
10. f as in *fun*, *off*, *photo*, *rough*, *often*, *sapphire*, *wife* – 7 ways.
11. v as in *view*, *of*, *nephew*, *stove*, *halve*, *navvy*, *rendezvous* – 7 ways.
12. th as sounded in *path*, *eighth*, *phthisis* – 3 ways.
13. th as sounded in *that*, *bathe*, *ye* – 3 ways.
14. s as in *sister*, *cell*, *city*, *mercy*, *miss*, *science*, *schism*, *waistcoat*, *sword*, *psalm*, *cease*, *peace* – 10 ways.
15. z as in *zeal*, *buzz*, *was*, *scissors*, *discern*, *raspberry*, *Czar*, *asthma*, *xylol*, *haze*, *exit* – 11 ways.
16. r as in *roar*, *sorry*, *rhyme*, *colonel*, *corps*, *myrrh*, *write*, *mortgage* – 8 ways.
17. l as in *plural*, *mill*, *male*, *muscle*, *intaglio*, *kiln*, *island*, *castle*, *knowledge* – 9 ways.
18. sh as in *ship*, *machine*, *sugar*, *pension*, *assure*, *passion*, *conscious*, *nation*, *officiate*, *ocean*, *ancient*, *schedule* – 12 ways.
19. ch as in *church*, *watch*, *nature*, *courteous*, *question*, *cello*, *Czecho-Slovakia*, *righteous* – 8 ways.
20. as in *measure*, *azure*, *vision*, *glazier*, *rouge* – 5 ways.
21. j as in *joy*, *wedge*, *gaol*, *pigeon*, *religion*, *suggest*, *judgment*, *soldier*, *grandeur*, *Greenwich* – 10 ways.
22. y as in *yet*, *union*, *hideous*, *hallelujah*, *vignette*, *cañon* – 6 ways.
23. wh as in *when*, is spelled in only one way.
24. w as in *went*, *queen*, *distinguish*, *memoir*, *patois*, *one*, *bivouac* – 7 ways.
25. h as in *home*, *who*, *Mojave* – 3 ways.

### Vowels

26. long-e as in *feel*, *beat*, *field*, *seize*, *we*, *people*, *key*, *suite*, *Beauchamp*, *chagrin*, *antique*, *Caesar*, *mosquito*, *quay*, 14 ways.
27. short-i as in *ship*, *hymn*, *England*, *women*, *busy*, *build*, *sieve*, *give*, *breeches*, *village*, *plenty*, *minute*, *mountain*, *always*, *guinea*, *forfeit*, *money* – 17 ways.
28. long-a as in *mail*, *way*, *made*, *great*, *rein*, *reign*, *eight*, *grey*, *gaol*, *gauge*, *straight*, *campaign*, *champagne*, *halfpenny*, *waste*, *eh*, *aye*, *ate* – 18 ways.
29. short-e as in *bed*, *head*, *many*, *said*, *says*, *heifer*, *leisure*, *friend*, *bury*, *leopard*, *Reynold* – 10 ways.
30. short-a as in *fact*, *ma'am*, *have*, *plaid*, *Gaelic*, *laugh*, *guarantee* – 7 ways.
31. Italian-a as in *part*, *bazaar*, *ma'am*, *hurrah*, *eclat*, *are*, *taunt*, *calm*, *seargeant*, *heart*, *memoir*, *patois*, *guard* – 13 ways.
32. long-i as in *pitie*, *kind*, *1*, *high*, *cry*, *guy*, *pie*, *height*, *isle*, *aisle*, *dye*, *type*, *indict* – 13 ways.
33. the diphthong in *caoutchouc*, *umlaut*, *hour*, *sound*, *how*, *house*, *plough*, *Macleod* – 8 ways.
34. short-o as in *hot*, *wash*, *yacht*, *sausage*, *hough*, *John*, *knowledge*, *gone* – 8 ways.
35. intermediate sound in *draw*, *sauce*, *all*, *talk*, *broad*, *because*, *aught*, *ought*, *hurrah*, *extraordinary*, *awe*, *for*, *gone* – 13 ways.
36. the diphthong in *boil*, *noise*, *boy*, *quoin*, *turquoise*, *buoy*, *buoyed* – 7 ways.
37. short-u as in *other*, *one*, *sum*, *blood*, *does*, *money*, *some*, *tongue*, *rubbed* – 9 ways.

38. long-o as in *chauffeur, mauve, beau, coarse, hope, oh, goat, crow, go, more, o'er, foe, folk, brooch, soul, sew, apropos, though, owe, yoeman, cologne, depot, hautboy, O, rogue* – 25 ways.
39. short-oo as in *look, put, wolf, could, worsted, sure, bouillon, pugh, brusque* – 9 ways.
40. long-oo as in *caoutchouc, leeward, rheum, do, moon, tomb, shoe, manoeuvre, blue, flute, loose, wooed, soup, fruit, chew, brewed, duly, through, move, coup, ragout, rendezvous, billet-doux, buoy* – 24 ways.
41. long-u as in *beauty, foed, feud, deuce, few, cue, ewe, lieu, human, use, queue, fugue, you, yule, suit* – 15 ways.
42. vocalic-r as in *verb, bird, word, heard, journal, nurse, amateur, myrtle, colonel* – 9 ways.
43. schwa as in *idea, cruel, profession, submit* – 4 ways.

The 12 diphthongs or triphthongs with r are omitted as being combinations or duplications of the ordinary vowel sounds with r or schwa.

This shows that there are at least 381 ways of writing the 43 sounds of English. The above list, which by the way is not a complete listing but rather one hastily drawn up out of the instances given in my little volume on English phonetics intended for the use of my young compatriots, and so containing nothing but the bare elements of the subject, I should not be surprised were you to find the following criticism not so shocking as, without a premonition, you well might:

"How spelling can be taught at all in elementary schools is a constant wonder to me. There is not, to my knowledge, any rule which a teacher can give which has not almost as many exceptions as examples. Thus, 'final e lengthens the preceding vowel, as in *make, bile, gibe, behave*; but then, what of *have, give, love, move, tongue*? 'G before e or i is sounded like j, as in *gentle, gin*;' but *gift, gig, get, gild*, abrogate that rule. 'Gh after au or ou is pronounced like f, as in *laugh, cough, rough*;' but what of *haughty, plough, bough*? And, worst of all, what can the teacher do with the rule 'When two vowels go awalking, the first one does the talking.' How to reconcile the ea in *each, bread, great*; ai in *hail, against, mountain*; au in *fault, gauge, laugh*; ou in *sound, wound, could, soul*; ow in *blow, towel, toward*; ew in *crew, sew, few*; ei in *heifer, receive, reign, forfeit*; ie in *field, tie, friend*? and so on ad infinitus.

"Thus, whether the pupil has to utter the written words or to write the spoken ones, in either case he has so many possibilities before him that it can only be by mere chance if he hits on the correct answer; and it is through such guess-work, which cannot be dignified with the name of discipline at all, that he makes his entrance into the world of letters and science, where everything *ought to be* ordered by system and intelligence. I am not speaking too strongly in saying that our lack of systematic orthography has reduced the advantage of alphabetic writing to a minimum, and made correct spelling almost impossible... How spelling can under the circumstances be made a subject of examination by inspectors of education, I am at a loss to understand. A child may surely without blame write *beef* as *befe, beaf, bief, beif, beaff*, etc., since all these combinations might be used to convey the sound. When our primary education is becoming one of the great questions of the day, this problem of orthography must assume a higher importance than it has ever had hitherto. When the mind is being introduced into a realm of exactitude, order, and principle, the spectacle of pure chaos in language cannot be edifying, but rather demoralising....

"If the present system had any historical value, as indicating the source, the original pronunciation, or any other important fact about a word, we might reconcile ourselves to it. But its *positive mistakes* are so many that we can never place any faith in it. We write *sovereign*, from the ridiculous idea that it had something to do with the verb *to reign, posthumus* with an *h*, from the error, long since exploded by Latin scholars, that it referred to those *post humum*, after death; *sylvan*, though scholars always now write *silva* in Latin; *island* from an imagined connection with

insula, whereas it is Anglo-Saxon, and should be *iland* or *eyland*. Why should we write the participles *spread*, *dead*, but on the other hand, *led*, *fled*? That some historical information may be conveyed by the present orthography cannot be denied; but where one-half of such information is demonstrably false information, the other half is open to suspicion and is practically useless. And even if this half were absolutely reliable, it is an open question still whether the retention of old orthography, or the keeping of the orthography in accordance with the times yields worthy information to the historian – not available elsewhere. Hence, I contend that even the most plausible argument for the old spelling, the argument most likely to find favor with men of letters, who like the flavor of antiquity, works in the opposite direction." [\[1\]](#)

This seems to me medicinal enough to cure the most obstinate patient of his misplaced patriotism, for that is the only explanation I can make out of the blind tenacity with some people, otherwise clear-minded, would cling to the accustomed modes of spelling words, simply because they have been so settled from time nobody knows when.

"The wisdom of our ancestors is in the *arrangement*; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for." (Dr. Samuel Johnson)

Moved by a higher love of their country, however, there were some scholars in the latter half of the 18th century, who, instead of taking to the usual task of orthographical amendments, thought it more beneficial to the general public to provide it with a pronouncing dictionary, so that any one who cared might ascertain how a conglomeration of letters is to be deciphered into an intelligible group of sounds. Among these the name of Thomas Sheridan is to be specially remembered as the author of "*A Dissertation on the Causes of the Difficulties which occur in Learning the English Tongue, with a scheme for publishing an English Grammar and Dictionary upon a plan entirely new; the object of which shall be to facilitate the attainment of the English Tongue, and establish a perpetual standard of pronunciation.*" This important pamphlet was published in 1762, later by 7 years than Dr. Johnson's lexicographical masterpiece, which, though it works marvels in its way, left the pronunciation side almost untouched, the side Sheridan did his best to make clear in his own "*General Dictionary*" that appeared in 1780, not only by dividing words into syllables but, by his special device, marking each vowel-letter or letter-group by means of a superadded numerical figures. It is in this memorable essay that we first see the fundamental principles of a phonetic notation clearly stated: "Words written," he says, "may be considered in two ways: either as types of sounds which stand for ideas; or, immediate types of ideas without reference to sounds. Deaf men can consider them only in the latter light; those who have the organs of hearing, they may stand in both, or either.

"When written words are considered only as the types of sounds, in order to make them correspond to their archetypes, the four following rules should be strictly observed:

1. No character should be set down in any word, which is not pronounced. (No silent or superfluous letters in words.)
2. Every distinct simple sound should have a distinct character to mark it, for which it should uniformly stand. (One sound, its one letter.)
3. The same character should never be set down as the representative of two different sounds. (One letter for one sound.)
4. All compound sounds should be marked only by such characters as will naturally, and necessarily, produce those sounds, upon being properly pronounced in the order in which they are placed. (No improper digraphs.)"

And then, judging the unruly state of English writing these standards, he laments, "that the darkest hieroglyphics, or most difficult cyphers, which the art of man has hitherto found out, were not better

calculated to conceal the sentiments of those who use them, from all who had not the key, than the state of our spelling is, to conceal the true pronunciation from all, except a few well-educated natives," and goes on thusly to lay open the source of the irregularity and confusion:

"The chief cause of the irregular state of our spelling, will at once appear, when we reflect that we have adopted the Roman alphabet to be the representative of our sounds. Now, since we have a greater number of simple *sounds* in our tongue than there are *letters* in that alphabet, it must necessarily follow that the surplus number of sounds can have no peculiar characters to represent them in writing; and consequently, that either they must be marked by single characters, which also stand for other sounds; or by combinations of characters, which, separately taken stand for other simple sounds."

Like the beautiful Penelope of old, an English letter, more especially one doing duty for a vowel-sound, has almost as many wooers as she may care to have. Very unlike the faithful Greek matron, however, instead of remaining true to one sound and one only, she goes on flirting with many others who approach her with a timely sigh. The relation is decidedly more frivolous than that of the flirt. "*Si on ne s'assuront pas du orthographe, il y en a toujours un autre.*" goes the French phrase. Very much worse, alas, with English vowels!

That Sheridan, with all his insight and knowledge, failed to meet the impending need, except in the field of pronouncing, with his dictionary, was, with some of the later reformers, a matter of deep regret. "It is singular," writes George Withers, who in 1874 called out forcibly to the public in a little brochure entitled *The English Language Spelled as Pronounced*, p. 35, Tribuner & Co, London, "that one who could write so ably on the subject of written language, its shortcomings and requirements, as Mr. Sheridan in the foregoing passages, should have contented himself with merely publishing a *Dictionary*; not attempting even the smallest improvement in our 'defective alphabet,' nor altering in any respect the current faulty mode of spelling English. Indeed, he seems to have considered that any such amendment of the alphabet and spelling 'must prove to the last degree impracticable, and consequently must fail of its end.' With the key to the pronunciation of the English tongue furnished in his dictionary, 'learners may know how to pronounce most words in our language at sight, notwithstanding the irregularity of our spelling. And with respect to such anomalous words as cannot be reduced to any rule, as the learner, where he has no light to guide him, may always have recourse to the dictionary, it will be in the power of everyone to acquire a just pronunciation of all of our words, with case and certainty.' Rather a lame conclusion to arrive at, after stating so eloquently the requirements of the language." Here the dissatisfied critic quotes an interesting passage from Boswell, where, on the mention of Sheridan's work in connection with the desirability of having a pronouncing dictionary, Johnson is heard to say, "Sheridan's dictionary may be very well, but you cannot always carry it about with you; and when you want the word, you have not the dictionary." Another instance of the illogical reasoning of a supposedly wise man.

The real motive why Sheridan stopped short of taking a further step and going in for a new system of spelling English by sounds can by no means be ascertained. He may as likely as not have thought it unworthy of his time and labor to try to eke out the scanty English alphabet by adding a number of *Romic* characters in their modified use. May he not have preferred, if at all, a wholesale change, so that there might come about a thorough Herculean wash? But this is mere supposition.

(Ed. note: next were recounted a great number of milestones left by other famous inventors of alphabets (alfabeteers, as I call them) – so lengthy as to fill a booklet – which we must forego due to space limitations.)

In any proposed spelling change, the etymological and historical interest should of course not be overlooked. But to give it an unquestioned preponderance in a field of mental exertion where many



other considerations of importance justly claim out immediate attention, might not be very "practical" as it would seem to some students of philology. Are we not to clear the green, where our dear children daily go and have their sports, of venomous reptiles, merely because they happen to be specimens of some zoological interest? Being, as I am, quite ready to follow in this matter of spelling reform the steady lead of Dr. Henry Bradley and repeat after him that, "I am opposed to any radical change based on purely phonetic principles; and on the other hand, I have expressed my conviction that our existing system urgently needs improvement," and also that, "the right policy for reformers is at first to confine the attack to those points of the present system for which there is no defence but custom." [2] I cannot sometimes help thinking with regret of these American reformers of earlier date that they were almost too mindful of the English ways in the matter of conventional spelling.

They ought, in my opinion, to have followed the example of the Boston Tea-party, and thrown, along with the tea-chests, at least the more burdensome members of the traditional spelling down into the harbor water, thus declaring their orthographical independence in the sacred name of all the American boys and girls, born and yet to be born! Custom, it is not to be denied, often proves to be "the great guide of human life," but it is as often found to be an obstinate donkey to travel with. And yet, the natural man in us, like the poor old Franconian in the story, often finds relief in getting heartily sentimental over a dead ass!

No matter what we may think or say of it, however, one thing is certain: the fickle master, Public, is satisfied to go by custom. And where *vox populi* counts a great deal, an innovator will do well to keep a sharp eye to that point. Just listen to what Mr. Lloyd James tells us in *The Listener*. [3] "Spelling reform is always a thorny subject, for the existing spelling is so sanctified by long usage, as to be regarded as sacred. We are all built that way, and that is the end of the matter. We hate new spellings, and hate any disturbance of the printed page. 'Correct' spelling has been synonymous with education, and reformed spelling will consequently look uneducated. *If we could only bear it for a few years, we should get used to it; it would look as good or better than the other*, and our youngsters would have one fewer burden to bear in their early years!" How real of the common attitude the description, and how true to the point the advice! But few indeed will be the number of those who are ready to go through personal inconvenience for a while, so that their successors in life may benefit by the sacrifice. "An author," says Dr. Bradley, [4] "whether he is one who has something he wishes to tell the world, or one who lives by his writings, will not willingly limit the circle of his readers by indulging in orthographical eccentricities." [5] Besides, we must remember that there is a certain class of words where an alteration of the customary spelling usually means the destruction of their identity. That is why the business of a simplified spelling society has to stop short of proper names. "To speak only of surnames, Spenser and Spencer, Gray and Grey, Phipps and Fipps, Cholmondeley and Chumley, Wild, Wilde, Wyld, and Wylde are distinct names, denoting different sets of persons. Although it is in proper names that the practical inconvenience of unphonetic spelling is at its worst, the reformer cannot meddle with them without doing more mischief than good." [4] Yes, this extraterritoriality must be strictly observed by an advocate of any system of spelling reform, and the only set of persons that are privileged to step, generally either for scientific or educational purposes, into the tabooed land are those whose business it is to transcribe an oral piece of text as faithfully as their phonetic symbols will allow. (For that purpose there is the International Phonetic Alphabet.) For them it is absolutely necessary that the signs used should retain their individual phonetic values and not dwindle to a mere section of a graphic whole that stands for a word, because then the value of each phonetic symbol ceases to count individually, and the meaning of using one is practically lost. Hence the following important warning on the part of Dr. Bradley: "A serious mistake of method has been committed by many phoneticians, through failure to distinguish two things that differ greatly – a reformed spelling for general use, and a phonetic notation intended to teach correct pronunciation and the analysis of speech sounds. Those whose aim it is to bring into use a reformed spelling (even one that is

intended to be phonetically accurate) are acting wisely when they employ it in the printing of connected texts that will be intrinsically interesting to the reader, and when they encourage their pupils to use the reformed spelling in their own compositions. The object is to render the pupil so familiar with the new orthography that he may be able to use it freely for the ultimate purposes of reading and writing – the apprehension and expression of *meaning*. When this familiarity is attained, the reader will have come to identify the words before him by their general appearance, without troubling much whether he pronounces the successive letters correctly or not; and the writer will use the prescribed spelling, even though it does not agree with his own pronunciation. There will be no harm in this; an orthography intended for general purposes *must* be more or less conventional. But a phonetic notation of which the representation of sound is the *ultimate* object must be treated quite differently. If it is allowed to be used for 'the apprehension and expression of meaning,' its value will be greatly impaired. The learner should never be suffered to write a word in the phonetic script unless he has first learned to pronounce it correctly." [6]

So much for the purely phonetic script and the proper domain of its application. It is in a reformed spelling for general use - not a system of phonetic transcription, pure and simple - that is the subject of this treatise. In this practical field of graphic images, it goes without saying that any serious divergence from conventional makes a break in their continuity that is disturbing to an ordinary reader, and so a would-be reformer should make it a rule to indulge in no extensive re-spelling, except when the unprincipled use of letters is more harmful to our mind than the temporary derangement of the visual images is to our sense of sight. But outside the extraterritorial jurisdiction of proper names, this is no excuse, for a true innovator of conventional spelling, to leave untouched patches of orthographical anomalies of glaring dye. Otherwise, the uniformity in the use of letters and other signs as so many phonetic symbols, cannot be kept up. So it is now our matter in hand to see how the latest development of the English spelling reform movement will look when considered in that light.

Owing to the rather abrupt secession from its activities, which the war obliged *The Simplified Spelling Soesiety* of London to discontinue, a considerable amount of mental labor and money that has gone into the work seems at first sight to be now almost as good as wholly lost. But a closer scrutiny reveals to us that, notwithstanding some of its unwise steps, the body of reformers, strongly pushed forward, more especially by the indefatigable devotion of Prof. Walter Ripman and the late William Archer, has done since its incorporation in 1908, much that has proved very helpful to later reformers. Indeed, it is my firm belief that Prof. R. E. Zachrisson, of the Royal University of Upsalla, Sweden, will himself be the first man to acknowledge his indebtedness to it in many ways for the working out of his "*Anglic, a New Agreed Simplified English Spelling*," [7] just as heartily as he actually does, among many others, to Dr. Godfrey Dewey, well known for his thorough statistical study of English spelling. In some sense, "Anglic" may be considered as a further development of the system advocated by the body of English reformers just referred to, – a fact which becomes more convincing when we take a peep at an example of *Easy Spelling*.

*A Reporter for the Daily Chronical*: "Well, as you have taken up this fad, you are naturally provided with a stock of ready arguments. But it will be long before you can argue people into the acceptance of such an uncouth method of spelling. Are you not conscious of its absurdity?"

*Mr. William Archer*: "Ov its absurdity, no; ov its uncuuthnes, yes. An absurd thing iz a thing that iz ridicyulus becauz it iz unreezonabl; and in that sens it iz the tradishonal speling that iz absurd. Uncuuth, on the uther hand, meenz simply unnoen, unfamiliar; and ov cors, whiel nienty-nien per cent ov the mater wun reeds iz in the oeld speling, a surtain air ov unfamiliarity must cling tu th nyu speling. But I ashur you that the mor I riet in this speling, the mor du I feel the real satisfacshon ov yuezing a good insted ov a bad instrooment. Az for uncuuthnes, wil yu pleez imajin for a moment that yu had alwaiz been acustomd tu riet '*tho, enuf, naibor, frend, siv, peepl, filosoler*,' and that sum

wun caim along and toeld yu that in the fyuetur yu must riet '*though, enough, neighbor, friend, sieve, people, philosopher,*' – yu wood not thinc theez formz uncuuth – yu wood cwiet justly thinc them monstrus and insain, tu ecstravagant tu be eeven laafabl."

With this kind of logs and charts to consult and steer by, a navigator beating his path in a sea, though he may often find it very choppy, need not trouble himself much about the safety of the voyage. More so when he is so fortunate as to have the help of many well-known Pilots. Dr. Godfrey Dewey, as one of these, seems to have made great contributions towards the growth of Anglic to its present status at the fostering hands of Prof. Zachrisson. The American reformer thought he saw many weak points in the whole plan of "Easy Spelling" (which eventually grew up to be Anglic of today), and, as Prof. Zachrisson himself tells us, "insisted upon certain modifications in the direction toward greater uniformity, if the system should be adopted as a basis for American and British spelling reform, and also urged the necessity of making the spelling suit the American as well as British pronunciation of English." [8]

Under these auspicious conditions, it is a happy sight indeed to see the new yacht, Anglic, newly launched and making its steady headway with colors bravely flying in the breeze, – so much so that one cannot help adding one's share of blessing towards the enterprise even in the form of a few insignificant blowings into the fair wind. My own little contribution will be in the shape of some outspoken remarks which may not sound like an unconditioned homage to the result Prof. Zachrisson has achieved. Whether my proposals are changes for the better or the other way, it is for the impartial reader to decide. But first let us see what a sample of the Anglic system is like.

### **Anglic Spelling Proper:**

The sport was at its hiet, the slieding was at the quicest, the laafter was at the loudest, when a sharp krak was hurd. There was a quik rush tordz the bank, a wield skreem from the laediz, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A larj mas of ies disapeerd; the wauter bubld up oever it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gluvz, and hankerchif were floeting on the surfis, and this was aul of Mr. Pickwick that enibodi kood see. [9]

"The text," says Prof. Zachrisson, "contains 79 words. In Anglic Spelling Proper 54 of the words are left unchanged (68%) and 9 more only slightly changed (*slieding, quik, quikest, wield, mas, disapeerd, babid, oever, hankerchif*).

"From this we can safely conclude:

- (1) that no new letters are wanted for a phonetic spelling on the basis of the Roman alphabet;
- (2) that no strictly Romo (i.e. Roman alphabet) spelling has any chance of replacing the ordinary spelling for general practical purposes, whereas Anglic Spelling Proper is an orthography which is phonetic in principle but at the same time bears sufficient resemblance to the existing spelling for the two systems to be used side by side for the same purposes."

The validity of this conclusion, however must be settled by the answer that is given to the question, "Why is the percentage of unchanged words so markedly high in the case of Anglic Spelling Proper?" I am much mistaken if the reader will not receive, with a big nod and a significant smile not exactly good-natured, the information that Anglic *tolerates within its own dominion words of unruly spelling that go about in the full enjoyment of their extraterritorial freedom, thereby giving the whole system an aspect of respectability not deserved by their deceitful nature.*

(Ed. note: the brief spelling rules for Anglic are omitted because of this, and also because World English, an out growth of Anglic, is much more regular and reliable.)

So far, from the example given, Anglic seems very rational, though the scheme still leaves much room for further emendation. But why I feel sorry for the cause of the Anglic movement is the fatal (for so it seems to me) step Prof. Zachrisson took in a weak moment, and suffered more than 42 words of erratic conventional spelling, which defy coming under any of the rules given above, to smuggle themselves into the system to its fearful disadvantage. They are like so many Greek warriors in the wooden horse taken into the ill-fated city of Troy, and yet Prof. Zachrisson seems well pleased with these extra territorial dwellers in his land, whom he calls "word-signs" This is why he has come to accord them so much liberty:

"In order to secure as great a resemblance as possible to the conventional orthography, it has been considered advisable to keep the present spelling in the following common words and derivatives from these words as word-signs:

*as, be, by, do, (-ful), has, he, her, his, how, I, is, me, my, now, of, off, she, than, that, their, them, then, these, they, this, tho, those, to, was, we, were, what, who, whole, whom, whose, why, with, you, your.*" [\[10\]](#)

Why this overwhelming anxiety to please the old customers, the *initiated*, the inveterate users of the old spelling, as if the huge mass of young learners, at home and abroad, going through their mental torture, were a negligible quantity? Why not try to think out a more comprehensive system where these fidgety members too will be able peacefully to enjoy their several lives just as they are at present, or else be subjected to slight changes, so that they may cease to be disturbing elements in the learning process. As an excuse for their participation in the system, Prof. Zachrisson explains that "Anglic is the only Anglo-Roman spelling in which the choice of such words is based on careful mathematical calculations as to their frequency," and gives two elaborate tables prepared by Dr. G. Dewey, which shows us in exact figures the rate of frequency (per 100,000 words), one for "Common Words Changed in Anglic," and the other for "Common Words Unchanged in Anglic." [\[11\]](#) The very highness of their frequency rate, however, might with more reason be argued, not *for*, but *against* the existence of words of anomalous spelling in the land of Anglic jurisdiction. A vegetarian dish may taste better for a secret spoonful of animal condiments, but the addition spoils the simplicity of the entire arrangement. Let us now see if it is at all possible for us to frame anew a system of simplified English spelling on the basis of the Roman alphabet, which will, without having recourse to any tricky method, yet in the main bear as close a resemblance to the present orthography as the uniformity in the use of letters and digraphs on phonetic principles will allow.

The realization of this teetotalian dream seems to me not altogether beyond my reach, for I have a deep-seated conviction about English spelling that,

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't."

### **The Y-O-K Alphabet.**

uses the consonant and consonant digraphs phonetically, except *k* before *e*, *i*, and *y*, and at the end of words. In all other places, *c* does the same duty, except before *w*, when *q* takes its place.

The digraphs *ng*, *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *wh*, are used phonetically. In addition, a line joining *t* to *h* makes for the voiced *th* sound. The *zh* sound, not demonstrable consistently in conventional spelling, is shown below along with examples of the long vowel sounds. X is used for both the *ks* and *gz* sounds.

gate – ga-t, father – fa:th'r, beef – be-f, pine – pi-n, growth – gro-th, beauty – bu-ty, verb – v;rb, put – pût, wooer – wu:' y, measure – mez'ur, ink – in'k, finger – fin'g'r, four – fo:r, all – o:l.

Besides the usual 26 letters of the alphabet, the reader will notice that many typographical marks play their roles in my scheme of simplified spelling. Seeing that they have been so useful as signs of punctuation, I do not see why the same slaves of the lamp should not be called on to render their services in new capacities so long as the additional parts they are to play do not interfere with their native duties. Of the seven marks thus appropriated, the first in importance is of course the hyphen (-) or rather the macron placed, not over, but next following the vowel-letter, so that it may give the preceding letter its "name" value. Next comes the colon (:), also used as a length mark. It simply prolongs the sound of the vowel-letter to which it is added. In other words, it forms with the letters *a*, *o*, and *u*, the symbols for the three sounds heard in *father*, *daughter*, and *school*. The apostrophe (') has two parts to play. When it stands between an *n* and either a *c* or *k* or *g*, it shows that the *n* in question is in value equal to the digraph *ng*. The other use of this sign is as part of the slight vocal murmur as heard as *er* at the end of words. This sign group 'r is always syllabic. When a non-syllabic murmur with potential *r*-sound in it is to be written, a single *r* is used, as in *a-ry*, *ti-ring*, *tu:rist*. For the strong form of vocal murmur, the best sign would be the tilde, – with an *r* after it; but as it may cause no small amount of difficulty for the printer, and more especially to the users of an ordinary typewriter, a sign group made of ;r may advantageously be used in its place.

The use of these punctuation marks, when allowed to take its natural course, will bring about occasions where words are to end with one of these graphic signs, which, being at the same time usual marks of punctuation, will often prove misleading even to a careful reader. So it becomes necessary to find some suitable means of saving the situation. For this purpose, let us see what letters and letter groups are actually in use in conventional orthography to express the last syllables of words ending in a long vowel or diphthong. Here are the commonest ones:

1. Long *a*: bay, grey.
2. Long *e*: see, pea, key, be.
3. Long *i*: my, buy, die, dye, high.
4. Long *o*: low, owe, go, doe, dough.
5. Long *u*: dew, cue, view.
6. Broad *a*: bah, papa.
7. Broad *o*: jaw, awe.
8. Broad *u*: drew, too, pooh, true, do, through, sou.
9. Diphthong *au*: cow, bough, thou.
10. Diphthong *oi*: boy.

All listed in the order of the more commoner first. Hence, a survey of the above list seems to be sufficient as a guide in our choice of letters to be added to the length marks so that they may hide their tail-ends. For 1. a-y; 2. e-e; 3. i-y; 4. o-w; 5. e-w; 6. a:h; 7. o:w; 8. u:w; 10. oy are, after all, the most natural closures according to usage. Only in the case of 7, the predominance of *aw* in the conventional spelling makes us think twice and see if it is not possible to bring *a* (and not *o*) into our sign. This could never be done, however, unless we strain the principles concerning the rational use of letters to such an extent that the whole system will be in danger. So we must use *o:w*. As to no. 9, we are to write *aw* when this diphthong turns up at the end of words. Here again, the sight of *aw* may be strange to those who are accustomed to the conventional spelling. But they will soon see the benefit of harmony in the use of the alphabet. Besides, we must not for one moment forget that our endeavors in spelling reform are an attempt principally in behalf of young learners, both at home and abroad. In fact, what I humbly propose to offer here to the thinking public is English in a simplified orthography for use in the earlier stages of instruction, in the hope that it may prove to be a substantial help to correct pronunciation as well as an unflinching means of facilitating the attainment of competence in ordinary reading and spelling.

Some examples for the reader's well-meaning scrutiny will show that in matters of punctuation marks and other usages concerning capital letters, abbreviated forms, etc. I remain faithful to the ordinary English usages. In forming the plural, the rule here followed is:

1. add *s* when the word ends in a voiceless consonant;
2. add *z* when it ends in a voiced sound, i.e. in all other cases, except,
3. when it ends in the sound of: *s, z, sh, ch, zh, or j*, then *iz* is to be added to the singular. This rule applies to the formation of the third person, singular, of verbs in the present tense.

Similarly for the formation of the past and the past participle of regular verbs, the rule being to;

1. add *t* to the infinitive when it ends in a voiceless consonant; otherwise,
2. add *d*, except,
3. when it ends in *t or d*, then add *ed* instead.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof." So let us try an example of my system to look at its merits, for its merit, and hope you will find it with merit.

### An Enigma

"Du-w Englishmen wish tu-w erect an impenetrabl bari'r for the p;npos ov shutting aut foren'rz from enjoying the trezu-rz ov tha-r splendid literatu-r? Du-w tha-y wish tu-w ma-k the aqwizishon ov nolej az difficult az posibl tu-w tha-r o-n children? If such had ben tha-r object, the prezent enigmatical sistem ovo:rtografy iz fited in an eminent degre-e tu-w secu-r the-z objects. It iz a rema:rkabl instans ov the tenasity ov er'r and the tirany ov fashon, that a sistem condemd bi-y oLmo-st every ri-t'r and spe-k'r, na-tiv o:r foren, hu:w haz examind intu it, shud be-e ma-nta-nd at so-w much inconve-niens and expens when not a singl a:rgument can be-e adu-st in its fa-v'r, exept that it iz faund in u-s and haz ben handed daun in a man'r no-body no-z haw. It iz imposibl tu-w conva-y tu-w Englishmen the impreshonz ov a stra-nj'r respecting the foly and abs;rdity ov reta-ning this sistem. The ri-t'r iz astonisht beyond mezu-r that a pe-pl so-w practical and f;rtil in invenshon shud tolera-t such confu-son in tha-r ritn and printed lan'gwej, which rests li-k an in'cu-bus on the intelect ov the na-shon. Fo:r if this iz so-w bewildering tu-w an adult, haw much mo:r so-w iz it tu-w the uninfo:rmnd mi-nd ov a chi-id."

(Quoted from a Pamphlet entitled '*National Education and the English Language*, by a Foreigner,' published in 1868.)

The next example shows how it would look if further simplified by a rule that omitted the length mark and letter at the end of one syllable words with long vowel sounds:

### Mary had a Little Lamb, by Sarah Josepha Hale

Ma-ry had a litl lam,  
Its fle-s woz whi-t az sno;  
And everywha-r Ma-ry went,  
The lam woz shu:r tu go.

And so the te-ch'r t;rnd him aut,  
But stil he lin'g'rd ne-r,  
And wa-ted pa-shently about  
Til Ma-ry did ape-r.

He follo-d h;r tu sku:l wun da,  
Which woz agenst the ru:l;  
It ma-d the children laf and pla,  
Tu se a lam at sku:l.

"Whot ma-ks the lam luv Ma-ry so?"  
The e-g'r children cri;  
"Whi, Ma-ry luvz the lam, yu no,"  
The te-ch'r did repli-y.

The reader who has kindly followed me thus far may now be convinced of the advantages of my "whole-hogger" system of simplification over others that have hitherto been schemed with untaken

forts left here and there in their rear. Their use of nothing but common letters of the alphabet may at first sight give him a better impression, but a closer scrutiny will reveal to him unnecessary complications in their use of signs, letters, and other imperfections, from which my scheme is intended to be free. But even they are far in advance of the older device of distinguishing each letter or letter combination by means of numerical figures or diacritical marks of a very complicated nature. Not that it is without its own practical value if its application is restricted to a certain field such as smaller dictionaries, etc. For those whose interest moves that way, Prof. W. A. Cragie's little pamphlet, *The Pronunciation of English indicated by a system of marks applied to the ordinary spelling for the Use of Foreign Students*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1914), will be suggestive in many ways.

Lastly, for those who, instead of troubling themselves with English, or any other living foreign language, with its orthographical imperfections, grammatical shortcomings, and other drawbacks, would rather care for an international auxiliary language, and to know what it is worth as a means of exchange of thought, I should suggest a perusal of the S(ociety of) P(ure) E(nglish) Tract, No. XXXIV, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1930), where the question of artificial languages is very ably treated.

[1] Russel Martineau, in a Report to the Philological Society, quoted by George Withers. cf. *The English Language Spelled as Pronounced*, Trudner & Co, London, 1874, p. 10-12.

[2] H. Bradley, *Spoken and Written Language*, Oxford, 1919, p. 30.

[3] "Speech Today and Tomorrow" in *The Listener* (July 6, 1932), published by the British Broadcasting Corp.

[4] *Op. cit.* pp. 31, 33.

[5] Yet certain American humorists (Mark Twain, Geo. Shelly Hughs, Jonahan Dymond, John Kendrick Bangs) did for reasons of clarity and humor.

[6] *Op. cit.* pp. 34-35.

[7] *Anglic Fund*, A-B, Uppsala, Sweden, 1931.

[8] "Four Hundred Years of English Spelling Reform" (pp. 26-7), printed from *Studia Neophilologia*, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-2.

[9] *Anglic*, Uppsala, 1931, pp. 32-3.

[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 46.

[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 46-47.

[Some of the Editor remarks, within the article, are in SPB but not in the Tune anthology.]

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

## 6. 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.