

# Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1982

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## **1. A Fully Planned Program for the Implementation of Spelling Reform, by Harvie Barnard**

1. Agreement on a suitable form of simplified spelling is important, although not absolutely essential, since many would-be reformers will continue to insist that their personal versions of reform are better than others.
2. Introduction to the general public so as to popularize the idea that simplification is an improvement over present spelling. The enlistment of well known cartoonists and writers would be needed to implement this popularization. Comic strip writers would be most desirable, such as Hank Ketchum, producer of "Denis the Menace." Such an approach may require subsidization as well as a well planned selling effort with aid in the form of material for the writers and artists to use in their creative work.

3. Educational materials for th' teaching profession to utilize in a redy-to-uze form. Publishers of text materials beginning with primary teaching aids, fully developed, wuud be needed. Such materials wuud need professional introduction by influential educators who are known to th' profession as well as to th' publishing community. Th' materials developed for skool use wuud hav to be of top grade professional quality, suitabl for general public skool use.
4. Such materials wuud require testing by thoroly experienced teachers, perhaps at privat skools connected with universities and "special skools" where dramatic achievements cuud be demonstrated and th' results published widely.
5. A few well selected public skool systems must be chosen for further demonstration and testing.
6. Parallel with popularization efforts, business peopl and industrialists shuud be encourajed to proceed with actual use in inter-company as well as personal correspondence.
7. All parts of this program shuud receive widespred publicity in all branches of th' media, which shuud be redily acheved as soon as news of successful accomplishment is availabl. A public relations office wuud probably be needed to keep th' media well informed of progress.
8. When it has becum apparent that th' program is gaining acceptance, and not before, legislators on both state and national levels will becum interested, and at this point legislation shuud be introduced. It must be recognized that politicians are not leaders, but are followers. They are usually reluctant to introduce legislation, whether remedial or otherwise, until they are assured that it is "safe." When it becums apparent that spelling reform is an accepted success, they will flock to support itlike flies to honey and men to money. Legislation, insted of being th' first step, shuud be th' last – at which point it probably will not be needed, and will follow along like a caboose on a railroad train. Railroading spelling reform wuud be like putting th' caboose ahed of the engine; it cuud be dun, but it is highly unlikely!

(Ritten using "Altemativ"spelling.)

## **2. Development of Improvement in English Orthography: "Semantic aspects of spelling reform," by Neville Brown, Ph.D.,**

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### **Abstract**

Traditionally, attempts to simplify English spelling have been predominantly motivated by the difficulties that a substantial minority of children experience in early written language acquisition, particularly in respect of phoneme-grapheme correspondence and the reproduction of polysyllabic words. Evidence from recent research suggests that too much emphasis on the phonological or phonetic aspects of written language in teaching may deter many children from using other available strategies, such as direct linguistic encoding and decoding in reading and writing, to the extent of impairing their learning and performance efficiency. From this, it is argued that semantic considerations should take precedence over phonological considerations in any attempt to reform the English spelling system.

### **Corpus**

The motivation for spelling reform stems predominantly from the difficulty experienced by a considerable proportion of school children in acquiring the written English language and also the apparent disparity between the acquisition of oral and reading vocabulary and between reading and spelling vocabulary in terms of word length. This paper will attempt to show that, whilst attention to such a problem is not of itself misplaced, some of the assumptions underlying traditional approaches to spelling simplification are not only untenable but perhaps counterproductive.

Whilst it will be readily recognized that Chinese ideographs, for example, constitute a written language that has little or no phonological basis but is nevertheless a language, there has been the general expectation in most Indo-European languages that a fine relationship between phoneme and grapheme is desirable and can be attained, so that much attention, for example, that of Sir James Pitman of i.t.a. (initial teaching alphabet) fame, has been directed to alter the orthography accordingly. It is, however, recognized that within our own language the notion of an absolute value for any phoneme is undermined by the infinitely wide variation in pronunciation between regions, villages and even individuals. One aspect of the usefulness of written language is that it transcends such differences to a large degree. At this time, it might be argued that any attempt at reforming English spelling along phonetic lines would involve such a multiplicity of necessarily acceptable spellings using an orthography of such extended range as to render a child incapable of using writing as a communicative tool. This, however, is not quite my theme in this paper.

In recent years, research findings in the field of information processing indicate that there are mechanisms in an analysis of which clearly supports the view that there are separate phonological and visual pathways in reading and also that there are two fundamentally different operations applicable to "information processing in general and to reading/spelling in particular which may be termed analytic-sequential and holistic-simultaneous (Das, 1973, Bever, 1975). Aaron (1977) suggests that reading involves the analytic-sequential processing of selected letters and the holistic-simultaneous perception of the salient features of the entire word and concluding that dyslexia is due to an imbalance between these processes.

The prevailing assumption of reading pedagogy and its research is that processing along the phonological and analytic-sequential pathway is not only essential but is prior to any other process. In other words, reading and spelling cannot proceed without phonological mediation. At first sight, commonplace findings would appear to support this view: Children who experience difficulty in reading do tend to sound out the words that are not in their sight memory letter by letter and build the sequence of sounds into the word and, further, their difficulty appears to increase as does the word length. This relationship is, however, not a simple one and correlation coefficients for difficulty x letter count rarely exceed .4, hence the need for elaborate calculations involving other variables in indices of reading difficulty of prose passages used for children. It is very easy to fall into the trap of thinking that because 'normal' readers do use phonological mediation in reading and spelling, then phonological mediation is necessary and prior, and that consequently a high correlation between written language disability and deficiency in the ability to analyse words into phonemes indicates the need to 'overreach' phoneme-grapheme correspondence or to render the orthography more amenable to such a teaching approach. . . or both!

In a study of preference for encoding modality in reading in 149 'apprentice' readers, it was found (Brown, 1978) that subjects who preferred the visual modality exhibited greater reading difficulty than those who preferred the auditory, but subjects who showed no preference tended to be better readers. Amongst the poor readers, the ratio of visuals to audials was approximately 2:1. The predominately auditory-preferent readers clearly tended to be underachievers in the sense that their mechanical reading level was below what one would expect from a study of their oral language ability. Aaron (1978) in a study of processing strategies in dyslexics, found that whilst normal readers had both adequate eidetic and phonetic memory, dyslexics tended to group into what her terms 'dyseidetics' and 'dysphonetics'. If one equates Brown's 'audials' with Aaron's 'dyseidetics' and Brown's 'visuals' with Aaron's 'dysphonetics', one comes to the conclusion that the two processing strategies are not only potentially present in reading but also necessary, and that a 'mixed' approach to remediation of reading and spelling difficulties rather than a solely 'phonics' approach would be beneficial.

The 'mixed' view appears at first sight only to be supported by a study by Brown (1976) of linguistic complexity in prose passages of known difficulty. Brown took the responses to 460 applications of the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability which has 6 graded prose passages and found that the error counts for individual words did not bear a simple relationship to word-length or to familiarity. The word 'confident' accounted for 2.13% of the errors on passage no. 5, 'captives' had a 3.23% error, 1.39% for 'proceeded', 6.01% for 'persistent', whilst 'withstand' had no error count at all. When relationships between error count and a number of word-variables were explored, at the level of the Neale passage 1, which consists with one exception of short monosyllabic words, the only significant factor in passage 1 was the length of the words in letters. As the passages increased in difficulty, other variables such as syllable-count and morphographeme count assumed significance. The variable which most affected error at the higher levels of the Neale was, however, not the length of word in terms of letters, syllables or morphographemes but the incongruence of syllable/ morphographeme boundaries.

A working definition of a morphographeme is a meaningful letter string that can, irrespective of any shift in sound or pronunciation be generalised from one word to another. Thus 'ed' is a morphographeme in the words 'wanted', 'killed' and 'skipped' though its pronunciation differs markedly over the three examples. As it could be argued that 'wanted' has two syllables and 'killed'

and 'skipped' have but one, the difference is perhaps more quantitative. The word 'corporation', however, can be divided into four syllables and also into four morphographemes, but the boundaries are quite different:

In syllables: cor – por – a – tion

In morphographemes: corp – or – at – ion

It is in words where the syllable and morphographeme boundaries do not coincide – termed 'incongruent' here that tend to give much greater difficulty to children in reading and spelling than words of comparable length without 'incongruence.'

Table 1: *Correlation coefficients of relationships. between Error Count and Word-level variables in the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability, Form A, p<001 throughout. (Brown 1978)*

| Passage No. | 'Age' | Letters in word | Syllables | Morphographemes | Incongruence of Syll/MG. |
|-------------|-------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1           | 6:9   | .7437           |           |                 |                          |
| 2           | 8:5   | .6938           | .6299     | .6427           | .3820                    |
| 3           | 9:6   | .4616           | .4202     | .6203           | .6204                    |
| 4           | 11:2  | .5117           | .4697     | .5728           | .5093                    |
| 5           | 12:3  | .6249           | .4843     | .4516           | .7019                    |
| 6           | 13:0  | .4902           | .4997     | .4715           | .5557                    |

Aaron (1977) suggests that reading (and presumably spelling) involves the analytic sequential processing of selected letters and the holistic-simultaneous perception of the salient features of the entire word, coming to the conclusion that Dyslexia, specific written language difficulty, or whatever one wishes to term it, results from a deficit in one of these processes. Saffron and Marin can, however, accede from their clinical observations of aphasic dyslexics that reading can not only proceed independently along the two pathways but can even proceed exclusively along either. This suggests, further, that for some children in difficulty, the direction of attention to the morphographemes in longer words, irrespective of their fine pronunciation, might facilitate the processing of a word for meaning as morphographemes are by definition semantic units. In the course of research, it was found in the application of the Neale Test for Mechanical Accuracy and (subsequent) comprehension without feedback of mechanical errors that sometimes a key word for a comprehension answer would be unrecognizably misprocessed in mechanical reading and yet reproduced perfectly in the comprehension test.

In another experiment, unfamiliar words were taught under controlled conditions to children with reading and spelling difficulties but who were competent in the oral language. Whilst this work is reported elsewhere (Brown, 1978 and 1979), it was found that such children could learn to spell and read – both mechanically and for comprehension – the corpus of 'impossible' words significantly better by a morphographemic approach than by what may be termed a 'phonic' approach. For this experiment, the teaching of vocabulary was conducted in silence and there fillwas evidence that attempted subvocalisation inhibited processing of the morphographemes.

It appears that a polysyllabic and polymorphemic written word can be encoded and decoded not only at different levels but by different pathways. The analytical sequential approach to our word 'cor-por-a-tion' may be at the level of grouping individual letter sounds into syllables and thence to the word. The implication of this approach is that semantic encoding is not possible until the whole word has been processed and referred to acoustic memory. It is frequently found in reports from

certain Dyslexia centres that extra practice in 'chunking' sounds into syllables is required. The word 'chunking' (after G. A. Miller) appears to be entirely inappropriate to the analytic-sequential processing path as the resultant encoding or decoding need not involve meaning, hence the phenomena of 'barking at print' and the ability to spell better than to read in some children, recorded by Carbonell de Grampone. 'Chunking' does seem to be appropriate for the simultaneous-holistic processing of letter strings or morphographemes for meaning-cum-recognition.

The next step in the argument is that meaningful encoding and decoding is preferable to meaningless, and that anything which prevents the processing of morphographemes in a word is more serious than that which inhibits the mere pronunciation of the word by the analytic-sequential pathway.

In lieu of a conclusion, it may be useful to give examples where angels should fear to tread: The integrity of the morphographeme 'vis' should be maintained across the words 'divisive' and 'division' so that a spelling change which differentiates 'divisive' and 'division' should be avoided. The spelling pattern 'rupt' is better maintained over 'disruptive' and 'disruption' and 'rig' is better maintained over 'rigor', 'rigid', and 'incurable.'

On the other hand, 'x' may well be regarded as not only a redundant letter but one that interferes with the generalisation of letter strings. Without 'z' it may be easier to relate 'example' to 'sample' 'examine' to 'same' (and all four together), and even perhaps the 'ex' morpheme as in 'extract' to 'ec' in 'economy' and 'eco-system.' There is perhaps a case for changing 'build' to 'bild' and so bring us into line with at least one other EEC language, though this is better seen as a bonus when it occurs rather than a prime aim.

Our energy at Lichfield is currently directed towards enabling the dyslexic child to come to terms with the existing orthography and our teaching will be considerably helped by the forthcoming publication of a dictionary of morphographemes which we shall call a 'Wordbitbook'. From this paper, it should be apparent that we also have clear views on the direction that spelling reform should take if it is to assist children with unexpected difficulty or failure.

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### 3. "How to reconcile conflicting principles for a reformed English spelling," by Dr. Walter Gassner\*

\*Randwick, N.S.W. Australia. Deceased Dec. 4, 1981.

#### Abstract

The conflicting principles are:

(1) *Consistency in the use of letters and minimizing deviations from traditional orthography.* The latter involves: avoiding the introduction of new letters or written accent signs; moreover, avoiding, within the limits of practicability, unfamiliar use of letters; and finally, providing a means to distinguish words with the same sound but different meanings which are distinguished by distinctive written forms in the traditional system. (It does not involve limiting arbitrarily the number of occurrences of letters whose sounds are established unambiguously, such as *k* and *z*, and replacing them by *c* and *s* respectively, just to conform with established practise). Any system that would aim at preserving more than, say, 30% of traditional written forms would, necessarily, be encumbered with complicated rules, and such a situation should be avoided.

Ways to reconcile the conflicting principles: (a) allowing certain sounds to be represented by letter groups, such as *sh*, *ng*, *ai*; (b) allowing certain letters to be used for different sounds in different positions, such as *y* for the consonant in "yes" when occurring in front of a vowel, and for the diphthong in "hydrant" when occurring in front of a consonant (where the other sound cannot occur); (c) allowing certain vowel letters to be used for different sounds in stressed and unstressed syllables – as "a" for the sound in "hat" in stressed syllables, and for the Neutral Vowel in unstressed syllables (This has the prerequisite that the system is one in which the location of stress is clearly indicated).

(2) *Basing the system on one particular pronunciation or not taking into account variant regional pronunciations.* The speech of Southern England is used as a basis (not for any inherent superiority, but on the grounds of intelligibility and acceptability and the possibility of checking it in reference books). Deviations from it are established, where a substantial number of speakers make a distinction that speakers of Southern English do not make and such distinctions are backed by distinctions in traditional orthography – as the use of *ar*, *or*, and *er*.

(3) *Differences in styles of speech:* Using as a basis careful pronunciation of educated speakers, but rejecting fanciful pronunciations that exist only in the minds of persons who are influenced by traditional orthography. Words with distinctive "strong" and "weak" forms rendered so as to suggest the strong form, the form used in isolation. This for the sake of consistency.

(4) *Rejecting inordinate emphasis on time, saving and etymology.* A brief description of the author's *Consistent Evolutional Spelling* pointing out the features through which the best possible compromise between conflicting principles is achieved. Occasional reference to the position in other languages.

#### Corpus

At this and previous conferences, a large number of spelling reform proposals have been presented. The common goal of all these proposals is to replace the present traditional system of orthography – which is full of arbitrary features and inconsistencies – with a system that is simple and

straightforward, easy to learn and easy to use. Most spelling reformers – the exceptions being, of course, those who want to introduce a completely new system of writing – stress the need to limit departures from existing practice to the absolute minimum, and this is justified in view of the need to make transition easy and to obviate a situation in which it will be impossible for future generations to read and understand anything that has been written before the reform. These two principles are in direct opposition to each other; and whilst most reformers try to bridge the gap between the two conflicting principles, it lies in the nature of things that they arrive at different results.

This is an attempt to determine what is essential and to arrive at a solution which is effective and workable.

In order to determine what is essential, we have to remind ourselves of the plight of youngsters who are faced with the task of learning to read and write a language in which sounds and letters do not agree. They have to memorize long lists of words by rote, an exercise which is stultifying because it is devoid of any stimulus to logical thinking. It is also wasteful from the educational point of view because the time required to become literate is an obstacle to proficiency in other studies, the range of which is continually increasing. Where a language is phonetic, all that a person who knows how to speak has to do is to learn the alphabet and their sounds and, possibly, if the alphabet is deficient, a few groups of letters. Attempts at framing rules for English spelling have, of course, been made and some ingenious teaching devices have been proposed, but they do little to alleviate the situation. A rule that is riddled with exceptions becomes useless if the exceptions appear arbitrary. It is only if this situation is radically remedied that spelling reform becomes effective; when such a reform is implemented, it will no longer be necessary to ask the question, "How do you spell (such and such a word)", for the answer would almost invariably be, "As you pronounce it" or, possibly, "As you hear it pronounced" (say, by the B.B.C. or some other authority) – subject to qualifications only in variations in pronunciation and the need for clarity.

Likewise there should be no need to be provided with pronouncing dictionaries or to have the pronunciation of words indicated in an all-purpose dictionary. If one takes account of the fact that there are numerous systems of imitated pronunciation, varying from one dictionary or reference work to another, with which users in most cases are not familiar, one can see that here, too, a lot of time and effort is wasted, which will be saved if a phonetic system of spelling replaces the existing one.

From what has been said, it follows that "scratching merely the surface," that is, eliminating certain glaring arbitrary written forms, or omitting redundant letters, would not sufficiently alter the present position, for learning by rote would still be the necessary thing to do; a limited reform of that type would not be worth the upheaval. It is only when the written forms of words are a reliable guide to their spoken forms and vice versa, that the staggering rate of illiteracy will disappear in English-speaking countries and that one can expect foreign students to arrive at an acceptable and intelligible pronunciation. (I am, of course, thinking of persons who are able to express themselves flawlessly in writing and yet distort the words when expressing themselves in speech). Obviously, the new spelling, as I conceive it, will not prevent foreign or regional accents from continuing to exist, but in general, every user, whether English-speaking or otherwise, will be able to deduce the written form from a spoken form with which he is familiar, and vice versa.

If consistency and effectiveness are the essential requirements, it follows that the reverse principle, that of limiting departures from existing practice to a minimum must play a minor role. Yet, in



certain respects, it is an essential principle. The important feature of a system thus conceived is not the number or percentage of words that remain unchanged, but the degree to which words are recognizable without special instruction to persons accustomed to the traditional spelling. Thus, there is no point in insisting that the letter *c* should continue to be used for the *k*-sound and the *s*-sound, because we have the letters *k* and *s* at our disposal. If, accordingly, the letter *c* were to be eliminated, the words in which a *c* is replaced by a *k* would evidently be recognizable at sight; indeed, only persons who are adverse to any change should be shocked at an increase of the occurrence of the letter *k*. What we must reject, however, is the idea of abandoning the Latin alphabet or augmenting it with new letters. Implementing an entirely new system of writing, as George Bernard Shaw suggested and provided for in his will, would sever the ties of the English language not only with the past, but also with the languages of the greater part of the European continent, and, indeed also of the other continents-seeing that even for Chinese the Latin alphabet has-been allocated certain functions. And these remarks are applicable not only to a completely unrelated system of writing, but also to an alphabet which is essentially the Latin one, but is augmented by additional letters or diacritical marks. No matter how much ingenuity is evident in the designing of these additional symbols, they would impair the readability by the uninitiated and the acceptability from a world-wide point of view.

The Latin alphabet has 26 letters, and there is some agreement that the English language has at least 40 distinctive sounds, or rather phonemes. This is evidently an area where there is conflict between fundamental principles, but these are easily bridged if one agrees to the attitude that for some sounds, we can continue to use groups of letters (digraphs or trigraphs, referred to as "compound symbols") – chiefly for long vowels and diphthongs. There is quite a choice of such compound symbols among those used in traditional orthography, and this makes it possible to reflect one important aspect of the pronunciation of words: stress. Many spelling reformers will refrain from indicating the stress in their proposed systems, arguing that a notation of that kind is impracticable or unnecessary. Suggestions are made to the effect that stress might be marked, especially in books for children and foreigners, by underlining, bold type or written accent signs- but that for general use, the indication of stress can be dispensed with. I hold the opinion that indication of the stress should be incorporated in the system in common use – thus avoiding the additional expense and effort to have books especially marked for certain types of users. However, none of the devices mentioned would be practicable and they would be deviations from existing practice. Indications of stress can, indeed, be effected by making available a second set of vowel symbols in addition to the ordinary ones and, in a limited range of instances, by using double consonants after short vowels. Of the various ways of indicating the stress (I have experimented with several), the most appropriate one is to use the second set, as referred to above, to mark the stress on a syllable that is not the initial one, on the understanding that where only "ordinary" symbols appear in a word, stress falls on the first syllable.

Once it has been made clear *which* syllables in a word are stressed and which are not, it is possible to represent certain obscure vowel sounds – sounds that can only occur in unstressed syllables – by vowel letters which have a different function in stressed syllables. The sound that requires special attention among obscure vowels is the so-called neutral vowel, sometimes referred to as "schwa" or the muttering vowel sound. It is the sound most frequently occurring in unstressed syllables and is, under the existing system, represented in a variety of ways (*a* in about, *e* in silent, *o* in develop, *u* in circus, *ou* in grievous, *ia* in parliament, *iou* in precious, *oi* in tortoise). In the International Phonetic Alphabet it is represented by an inverted *e* (thus ə). Earlier spelling reformers ignored the existence of this sound. Their schemes were based on the assumption that the words involved contained the sounds which these letters have in stressed syllables, either leaving the written forms of the

unstressed vowels as they are in the traditional system, or with minor arbitrary simplifications. The effect would have been a continued need to memorize the spelling of a lot of words. Then came some spelling reformers who *did* take account of the existence of the neutral vowel, establishing newly invented symbols for it. As mentioned before, extending the alphabet is extremely undesirable – even if only a single symbol is added to it. Apart from the costs and inconvenience of adapting all printing fonts and typewriters in English-speaking countries, there would have been the additional problem of printing English words in countries in which other languages are spoken; and the need to print English words throughout the world is obvious in view of the position of English as a world language. At one stage I toyed with the idea of using the letter "q" for the neutral vowel – not a new letter, but one that in the existing system serves no useful purpose. Later on I abandoned this idea in view of the strange appearance given to the most common words.

It is actually because the second set of vowel symbols is used as a stress marker on syllables other than the initial one, that an obscure sound such as the neutral vowel can be represented by a letter which is used for a different sound in stressed syllables. The letter best suited for this purpose is the letter "a" – which in stressed syllables represents the sound occurring in the word "hat"; this chiefly in view of the frequent occurrence of this letter for the neutral vowel sound in the initial and in the final position – almost to the exclusion of other ways of representation. (In *about*, *afraid*, *along*, the sound occurs in the initial position; in *banana*, *data*, *China*, *villa*, the sound occurs in the final position). The cases in which the traditional system uses a combination involving the letter *r* at a word end or before a consonant – such as *river*, *tailor*, *sugar* – are different; here the symbol *er* is used. It is not possible to show the occurrence of the neutral vowel in words of one syllable, and it is actually not necessary to do so because such pronunciations of monosyllables with the obscure vowel sound, as *can* in the expression: "I can do it" without any emphasis on *can* – have to be considered as incidental to sentence stress. It depends upon the desires of the speaker as to whether he wants it to be stressed or not. And sentence stress is something that is not practical to be indicated in the spelling. All such words as *at*, *from*, *of*, *have*, *must* are represented the way they are pronounced in isolation.

Two letters of the alphabet – "y" and "w" – can be used both as consonants and as vowels, as they are in T.O. The consonants are those occurring in *yes* and *wind*, and the vowels are those occurring in *hydrant* and *put*, *how* (which will be written *pwt*, *how*). This double use is not an infringement on the principle of consistency if the rule is established that the two letters in question are consonants when followed by a vowel, and vowels when followed by a consonant, or used as part of a diphthong.

Another source of differences of opinion is the variety of pronunciations in various parts of the English speaking world. A certain form of speech has to be taken as the standard, and it has to be a form that is reflected in currently used pronouncing dictionaries, in dictionaries in general use and in foreign language dictionaries in which the pronunciation of the English words is shown for the benefit of foreign students. This standard is Southern British, sometimes referred to as "the Queen's English" or "Received Pronunciation." Deviations are allowed for in cases in which a substantial body of speakers uses an alternative pronunciation which is clearly backed by use in traditional orthography. Thus, certain vowel sounds are split up into "cases with r" and "cases without r" (such as *aa* and *ar*), the letter *r* in such cases being almost silent in Southern British speech, but sounded in Scottish speech. Also the vowel in such words as "ask" (pronounced with the *a* in "father" in Southern British speech) is represented in a special way. Generally speaking, where different pronunciations are used in different styles of speech, the system is based on careful pronunciation

used by educated speakers, but fanciful pronunciations that exist only in the minds of persons who are influenced by traditional orthography are left out of account.

The suggestion has often been made that spelling reform should be put into practice gradually, the idea being that changes of a trifling nature would be more easily accepted, and that with each successive change, resistance would decrease. My chief objection to implementing a spelling reform in a large number of small steps is that the intermediate steps would, of necessity, be unphonetic (they would even in some instances deprive the written forms of that modicum of consistency they might appear to have) and that each step would require re-editing of dictionaries and reference works. However, following a frequently heard demand, I will make two suggestions for a spelling reform step-by-step: the first, in fact, chiefly to reject it and to demonstrate why; the second is one that is practical, simple to understand and reasonably extensive. The first is based on the assumption that we, the alphabeteers, have come to an agreement and that we know what the final outcome is going to be. The first step is that proposed by Mr. Lindgren of Narrabundah, Australia, viz. that the letter *e* should be used for the vowel sound in "bet" to the exclusion of all other ways of representation. In my opinion, this makes sense only if we also refrain from using this letter for other sounds and use the symbols that truly represent these sounds. Thus: *ee* in "lever", *i* in "pretty." Now with each subsequent step the same procedure would have to be followed, and if each step takes 10 years to carry out, it would take over a hundred years to arrive at the final shape. It is self evident that a step-by-step spelling reform of this type would require a public throughout the world (whether English-speaking or not) endowed with an infinite amount of patience and docility, ready to replace their dictionaries frequently with new ones and assimilate the changes graciously.

The other suggestion for a gradual approach does not assume that there is complete agreement among alphabeteers. And only one intermediate step is required – the rule is simplicity itself: to each of the usable letters – all except *c* and *q* – one sound is allocated, and whenever this sound occurs, that letter is used. (But the letters continue to be used also for other sounds – adjustment of this and handling sounds that are represented by compound symbols and other features have to be left to the second and final step – which can be taken only after spelling reformers have come to an agreement). In the proposed intermediate system, the vowel letters would have their "short" values as in *hat*, *bet*, *sit*, *hot*, and *hut*. Among the consonants, *k* and *s* will replace *c*; *z* will frequently replace *s*; *f* will replace *g* wherever it is thusly pronounced, leaving to *g* the duty of representing the "hard" sound (as in *get*); *z* represents only *ks*, and *f* replaces *ph* and sometimes *gh* (as in *tough*).

Once this intermediate system is introduced, a definite effort should be made by all spelling reformers to come to an agreement. The final goal-effectiveness in learning in the sense that learning lists of words would no longer be necessary-should not be left out of sight.

Whilst, generally speaking, a reform in steps is undesirable, one which would not interfere with arrangements in dictionaries for the intermediate step is not so. The German language is much closer to being phonetic than English, but if it were to attain the same standard as envisaged for English, a lot of alterations would be necessary. But there is one change that could be carried out prior to a large scale spelling reform-and there is a strong movement in Germany in favour of it: abolition of the capitalization of nouns in general, limiting capital letters to proper names, as in other languages. This step would not interfere with the arrangement in dictionaries and could be carried out in advance of a more thoroughgoing reform.

It is hoped that those who oppose a spelling reform for fear that it would destroy a valuable inheritance will rest assured that such a sacrifice will not be required. Those in favour of radical

reforms, introducing a new alphabet, or augmenting the old may consider that all the advantages they envisage can with equal ease be achieved by staying within the limits of the existing alphabet. (see example)

### Examples from *Consistent Evolutional Spelling*

From "A *Krismas Karal*, by Charlz Dikin. *Marli'z Goast*.

Marli woz ded, tw bigyn wi'th. Thair iz noe dout whottever about that. The rejister ov hiz berial woz siend bie the klirjiman, the klark, thi undertaiker, and the cheef moerner. Skrooj siend it. And Skrooj'iz nain woz gwd for enithing hee choaz tw pwt his hand tw.

Oald Marli woz az ded az a dornail.

Minde! Ie doant meen tw say that ie noa, ov mie oan nolij, whot thair iz pertykywlerli ded about a dornail. Ie might hav been inklinde, mieself, tw rigahrd a kofin'nail az the desist pees ov iemnunggari in the traid. But the wizdam ov our ansisterz iz in the simili; and mie unnhaeload handz shal not disturb it, or the Kuntri'z dun for. Yoo wil thairfor permyt mee to repear, emfatikali, that Marli woz az ded az a dornail.

Skrooj neu hee woz ded? Ov cors hee did. How kwd it bea utherwiez? Skrooj and hee wir partnerz for ie doant noa how meni yeerz. Skrooj woz his soal egzekywter, hiz soal admynistraiter, hiz soal asine, hiz soal rizedyweri legatea, hiz soal frend, and soal moerner. And even Skrooj woz not soe dredfwli kut up bie the sad ivent but that hee woz an exalant man ov biznis on the veri day ov the feuneral, and solamniezd it wi'th an undowntid bargin.

The menshn ov Marli'z feuneral bringz mee bak tw the point ie startid from. Thair iz noe dout that Marli woz ded. This must bea distynktli understuud, or nothing wunderfwl kan kum ov the stauri ie am goaing tw rilayt. If wee wir not pifirkarli konvvnst that Hamlit's faather died bifoer the play bigaen, thair wwd bea nuthing mor rimahrkabl in hiz taiking a stroal at night, in an eesterli wind, aponn hiz oan ramparts, than thair wwd bea in eni uther midl'ajd jentlman rashli timing out affter dark in a breezi spot – say Snt Paul'z Chirchyear for instans – literati tw astonnish hiz sunn'z weak minde.

From the monolog in Akt III, Sean I ov "*Hamlit*" by Wiliam Shaikspeer.

Tw bea, or not tw bea; that iz the kweschan.

Whether 'tiz noabler in the minde tw suffer

The slingz and aroaz ov outrajas forchan,

Or tw taik armz agenst a sea ov trublz,

and bie opoezing, end them? Tw die: tw sleep;

noe mor; and bie a sleep tw say wee end

the hahrtaik and the thousand nachwral shoks

that flesh iz ehr tw; 'tiz a konsumayshn

divowtli tw bea wisht.

**(Editor's comment):** Gassner is not very consistent in the use of his system(?). In the 2nd line, he spells *about* as *abowt*. Yet in the 2nd line, 2nd paragraf, it is *about*. He spells *hee* yet *bea*, and in 1st line, *noe* but in 2nd line, 5th paragraf, *noa*. Also wwd for would, yet *understuud*.

#### 4. "An account of the 'English Maximally Simplified Writing' (EMSR)" by Prof. V. A. Vassilyev,

Leningradskage Shosse 112/1, Korp 3, XV 717, 125145, Moscow, A445, U.S.S.R. and Prof. A. C. Gimson, Univ. College, the Open Univ., Milton, Keynes, England.

##### **Abstract**

The rationale of EMSR is to remove all discrepancies between pronunciation and spelling. Spelling reforms, no matter how badly needed, are impossible to put into use to *supplant* traditional spelling. MSR is planned to co-exist with traditional spelling. Variant spellings are considered. Kinds of writing. Advantages of MSR. The use of schwa helps to indicate stress. Ways of introducing MSR. Better knowledge of speech sounds and its use in phonics. Chart of consonant, vowel symbols and key words. The system is based on Received Standard Speech (Southern British).

##### **Corpus**

The rationale of EMSR is to remove all discrepancies between pronunciation and spelling. It is not intended to be an official orthography obligatory on all literate people, but to be an unofficial and optional re-spelling system to be used alternatively with the traditional spelling (TS). It is to emphasise this unofficial character of MSR that the word 'rieting' rather than 'spelling' is used in it.

Spelling reforms as such, no matter how badly needed, are impossible to enact, as proved by the failure of more than a hundred projects to reform English, French, Russian and German. It is a mistake to believe that because reforms are 'evidently rational', they can easily be introduced by means of official governmental spelling reform. Reform depends upon highly literate people who are dogmatic, conservative, and have forgotten how hard the learning was for them. They firmly believe that if they themselves overcame all such difficulties, so can all others. Many proposed reforms have been so revolutionary in design that orthographic unity would be broken internationally, since it is unlikely that countries could agree on a common change.

MSR, however, is planned to co-exist with the official TS. It could be learnt easily because it denotes each of the language's sounds with a separate (only one) letter or constant letter combination almost exclusively belonging to the language's traditional alphabet ('one sound-one grapheme' principle).

As phoneticians, the devisers of MSR are at pains to distinguish the 'sound types' which are the bases of MSR from the more technical and even controversial elements of the spoken language, phonemes and phonetic elements, although the sound types function as phonemes in that they distinguish language units from each other.,

The number of rules for pronunciation and re-spelling in MSR are approximately the number of sound types and phonemic sub-types in the language, viz, about 47, and there are no exceptions to the rules. This means that for the learner to write in the MSR system, he must be able to break up his own (dialectal) speech and the (standard) speech which he hears from others (including speech on radio and television) into the language's sound types and phonemic sub-types (to do which he must know their inventory) and write each of them by the appropriate grapheme.

The second part of the above general rules means that for the learner to read in MSR, he must be able to pronounce correctly (i.e. in accordance with standard pronunciation) all the sound types and phonemic sub-types which he sees presented by the appropriate graphemes. The knowledge of both parts of these general rules frees the learner from the necessity of memorising any particular

pronunciation and spelling rules. Thus the number of learning-to-read-and-write difficulties is reduced to an absolute minimum. All the learner would have to do would be:

1. To learn the handwritten and printed shapes of the capital and small letters of the alphabet and their names.
2. Memorise the inventory of the language's sounds (about 47).
3. Acquire the ability to break up words into these sounds.
4. Acquire the ability to denote each of these sounds by the appropriate graphemes.

In order to co-exist with TS, MSR uses the absolute minimum of letters and consonant letter combinations not used in TS. A symbol is needed for the neutral vowel, the schwa (ə) because its absence from an alphabet violates the one-grapheme-one-sound principle. The symbol used is an upside down 'e' (ɛ) which can easily be put on any typewriter.

Eight English sounds which are not denoted by any special graphemes in TS are represented in MSR by <dh, zh, uu, ə, iə, eə, oə, ooə> as in *dhae*, *vizhn*, *duu* (do), *kə* (cur), *hiə* (here), *cheə* (chair), *goəj* (gorge), *poəə* (poor). Full details are presented in the monograph by Prof. Vassilyev and Prof. Gimson, "The Quickest and Easiest Way to Learn to Read and Write in English," which attempts to provide a solution to the problem they see that "it is impossible to devise a re-spelling system for English which would still be simple and still close graphemically to ETS without violating the crucial principle for MSR of one-grapheme-one-sound, and without oversimplification.

As well as 'sound-typing', 'monograph emnis' and 'graphemic closeness' to TS, a fourth pre-requisite for coexistence of EMSR and TS is maximally possible letter economy by eliminating silent and doubled letters, including nonspoken vowel letters, resulting in a 5% economy overall. Even schwa is omitted when not actually necessary.

Writers in ESMR can choose the variant to the pronunciations to which they are most accustomed. The great extent of free variation therefore may be criticised by the argument that the reader who comes across several different spellings of one and the same word will have his recognition of words hampered. The counter arguments are proposed that:

1. A reader in MSR will become accustomed to several slightly different spellings of some words through practice.
2. Readers will learn that there are several equally correct pronunciations of the same word.
3. The benefit for writers is important.

Reading both in TS and MSR without special learning to do the latter may be called 'automatic lectal biliteracy.' The first stage in the introduction of MSR systems is practising TS and MSR lectal biliteracy. The second stage will be practising reading in TS by those who have learnt to read first in MSR. To what degree this second stage of lectal biliteracy will also be automatic can only be discovered through experience and special experiments (both of which are now lacking, of course). But it is assumed that little additional teaching and learning will be required for originally MSR readers to start reading in TS as well because except for 9 graphemes, all graphemes are already used in TS, and only a small number of words would differ from their TS counterparts in more than two graphemes, and many of the TS rules of pronunciation can be guessed or deduced from knowledge of English. The authors assume that readers in their native tongue will have this knowledge of the English language, although foreigners would have to pass from reading in MSR to reading in TS after acquiring a good knowledge of the language or to frequently consult the dictionary if they start reading in TS immediately or very soon after learning to read in MSR. All sorts of context-linguistic (grammatical, lexical, fonetic, orthographic), and semantic will also greatly help initially only MSR readers to read correctly sentences written in TS.

If however, some or even all of these factors prove, contrary to expectations, invalid, there is also the well-known fact that it is comparatively easy to learn only reading (without writing) in any TS system, especially in one's mother tongue, and even in a foreign language no matter how complex and difficult its TS is. There are a great many people who read (without being able to write) in a foreign language or even more than one who read (usually silently 'to themselves' without even mentally pronouncing words). Practice will also contribute to ensuring that MSR and TS lectal biliteracy could be achieved readily.

This lectal biliteracy will exclude the necessity to republish in MSR what has been, is being, and will be published in the TS system.

*Writing is* quite different from reading – physiologically, psychologically, in their varieties and uses. There are people who read well but write badly. These discrepancies between lectal biliteracy and scriptal literacy exist in TS but the authors assume that those who read in an MSR system would, ipso facto, be able to write in it as well. In other words, learning to read in an MSR system would be at the same time learning to write in it. (**Comment by summariser:** from my own experience, I think this would need to be tested experimentally rather than assumed. VY)

Only about 1% of the population need to write for publication in the TS, because that is the official system while MSR is to be used to write what is not meant for publication – the other 99% – who will not need to consult dictionaries.

Thus a tremendous amount of classroom and homework time, mental energy, material means and even manual labour in spelling exercises will be unnecessary, since school children will not have to learn to write TS, just as higher mathematics is only learnt by a few in a higher educational institution.

*The advantages of a writing system such as MSR*

1. It applies across languages, such as English, French, Russian and German.
2. The saving of time for schools in teaching and learning; the saving for adults not having to consult dictionaries.
3. Readers will improve both their native and foreign language pronunciation since texts will reflect the standard speech.
4. The use of schwa will help to indicate stress.
5. Economies of 5% in English, 7% in French, and 0.5% in Russian.
6. Linguistic works would not need special phonetic type.
7. Makes possible the development of portable cybernetic typewriters and similar developments in electronic sound-symbol transliteration without requiring expensive and complicated dictionary memories. Cybernetic readers will be possible. True, the pronunciation of such a cybernetic 'reader' will be unnatural, especially in the matter of prosody (length, stress and pitch) but it will be comprehensible. Since they could be made cheap and portable, they could supersede Braille for blind people.
8. Better methods can be designed for teaching reading and writing with a simple MSR system-as well as for switching to bilectalism.
9. Typing speeds could improve, since the system involves no superfluity of graphemes to denote one and the same sound to increase nervous system decisions and processes.
10. It is possible that reading would also become faster.
11. MSR in the original European languages now could blaze the way for MSR in other languages with complicated or no spelling.
12. Publishing opportunities will increase, in a wider literate public, as well as expanding into MSR publishing itself.
13. The lectal and scriptal rules for MSR can be given in a nutshell on a postcard, with MSR/TS keywords adduced to illustrate each rule.

### *Ways of introducing MSR*

1. Publicity to inform the public, using all media.
2. Literacy teaching in educational institutions using MSR, with special streaming to allow teaching in both MSR and TS for those who wish it or whose parents desire it. Those who already can read in TS may only require one teaching period in MSR.

The authors estimate that a fortnight with the help of special audio visual aids and specially designed textbooks would be sufficient to help beginners and second-language learners to master the techniques of reading and writing in any MSR. (Summariser's comment: We are so used to learners taking 18 months for 'the penny to drop' and three years for independent reading that we have not really considered how to organize teaching very carefully for 'speed learning'.)

The necessary skills to learn would be the ability to break up words and wordforms into constituent sounds, to know the meaning of the term '(speech) sound', and the inventory of the language's sounds, and to be able to identify as sounds and letters the vowels and consonants, voiced and voiceless consonants, stressed and unstressed vowels. The authors think even pre-school children can 'easily acquire' this 'phonetic minimum' if the methods are appropriate.

As an initial learning medium MSR would have the advantages of Pitman's i.t.a. without its drawbacks – the advantages of earlier and easier learning to read and write, without the disadvantage of transition, abandoning so much old learning to learn so much new.

3. Publishing in MSR, including the 'nutshell postcard' reference table of lectal and scriptal rules for handy reference in early use of it, news about the use and introduction of MSR systems at home and abroad, a summary of the main domestic and foreign news printed in TS elsewhere in newspapers, the 'nutshell rules' printed on the covers of exercise books.

4. Support by voluntary organizations and movements, in addition to an official MSR movement, such as the Simplified Spelling Society could be.

5. The 'orthoconservatists' and 'orthodogmatists' will not be inconvenienced themselves by the introduction of MSR because they can still read and write in TS – and will find MSR easy to read if they desire to do so. The orthoconservatists' insistence that everybody should learn to read and write only in TS and spend on it an immense amount of time, mental and physical energy and material means, including money, is manifestly undemocratic – an orthographic dictatorship, so to speak. MSR is completely democratic; only those will use it who wish themselves to do so. There is no need to doom humanity to eternal orthographic torments, paying through the nose for them at that. The public have the right to be informed of MSR, so they can have the experience of using it for their mother tongue and for foreign and second languages, and by their own experience become convinced of the advantages and benefits.

In the long run, even those who insist on publication only in TS will get so used to the look of national MSR systems and enjoy the benefits that they too will start using it. That will mean a natural spelling reform – and MSR will pave the way for it.

6. National and international organizations that can help promote MSR: a) ministries of education, b) societies such as the Simplified Spelling Society, whose stated object is "to recommend and propagate simpler spellings of English words than those now in use" does not go far enough – it should be seeking the maximally simplified spelling. (Some of its attempts at rule-making, e.g. *The Pioneer*, September, 1979, p. 3, 4 have been incredibly complicated, and impossible for learners to apply even if they memorise the rule.) Such societies should have their own publishing house and be internationally organized, with numerous national branches. c) The British Council and the English Speaking Union – the latter also has the Duke of Edinburgh as a patron. d) The International Phonetic Association and the International Society of Phonetic Sciences. The IPA's aim of scientific and practical representation of different languages remains so far largely



unachieved, but MSR could be the way to achieve its orthographic aims. The ISPhS has within it an Orthographic Reform Committee, and one member of this committee has written, "The new and the old spelling must be close enough to co-exist indefinitely. . . nobody would have to change his spelling habits. Let everybody continue spelling as he was taught in school; thus the irregularities would become obsolete with the passing of current users and the rational form would gradually become standard thru common usage. . . ' e) UNESCO. The overwhelming majority of the earth's population is illiterate. MSR may be crucial in achieving UNESCO's stated aim of doing away with both lectal and scriptal illiteracy.

V. Vassilyev. 23.7.1980. (Summarised by V. Yule)

A commentary on Vassilyev and Gimson's proposals will appear in a future issue of *SPB*.

| Letəz ənd konstənt letə kombinaeshnz widh dheə naemz and sound valuez in IMSR<br>(Ingglish Maksiməli Simplified Rieting) |                                  |                       |                          |                       |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | Vouəlz and                       | Konsənənts            | Kee-wədz in              |                       |
|  | dheə naemz                       | and dheə naemz        | IMSR                     | ETS                   |
| 1.   | ee /dubl ee/                     | p /pee/               | peep, pee                | peeθ, pea             |
| 2.   | aa /dubl ae/(r)                  | b /bee/               | baa, baa(r) <sup>1</sup> | baa, bar              |
| 3.   | au /ae, ue/(r)                   | t /tee/               | taut, tau(r)             | taut, taught; tore    |
| 4.   | uu /ue, ue/, ue /ue, ee/         | d /dee/               | duu, due, duep           | do, due, dupe         |
| 5.   | əə /dubl shwaa/(r)               | k /kae/               | kæk, kəə(r)              | kirk, cur             |
| 6.   | i /ie/                           | g /jee/               | gig                      | gig                   |
| 7.   | e /ee/                           | m /em/                | met                      | met                   |
| 8.   | a /ae/                           | n /en/                | man                      | man                   |
| 9.   | o /oe/                           | ng /en, jee/          | gong                     | gong                  |
| 10.  | oo /dubl oe/                     | f /ef/                | foot                     | foot                  |
| 11.  | u /ue/                           | v /vee/               | duv                      | dove                  |
| 12.  | ʒə shwaa/ (r) <sup>2</sup>       | /th /tee, aeçh/       | ʒtheenə<br>thəmomitə(r)  | Athena<br>thermometer |
| 13.  | ae /ae, ee/                      | dh /dee, aeçh/        | dhæ, bædh                | they, bathe           |
| 14.  | ie /ie, ee/                      | s /es/                | disiesiv                 | decisive              |
| 15.  | oi /oe, ie/                      | z /zed/ (US: /zee/)   | boiz, zuu                | boys, zoo             |
| 16.  | ou /oe, ue/                      | sh /es, aeçh/         | shout                    | shout                 |
| 27.  | oe /oe, ee/                      | zh /zed(zee), aeçh/   | noe, vizhn               | no, vision            |
| 18.  | iə <sup>2</sup> /ie, shwaa/      | h /aeçh/              | hiə(r)                   | here, hear            |
| 19.  | eə /ee, shwaa/                   | ch /see, aeçh/        | cheə(r)                  | chair                 |
| 20.  | oə /oe, shwaa/<br>(=au /ae, ue/) | j /jae/               | goəj<br>=(gauj)          | gorge                 |
| 21.  | ooə /dubl oe, shwaa/             | w /dubl ue/           | wooə(r), pooə(r)         | woer, poor            |
| 22.  | -                                | (=wh /dubl ue, aeçh/) | when (=wen)              | when                  |
| 23.  | (yooə)                           | y /wie/               | yes, unyan, pyooə(r)     | yes, onion, pure      |
| 24.  | -                                | l /el/                | lip, bel                 | lip, bell             |
| 25.  | -                                | r /aa(r)/             | riet                     | rite, right, write    |
|  | aeə(r), ieə(r)                   | -                     | plaeə(r), hieə(r)        | player, hire, higher  |
|  | oiə(r), ouə(r)                   | -                     | distroiə(r), flouə(r)    | destroyer, flour,     |
|  | oeə(r)                           | -                     | loeə(r)                  | flower, lower         |

1. Dhə letar r in brakits signifiaz dhat it iz not soundid in an r-əmiting vərieti əv IMSR (e.g. in British IMSR) ət dhi end əv ə wəəd prənounst in iesəlaeshn aur ət dhi end əv a sentəns bət iz soundid imeedyətli bifaur ə voual prənounst widhout dhə slietist pazuz bifaur it, cf. 'faa', 'It's faa,' widh 'faarəwae', 'It's not faar ət aul.', 'dhə Faar Eest'.

2. Wot iz sed hiər əbout dhv letər r in brakits aulsoe əpliez tə dh shwaa imeedyətli preeseedid bie i, e, o and oo, viz. iə(r), eə(r), oə(r) and ooə(r).

## 5. "A Research-Developed Reform for English Spelling" by Valerie Yule,\*

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\*This paper was published in *Revista Canada de Estudios Ingleses*, Univ. of La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain. No. 4, Apr. 1982.

### Abstract

An international modernization of English spelling has been held up by conservatism backed up by mistaken assumptions – that spelling reform is a purely domestic matter, that ideally it must be purely fonemic ('spelling how you speak'), that the appearance of English print would need drastic change, that immense costs would outweigh the immense savings, that the requirements of the literary elite have priority and are irreconcilable with the needs of learners, foreigners, or the ordinary average public, and that reforms can be argued out or in, regardless of careful technological and psychological research.

This analysis of the international and national requirements for English spelling today accepts none of these assumptions, and suggests directions for investigation of the possibility of a Chomsky-style 'morfo-fonemic' reform that shows the pronunciation of words, conveys their meaning quickly through its visual form, and has simple, consistent rules for learning that takes account of learners' abilities and difficulties.

### Corpus

As 'international' English becomes more important than local 'native' English, it is conceivable that economic, social, and scientific interests could back an international English spelling reform that by-passed home conservatism and was introduced first into international communication and overseas education-brought in first as parallel alternative spellings which then substituted for the old through common preference, in the same way as internal spelling reforms have succeeded in countries like Korea.

1. *However, the old (and still present) assumption must be abandoned*, that the whole matter of spelling reform can be argued out in armchairs at an academic level. Spelling is part of modern communications technology even more than a shelf in a corner of an Arts of Education faculty, and it requires the same approach of Human Engineering and inventive testing that has revolutionised the rest of audiovisual communication in the past three decades. There are volumes of research on what is wrong with people who cannot spell; now we must look at what is wrong with the spelling that so many people cannot learn it – and how to change it so that they can. All the directions for reform outlined in this paper have been suggested by converging findings in independent research in cognitive psychology, education, linguistics, and electronics communication, making the multi-disciplinary approach evident at the Edinburgh conference.

2. *The script for English spelling cannot be one applicable to English alone as reformers have tended to assume*. At some date, technological change may make a radical super-efficient orthography practicable or necessary, but it will affect the whole world, and be adaptable for all languages. For the foreseeable future, however, the Latin alphabet must be the basis, since it is the common medium for most modern languages.

3. *There has been almost universal assumption that English spelling reform must be purely fonetic*, that is, going backwards – reaffirming the principle of the original alphabet break-thru, that symbols

represent speech-sounds. However, 'spelling how you speak', the purely fonemic reform, today faces problems of regional variations in English dialect between country and country and even within districts and cities, problems of homophones (words that sound the same), of clumsy polysyllables, of how to represent slurred vowels, discontinuity with present spelling, and the degree to which such a spelling would lose visible relationship to other modern languages. (See [Appendix 1](#)).

We now have the benefit of a century's experience in the design of new orthographies for developing countries and languages, and of spelling reforms on other modern languages. This experience shows that in practice, plain sound-symbol correspondence must be modified in consistent ways to make reading for meaning faster and more accurate, and learning to write easier. Without such modification, some of the most theoretically perfect fonemic designs for new spelling for tribal languages have proven disastrously impractical. (O'Halloran, 1981)

The most important differences between an easy spelling and a difficult one may be that the rules must be few and consistent, not multiple and unpredictably applied, and the exceptions to rules must number at most a few dozen words, not thousands.

The rear-guard action against improving English spelling thinks up many arguments which all assume that any reform must be purely fonemic. Today the understandable desire to retain familiarity is rarely dressed up as an 'aesthetic' argument, and few people have the scholarship to be able to benefit from the 'etymological' argument, but at present the main thrust of conservative academic argument is to admit that a fonemic spelling such as Pitman's 'initial teaching alphabet' is proven to be easier for learners, but to claim that the visual appearance of present English spelling is better for users, especially skilled readers.

There are two types of 'visual appearance' arguments, one sponsored by Chomsky, and the other by Albrow and Sampson. It is easy to see by simple examination that neither argument applies very well to present English spelling, but they could be used to support directions for spelling reform. Chomsky's claim (Chomsky and Halle, 1968, and Carol Chomsky, 1970) is that English spelling shows the 'lexical form' of words which underlies their surface pronunciation. It is still frequently repeated, although now disproved. Less than 3% of the irregular spellings in a school book of 6000 words was justified as linking word-families and helping to decode new words by showing underlying lexical form. (See, for example, Francis, 1970, Sampson, 1975, Yule, 1978). However, when one considers how much visual similarity of words across languages aids learners and readers in other languages, Chomsky's idea becomes an exciting possibility for English spelling reform, if applied more consistently – that is, a 'morpho-fonemic' spelling reform that shows the core 'word form' as well as pronunciation.

Albrow (1972) suggests that readers can scan sentences for meaning faster if meaning-bearing words are longer than function words, so they are more easily distinguished, and if grammatical inflexions have invariant spellings, e.g., the plural *s* in *cats* and *dogs*, although the spoken form is closer to /cats/ and /dogz/. If these ideas are proved by research to be valuable, they could easily be part of English spelling reform – for most function words could easily be made shorter still, and the grammatical markers could be made more consistent.

Sampson has suggested that fast scanning in reading is aided by visual distinctiveness in the spelling of English words, and he implies that this is achieved by the bewildering variety of spelling patterns for words – 318 different ways to spell the 20 English vowel sounds, and 226 ways to spell 23 consonant sounds (See Appendix), and by the redundancy of extra letters.

However, against that there is the evidence that the most familiar spelling sequences are recognized more easily than the more unusual ones. Reduction of choice in spelling sounds could be a beneficial reform – and could also reduce decision time – for learners, particularly, when sound patterns overlap, as in *should/shoulder, were/there/here*. The 'redundancy' that is valued in speech or in the content of writing is all related to the message, to ensure that the message may get through even if some of the information is missed; however, redundant letters in the spelling of a word do not shore up the form of a word – they are only 'noise.' Research can easily prove or disprove whether English words are actually more distinctive if streamlined down to essentials – or barnacled with surplus ink. (Would words in the preceding paragraph become more or less recognizable if cut down to size?, e.g., *sujested, acheved, ar, mor, lerners, riting, mesaj, thru, misd*).

It is possible that the shorter the word, the more visually distinctive it may be, and the easier to scan for meaning. The compact mixed script of Japanese and the almost equally fonemic scripts of Indian languages are reported to be faster to read than English spelling, while early experiments by Beech (1981) and Yule (in progress) are indicating that literate adults can need only a few hours' practice in order to reach their *normal reading speed* when tested on reformed English spelling systems that use few but consistent rules which remove the irregularities and 'redundancy' which are claimed to be an advantage. With more practice, the subjects might well become faster than they are with the present English spelling.

Streamlined consistent spelling is also likely to serve the interests of learners too, since it avoids the problems of a purely fonemic spelling – of longer polysyllables and risking everything on auditory discrimination. Recent research has been finding differences between people who prefer a 'Chinese' strategy of visual clues in reading and writing, and those who prefer a 'Phoenician' alphabetic and fonic clues. (Baron and Strawson, 1976) It has been suggested that Phoenician may be the better method for learning or writing, but Chinese is the better for faster, efficient reading, and that the two interests conflict. (Frith, 1981)

However, research on learning and learning difficulties is tending to suggest that the more economical the representation of a word, and the shorter it is, the closer it is to a 'Chinese' type of compact visual gestalt, and the easier it *also* is to use auditory analysis and synthesis of a Phoenician type, in view of the nature of short-term memory and its limitations. The more decorated and lengthy the spelling, on the other hand, the harder for 'Chinese' operators because the gestalt is weaker and the basic structure less visible, while 'Phoenician' operators take longer to scan or to resynthesise a sentence, and find poorer linking to the spoken word. (Sometimes I think the natural spelling of five-year-olds should be the model – c.f. "I hav ben t th epot and ther ws a plan ful ov pepl nd lugaj.")

The ideal spelling might be shown to have a fonemic basis, for learning and writing and speaking and to ensure that the primarily visual activity of reading had the slower strategy of 'sounding out' words as an essential back-up technique to decode new words. However, this fonemic base would be mediated not purely by direct sound-symbol correspondence, but by a limited number of modifying rules which pack as much information into the appearance of a word as possible, to transmit word meaning and sentence meaning, avoid confusion with other words, and promote faster visual scanning. It would still be possible to derive the spoken language from the written and vice versa.

4. *The assumption that any real reform of English spelling would require such radical revision that everything now in print would become obsolete, and impossible demands would be made on the*

present literate generation faced with a completely new spelling. However, if you look closely at a printed page of English, you will observe that 70-80% is regular in the crucial sense that it is predictable from rules. Only 20-30% needs 'cleaning up.' As it is, this 20-30% wrecks the whole system, because you cannot tell in advance what is going to be predictable and what is not. If there are only three booby-traps on a road, it is still the whole road that is unsafe.

*An international perspective* on the visual-versus-phonemic issue, however, restates the dilemma in a form research can tackle. What weight must be given to the need for an international standard for sound-symbol relationships, and to the need for visual similarity of similar words in different languages that give them different pronunciations? (e.g. *theatre*, *imagination*, or *machine*). To what degree could the apparently conflicting demands be reconciled?

Mosterin's recommendation (1981) of the universal adoption of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for all national spelling reforms is interesting but there are many difficulties. The present IPA letters are not well suited for everyday use in print and handwriting, are not generally available in printer's fonts and on typewriters, the large number of symbols is unwieldy for our present technology and would require too much variation of keyboards from country to country; the symbols are designed for precise representation of sounds whereas an English spelling would do better with 'diafonic' representation, conventions that allowed some dialectal range in their pronunciation rather than quibbling about whose speech would be the 'standard.' The major question remains: is it more important to preserve visual similarities between languages, or to clarify phonemic differences in their spoken forms-or can the two be reconciled?

At present, the relationship of consonant letters and sounds in English spelling is basically close to IPA and international usage, and only needs 'cleaning up' the exceptions. These are the sounds represented in English spelling by *j*, *ch*, *th*, *wh*, *x*, *sh*, *ng*, *c*, *qu*, or the sound of *zh*. However, English use of the five Latin vowel letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* differs from Continental usage because English has a different set of paired long and short vowels, which can alternate systematically within word-families.

Switching to IPA vowels and their Continental usage would change the appearance of English text dramatically, with 22 vowels required, of which only one would be retained as at present, and four extend their occasional representation. (*e* as in *bet*, *a* as in *car*, *i* as in *police*, *o* as in *solo*, *u* as in *tabu*)

However, observation and experience suggest, and experiment could test the opinion, that as long as shifts in sound-symbol representation are systematic and limited in range and number, and the phonemes are close enough to existing repertoire, learners of different languages adapt quickly to some variation in the values of letters and letter combinations – usually in the first lesson. Sets to speak a different language can change like a shift in gears; so can set to read one.

At this stage it may be appropriate to give an illustration of what a 'morpho-phonemic' spelling could be like, that included in its charter the requirements that have been discussed, of continuity with present spelling and international recognizability, of economy, of minimum 'special cases' for distinguishing confusable homophones or abbreviating the commonest function words, or providing grammatical markers, of operating within an IPA framework or towards one, as far as it seems practicable, with no variability in consonant representation except for nine special cases (described below) and rules that govern a limited range of vowel representations:

"How, cd yu expect me not t'be wurrid at whot that antiqated lejislater thay caul th' public wil say when it sees me now, aftir al these years I hav been sleping in th' silens o oblivion, cum out with al my years on my bak, with a tale as dry as a rush, barrin o invension, devoid o stile, poor in wit an laking in al lerning and instruxion , without qotasions in th marjins or notes at the end o th' book; wheras I see uthir werks, nevir minde how fabulus an profane; so ful o sentenses from Aristotl, Plato an th' hoel herd o filosofors as t' impress thair reders an get thair authors a reputasion for wide reding, erudision an eloqens? (Prolog, *Don Quijote*)

*Description:*

1. The principle of representing the 'form of the word,' despite sound changes, has been achieved through the simple technique of extending the existing use of 'silent e' to indicate that a preceding vowel is long. The corollary, absence of a silent e or use of double consonants, indicates when the preceding vowel is short. This can cover most cases except some initial vowels. e.g. slepe/ slepd/ sleping not *slepping*); *profane/ profanity*, long vowel shown: *antiqated, lejislater, these, stile, minde*, etc. short vowels shown: *wurrid, aftir, barrio, uthir, nevir*.

2. *Vowel representation modified by place, in word and length of word:*

|                          |                                    |                       |                                 |                        |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| that                     | when                               | wil                   | not                             | cum                    |
| tale<br>qotasion<br>thay | these<br>been<br>me<br>polis       | stile<br>my           | notes<br>qotasion<br>so<br>goes | mute<br>fabulus<br>due |
| marjin<br>banana         | lerning<br>nevir<br>author<br>ocur | thair                 | caul<br>saw<br>al               |                        |
| out<br>how               | devoid<br>boy                      | boot<br>flute<br>tabu | poor<br>ful                     |                        |

|   |       |       |       |      |        |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|--------|
| a | paam  | paela | dais  | caos | taut   |
| e | year  | been  | deity | peon | odeus  |
| i | dial  | diet  | -     | iota | pious  |
| o | oasis | poet  | going | boot | about  |
| u | dual  | duet  | ruin  | duo  | arduus |

This vowel scheme allows for some regional variation in pronunciation, some flexibility in further reform (e.g., towards Continental vowel representation) and choices are generally rule-governed so that the reader can know how to say what he reads, and the writer can know how to spell what he writes.

3. *Special cases.* Shortening of function words, e.g. *cd, tb, t, o*, etc. Distinction of confusable homophones only, e.g., *hoel/hole, -sion, -tion, -zion*, suffixes as conventions for pronunciations /-sion/, /-tshun/, /-zhun/ to preserve continuity (although *sn, tn, zn*, might serve better)

4. *Grammatical markers.* -s as plural and verb ending; single nouns may end with -se or -ss. -d, -n as verb participle endings. (e.g., *grone is* a noun, *groen is* a verb)

5. *Consonants.* Transitional retention of velar plosives *c, k, q* (not *qtr*) with rules for their use. *j* still with English pronunciation until international agreement on *j, y, etc. is* established by research. Formal spelling of words like *nature, special*, which are slurred in actual speech.

6. *Visual distinctiveness and speed of reading.* A transcription in other languages is given in Appendix, and I would welcome reports of timed tests, using each subject as his own control with a time interval, and alternation of order of presentation to subjects. (The reformed spelling is 5%-10% shorter, as shown by the indication of omitted letters in the illustration.)

7. *Towards an international English spelling.* The illustration can be compared with other transcriptions (Appendix) for resemblance to the Spanish original. In a comparison of the spellings of 100 'trans-national' words from the commencement of that passage and later paragraphs, findings for closest resemblance were:

39% present spellings, 26% 'morfo-fonemic' Spellings, with 35% other spellings identical.

The words in which present spelling has the visual advantage are of course all words which present difficulty in pronunciation and spelling to the foreigner, and it remains to be tested, indeed, whether the advantage is actually complete, i.e. whether there still remain in the 'reformed spelling' version sufficient visual clues for transnational recognition, as well as sufficient fonemic clues for transnational pronunciation according to the English key.

### *Conclusion*

All the ideas put forward here are subject to testing by empirical research. They may be substantiated, modified, or refuted, and are in no final form. But we should learn from metrification the hazards of implementing any ideal system without thorough practical testing first. In spite of what most alfabetees say, most of their systems have not been tested adequately.

Geoffrey Sampson has suggested (1980) that failure to initiate English spelling reform may be linked with the loss of national self-confidence. "We see ourselves now as following the lead of others rather than as the model to which foreigners aspire; since even the Eurocrats of Brussels have not yet presumed to reform our own language for us, we instinctively suppose that change must be inappropriate or impossible."

I am of course being provocative in suggesting that the 'Eurocrats' or rather the 'cosmopolitans' may change, not the language, but the spelling. However, the first steps that can safely be taken within all the foreseeable possibilities for future English spelling can be taken, by all and anyone now – tacit adoption as alternative spellings of the international usage of *f* for *ph* and *e* for the short *e* sound, as in *bet* (as has been used throughout this article). Both are now appearing in the English-speaking press, often as much unintentionally as by design, and Australian publishers are putting out books and journals which use 'Spelling Reform 1', the short *e* reform.

Further directions for reform can be tested out now what spelling can best help adult illiterates, dyslexic learners, fast readers, transliterating computers? There is exciting research needing to be done on the question of international convergence in sound-letter conventions, and how the spellings of one language can be most accessible to the speakers of another.

There may be some future technological break-thru in a completely new direction, but an internationally useful English spelling reform is needed now, that could be gradually introduced by the existing route of co-existing alternative spellings. The features put up for research and discussion are

1. Consistent use of the present alfabet, with reduced choice of vowel spellings regulated by few consistent rules, to maintain continuity with present spelling, accomodate regional dialect variation and allow a future transition to a spelling system applicable to all languages, if required. The 'silent e' and double-consonant techniques are extended to preserve basic word-forms that have soundshifts between English long and short vowels.
2. Maximum compactness, including condensed function words, to aid visual distinctiveness and efficient scanning for the 'Chinese- strategy' reader, ease of production and decoding for the 'Phoenician -strategy' writer and learner.
3. Minimum rules and exceptions to modify basic fonemic spelling, to meet the needs of reading, learning, pronouncing, writing, and electronic communications technology.

We have dramatic evidence all around us of human capacity to adapt to change. Stone Age Papuans entering the modern age in a few decades, modern cultures risking reversion to the Stone Age. Research is also showing that intelligent, literate people can even adapt to changes in their spelling system in hours rather than generations, and all the resources of modern communications research give guidelines on how the transition can be made.

The spelling of a language is an example of the importance of very small things, often ignored as much as the air we breathe. A social elite can use it to maintain its own superiority by claiming that the convenience of the most educated users must be its major determinant, or it can be an instrument for universal literacy and fuller development of all the potential intelligence in a population. In this day and age, the reform of English spelling could be a sign that hope is possible. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth light."(Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians)

### **Appendix.**

*Spanish compared with two English translations in spelling reform and with present English spelling.*

1. *Spanish.* "Porqué ¿cómo queré is vos que no me tenga confuso el que dira el antiguo legislador que llaman vulgo cuando vea que, al cabo de tantos años como ha que duermo en el silencio del olvido, salgo ahora, con todos mis años auestas, con una leyenda seca como un esparto, ajena de invención, menguada de estilo, pobre de concetos y falta de toda erudición y doctrina, sin acotaciones en las márgenes, y sin anotaciones en el fin del libro, como veo que están otros libros, aunque sean fabulosos y profanos, tan llenos de sentencias de Aristóteles, de Platón y de toda la caterva de filósofos, que admiran a los leyentes y tienen á sus autores por hombres leí dos, eruditos y elocuentes?" (*Don Quijote*, Alhambra edition, 1979, pp 56-7)

2. *An English translation using a fonemic spelling reform ("World English Spelling") with a consistent relation between sounds and letters.* (Spell as you speak) "How cuud yoo ekspekt mee not too bee wurid at whot that antikwaeted lejislaeter thae caul the publik wil sae when it seez mee now, aafter aul theez yeerz Ie hav been sleeping in the sielens ov oblivion, cum out with aul mie yeaz on mie bak, with a tael az drie az a rush, barin ov invenshun, devoid ov stiel, puur in wit and faking in aul lerning and instrukshen, without kwoetaeshunz in the marjinz or noets at the end ov



the buuk; whaeraz Ie see uther works, never miend how fabyoolus and profaen, soe full ov sentensez from Aristotul, Plaetoe and the hoel hurd ov filosoferz, az too impres thaer reederz and get thaer autherz a repyootaeshun for wied reeding, erudishun and elokwens?

3. *A fonemic spelling for English using the Roman alfabet but within the guidelines of the International Ponetic Alfabet.* "Haw cud yu: ekspekt mi not to bi wurid aet whot that aentikweited ledzhisleite: thei co:l th publik wil sei when it si:z mi nau, a:fte: o:l thi:z jie:z Ai haev bi:n sli:ping in th sailens ov oblivion, cum aut with o:l mai jie:z on mai baek, with a teil aez drai aez a rush, bæren ov invenshen, devoid ov stail, pue: in wit aend laekin in o:l le:ning and instrukshen, without kwoteishenz in th ma:dzhinz o: nots aet thi end ov th buk; weiraez Ai si: uthe: we:ks, neve: maind haw faebjulæs aend profain, so ful ov sentensez from Aeristotel, Pleito aend th hol he:d ov filosofo:z, aez tu: impres the: ri:de:z aend get the: o:the:z a repju:teishen fo: waid ri:d:ing, erudishen send elokwens?"

4. *Translation in present English spelling for comparative tests of readability.*

"How could you expect me not to be worried at what that antiquated legislator they call the public will say when it sees me now, after all these years I have been sleeping in the silence of oblivion, come out with all my years on my back, with a tale as dry as a rush, barren of invention, devoid of style, poor in wit and lacking in all learning and instruction, without quotations in the margins or notes at the end of the book; whereas I see other works, never. mind how fabulous and profane, so full of sentences from Aristotle, Plato and the whole herd of philosophers as to impress their readers and get their authors a reputation for wide reading, erudition and eloquence?"

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## 6. "Commercial and Marketing Considerations when Developing Orthographic Reform," by C.J.H. Jolly.

London, England.

### Abstract

The main efforts of spelling reformers have quite rightly centred on making the teaching of English both easier and quicker by simplifying the orthography. However, by definition, almost all English users already write the language, and spelling reform would be an unwelcome change in their habits.

Commercial and marketing considerations are suggested which would help to make spelling reform a more welcome change. Like teachers, users of English are shown as living with a system that is wide open for improvement and how, by meeting their needs, orthographic reform can win more of the support necessary for acceptance.

### Corpus

My own background is that of Consumer Marketing and so this is the approach that I have used in considering the subject of this conference: Spelling: Research and Reform.

Marketing is about persuasion, in particular, how could we persuade people to change their behaviour. The changes we wish to see could broadly be achieved in one of three ways:

(1) We could advertise heavily, promote with competitions, sponsor sport championships, etc.

However, I would estimate that *Persil* spend approximately £2m in this country each year to get over the message 'Persil washes whiter', so with our vastly more complicated message and meagre resources, this is not practical.

(2) The changes could come by legislation or imposition. Examples would be decimalization or a change from driving on the left. This would only really be effective where the government has close control and where only one system is admissible. It is doubtful whether a change in English spelling would be brought about in this way.

(3) Our proposals could gain increasing acceptance because leaders of society use or do or believe these things. These are the people you respect in that particular field, opinions from columnists in the Press, fashions worn by fashion leaders, and what Jane Fonda does with her spare time nowadays. This is probably the most powerful and effective route for us in the long term.

However, let's consider the problem further. We must distinguish between:

- (1) the beneficiary of the change, and
- (2) the decision maker for the change.

Children's breakfast cereals for instance, are for the benefit of the child, but bought by the mother. So it needs to include aspects such as 'promotes healthy growth' to ensure she will buy the product. The same applies in spelling reform. The prime beneficiaries are learners of English that is, children or the person learning English as a second language. The decision maker, however, is the fluent English speaker because only by changing his behaviour will we bring about spelling reform. Here is the basic problem. We must find benefits for the fluent English speaker (and reader) if spelling reform is to have any chance of success.

To provide such a benefit, we must identify problems and confusions experienced in using English today. Pointing out illogicalities is not enough. There must be pressure for change because the existing orthographic system is either too prone to mistakes or too cumbersome, requires frequent searches in the dictionary, and because the alternative overcomes these.

Let us look at an important area where this could apply: Alphanumeric codes. Alpha codes or alphanumeric codes have grown in use enormously over the last few decades. For Example, product descriptions (e.g. the Ford Cortina 2.3 GL car, Rolls Royce P 3 211 aero engine, Castrol GTX oil), postcodes and vehicle number plates. If we drive from Edinburgh to Glasgow, we need to distinguish between the A8 and the M8 routes. Context alone is no guide as both go to Glasgow. When it comes to the code used for identifying hazardous substances by road tanker in the UK, the code even distinguishes between letters printed black on white from those printed white on black.

Here is an example taken from the current British Airways timetable:

| London-Delhi |      |      |              |        |          |
|--------------|------|------|--------------|--------|----------|
| Day          | Dep. | Arr. | via          | Flight | Aircraft |
| Mo           | 1000 | 2305 | non-stop     | A1116  | 747      |
| Tu           | 1000 | 0110 | Frankfort    | A1102  | 747      |
| Tu           | 1005 | 0315 | Kuwait,Dubai | BA147  | L10      |

The code for the British Airways flight BA147 is clear enough, but what about the symbol for the first flight listed? In the timetable it looks like it starts AI, the chemical symbol for Aluminum. In fact, of course, it is Air India. But is there an Air India flight A116, one wonders, and is there ever any confusion? And when you are settling into your seat for Air India flight 116 to New Delhi, spare a thought for your luggage which may be being stowed on the plane alongside Alitalia flight 116 to Naples. With such similarities, mistakes like this are easily made. Although the operator is to blame, in reality we have given him, and ourselves, a system which does not meet the demands of today. An example of the sort of mistake that our present day alphabet and numerals can produce came to light when I worked for Boots, the Chemist. Fortunately, the error was not important and so was never corrected. Here are the computer description of the two products involved:

1. Brief Case 3252 Black + Zip. 2. Brief Case 34Z Black

The first description used to be 325Z because of the outside zip pocket to the case. Constant rewriting and the passage of time had changed it to 3252.

It is to avoid confusions of this kind that we often see these changes:

1 written as 1̣ to avoid confusion with I, 7 is written 7̣, Z is written Ẓ to avoid confusion with 2  
the letter O is written [with a dot in the middle] to avoid confusion with zero, 0 or the number 0 is written Ø

Eny new system of English orthography should set out to redress problems of this nature.

An experiment by Brown and Hull showed the common errors made when copying from people's handwriting. Excluding the obvious confusions between 1 and I and between O and zero, the results were:

*Errors made when copying from manuscript*

Confusions of Z with 2 and 7 produced 10.2% of the errors

Confusions of 0 with 9 and 6 produced 5.7% of the errors

Confusions of S with 5 produced 4.6% of the errors

Confusions of D with 0 produced 2.0% of the errors  
Confusions of H with 4 produced 1.6% of the errors  
Confusions of T with 7 produced 1.5% of the errors

(By chance, errors of less than 0.2% would have been expected for each letter-digit or letter-letter confusion).

Another way of looking at the same problem was the experiment by Howell and Kraft showing responses to typescript, which found confusion between *C-G-6, H-M-N, M-H, Q-O, S-5, 2-Z, 3-5, B-8, 9-P*.

While interesting, I question the reliability of this research for our purposes and would suggest it needs to be rechecked.

Conrad and Hull showed that confusions could occur because letters and numbers *sounded* alike even though they were visually dissimilar. This was particularly so when letters and numbers had to be remembered before writing down in another location. There appears to be an acoustic as well as a visual element to the memory of these symbols:

#### *Acoustic Similarity*

Common acoustic confusions between letters and digits between: *V and 3, 5, 2; H-8; F-5; X-6; T-2*.

Acoustic confusion between letters is particularly significant because most letters can be placed in groups that sound alike:

- Group 1. B, C, D, E, G, P, T, V, Z (in USA) and sometimes Q
- Group 2. A, M, N
- Group 3. F, S, X
- Group 4. Q, U
- Group 5. O, A

It is notable that air traffic controllers have to use descriptions for letters but not for numbers to overcome this confusion. For Example, the letters in the first group are referred to as: Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Golf, Papa, Tango, Zulu, and Quebec respectively. We should expect a new system to use modified names for the letters so as to avoid the need for these secondary descriptions. Note that the most commonly used letters in codes are also the most prone to the confusions described:

e.g. S for Super, Special, Sport, South,  
O for Ordinary, Old, Zero,  
I for International, Internal, Interior, Interest, etc.

In developing codes, enormous care has to be taken so as to prevent them being prone to errors. A typical postcode in the UK has two clusters of letters and numbers e.g. WC2A 1LB. The second of these clusters never uses certain letters because one of several errors could arise:

Visual: C (confusion with G), I, O, M (confusion with H)  
Acoustic: V (confusion with 3), Perception: K (confusion with X, C)

For the reasons given, we need to look seriously at the number, graphic form and description of the letters used in our alphabet as an integral part of orthographic reform, and this may be vital to its acceptance.

Let us move on from alphanumeric codes to a new field: Symbols. There are of course, some 200 commonly used symbols, of which everyday letters and numbers are a part. Besides punctuation (.,:;!?"') and mathematical symbols (+-x > % oo√) 'there are a number of others that are widely recognized (\*£\$&#/' Δ) as well as the enormous number of corporate symbols. However we draw mostly from the Latin and Greek alphabets for our extra symbols. In one scientific dictionary, these few symbols are used for 'no less than 370 physical quantities. To take one symbol, alpha, it can represent:

*Use of symbol alpha a*

|                              |                                      |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Plane angle                  | Mesured in radians                   |
| Angular velocity             | Mesured in radians /sec <sup>2</sup> |
| Thermal diffusion factor     | Mesured in per degree C°             |
| Linear expansion coefficient | (in thermodynamics)                  |
| Magnetic polarizability      |                                      |
| Light absorbance             |                                      |
| Acoustic absorption factor   |                                      |

There are meny more uses for *alpha* as a symbol. It is also used to identify an atomic particle, the alpha particle.

The point of all this is that there is an enormous market for symbols in the academic community. Obviously, eny new symbol needs to be fixed in its form but with international agreement for its use in spelling, could get widely used elsewhere. Besides the academic community, new letter symbols could have a more dramatic use in the commercial world for product names. Phonetic spellings are often used to gain attention, e.g. Kwik Kopy, Kodak, and also numbers, e.g. 7up and 3M. New letters could get used to describe new products long before they were widely used in everyday. This could hasten their acceptance.

I would now like to draw your attention to one of the most crucial requirements for spelling reform, one which has not received the attention it deserves. That is the reform of the spelling of personal names and places. We cling to these very tightly and they are the last we would wish to change, but they are among the most needy of reform. They will have to be changed by legal action to preserve continuity of identity.

If we look at a telephone directory of place names or surnames, how meny can we be sure to pronounce correctly? Most perhaps, but not all. Taken the other way, if we could have eny pronunciation we asked for, we would still not get the spelling of some names. Here is the dilemma for eny communication that is by writing or by voice alone. Names would have a correct spelling for writing and a phonetic or reformed spelling for pronunciation, just as it is now in dictionaries. With the growing acceptance of the latter, it is reasonable to assume that it will slowly take over from the former. By this means, we have a method of avoiding the antagonisms that comes from imposing a change.

Considering the possibilities, there are probably three ways in which spelling reform could be introduced:

- (1) in gradual steps, e.g. SR-1 and on.
- (2) suddenly, as with the Turkish reform.
- (3) by transition from one system to another, the two systems coexisting during the changeover.

To conclude, if it is to be successful, the introduction of orthographic reform really does need some convincing, non-conversational benefits for the fluent English speaker if it is to win the support of the very people who can make it happen.

## 7. "Spelling: What Road to Reform?" by George O'Halloran,

London, England (in absentia)

### Abstract

How nearly ideal is English spelling? Phonemic reform – will it make the teaching of English a lot easier? Diaphonic spelling: How accurate do we need vowel representation? Dialect spelling, and teaching in it. Syllabic systems. Is English a syllabic system, and should it be taught as such? Is ideographic writing on the ascendency? Can we devise a spelling system compatible with Eurospellings? – perhaps by semi-ideographic spellings?

### Corpus

The long-standing insult offered by our traditional spelling to all readers, but especially to beginning readers must surely be coming to an end-or must it? Is our spelling really, as Chomsky would have us believe, the ideal instrument for representing English?, or is it, as so many others would assert, a treachery, a delusion and a snare? And if English spelling is to be reformed, or perhaps just simplified, what kind of changes should be made? From Ormin onward there have been many proposals for change. These came to a head in the first third of the century when reform bills had encouraging support in the House of Commons. The operation of these was hindered by the selfish outlook of a purported reformer who attempted to foist his own system on the unsuspecting public. He failed in this attempt, but left the reform movement considerably weakened.

Some of the early proposals for reform were said in their time to be *phonetic*. That is to say, they were said to be based on the systematic representation of the sounds of words as uttered. There was some uneasiness about the use of this description and as time went by it began to be replaced by the word *phonemic*. This description is said to be based on the systematic representation of families of related sounds. It was hoped that all the slightly variant members of such a sound family might be represented by the same single character. This possibility is not now so widely accepted as a panacea. There was for many folks in many lands the danger of just substituting one unsatisfactory system for another equally disappointing.

The reformers had hoped to make reading (and consequently education and thus economic progress) more easily available to the hoi poll. But was this happening? The underprivileged, speaking the widely variant dialects of the ghettos of London, Liverpool, New York, Freetown, and the West Indies would seem still to be out of the range of help. Large scale experiments in new systems such as i.t.a. conducted on thousands of children in hundreds of schools in numerous countries showed conclusively that children did learn to read in English faster when using i.t.a.- but not much faster. It seems that the greater net gain was not worth the disproportionate expenditure of money, effort and printing needed. The fact that nearly all former i.t.a. schools have now given up i.t.a. and have reverted to traditional orthography must, in itself, be significant. It has now become clear that any simplification or reform to be generally acceptable will have to be *diaphonic* as well as phonemic. That is to say, it will have to cover all (or most) of the sounds of all dialects of English adequately for reading – at least for beginners. A diaphone is a character which covers all

the variant pronunciation of particular phonemes. Using a diaphonic alphabet, learners would be able to learn to read in terms of their own dialects. A diaphonic system would be equally valid for the English sounds of Liverpool, Los Angeles, Lagos, Adelaide, and East London.

Another thing that was highlighted by all the experimentation was the importance of dialect itself in learning to read English. English has always been written in the middle-class dialect of the language. This has not been unreasonable since this dialect was in the past the language of most English literature as written by middleclass writers. It was fair that they should write as they spoke. But this made it harder for speakers of non-standard dialects to learn to read. This defect is said to be one of the causes of immigrant failure in education. One of the causes of the failure of i.t.a. was probably because it held too closely to class pronunciation and spellings. The mood of the times was against it. It was probably better to have early readers taught in their own dialects, and some progress has been made along this road already.

It is widely accepted that the vowels of English cause more confusion to beginning readers than the consonants. Teachers of reading in any language are only too well aware of the difficulties of vowel blending. In an earlier presentation to this Society, I described a method by which I overcame specific difficulties in an African language by consonant substitution. Experiments have shown that reading in a devoweled English script is quite easy. Would it be a good thing therefore to just leave out the vowels in English writing? Or just to leave out or to change only those which cause bother? Arabic (for Arabs) does omit vowels at an early stage in reading – although for nonArabs, especially in African countries, they are retained much longer in Arabic and are never even partially abandoned when writing local languages in Arabic scripts. Is there a lesson for us here? Should we set up experiments to test the effects of leaving out or changing some or all of the vowel letters in English. After all, the various kinds of shorthand have usually omitted the vowels. One successful brand of shorthand called Speedwriting whose proponents read a paper for us at our first conference uses ordinary letters and omits vowels only. It seems to work very well but is, of course, usually only taught to adult students.

Or should we go for a syllabic system? Here there must be careful thought. *Classical* English syllables are quite primitive, very difficult and numerous. Languages which have developed further phonologically than English have greatly simplified their syllable structure. For example, the East African language Mandika has reached a very high stage of syllable development. It has now only three types of syllable: V (vowel), CV (consonant+vowel), CCV (consonant+consonant +vowel). It is doubtful if a language can get more stream-lined than this.

But English is already developing along similar lines, although it has a long way to go. The following TV advertising jingle shows what has already been achieved as part of current oral usage: It is shown in the International Phonetic Alphabet:

jʌl nevə ɡe? ə bi ə bʌ?ə ɔn jvə naif

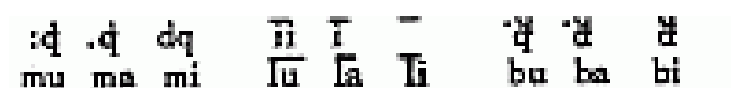
you'll never get a better bit of butter on your knife.

This development needs only to be used in print, perhaps as under, to effect a very much quicker reading result in all English-medium schools.

Yu'll neve ge a be'e bi o' bu'e on yu naif.

Most folks will be surprised to learn that English is, in its usually spoken form, already nearly a syllabic language. Think what an acknowledgement of this could mean to literacy. Children learn to read in syllabic languages with great speed. In The Gambia we set a period of two months for the attainment of complete fluency in reading. Hardly any children failed to achieve it. This was, of course, in the Gambian vernacular which is written as an open syllable language. Is this the shape of things to come in English? Are we going to follow the Mandinkos down the road of easy literacy instead of persisting with the outworn, outmoded system we borrowed from the Romans and never allowed to develop?

Do we need very great vowel accuracy in everyday writing? Again we may perhaps look to Africa for Guidance. The Mende people of Sierra Leone and Liberia (relatives of the Mandinkos already mentioned) in pre-colonial days evolved a system of writing to fit their language. This was a syllabary of a very special kind. It was written from right to left. I give a few characters to show how it worked:



Don't forget the right to left reading. But the script could just as easily read from left to right or even boustrophedon. Unlike the ancient syllabaries where discrete syllables like *ki*, *ka*, *ku* would usually be written as completely different shaped characters, the very competent orthographers of the kikaku recognised the separate nature of vowels and consonants. But these were also understood (in the ancient fashion) as an integral part of the syllable. This can be seen from the non-writing of a separate /i/ sound in syllables like *ki*, *wi*, *mi*. It was a change of vowel that was registered by dots as above.

Another interesting fact is that modern Western-trained linguists regard Mende as having a seven-vowel system. These seven vowels are in I.P.A. written as: a, e, i, o, u, ɔ, ɛ. But the Mendes found their own locally evolved three-vowel system quite adequate for all purposes. Do we really need all those extra vowel signs to write Mende nowadays. Or are they there for the benefit of foreigners rather than natives? A quite small number of foreigners will learn Mende. Should all the Mendes be burdened with superfluous letters to accomodate a few outsiders?

Come to that, do we really need all those vowel signs and combinations of vowel signs for English? The more signs there are, the greater the difficulties of learning them, and the greater the possibilities of confusion. Redundancy is not a virtue here. My elementary manual of phonetics claims that standard British English has need of over 21 different vowel signs. Maybe it's fewer vowel signs we need – not more. Should we perhaps try out the Mende three-vowel system to see how it goes? After all, the Arabs don't seem to suffer too much from the use of their three vowel system. (Ed. comment-!!!?)



Or should we go further and persue alongside, or even instead of, our Romanic script a completely new system of expressing our ideas. Should we go for some system of purely ideographic writing such as Blissymbolics? Bliss is gaining adherents in many countries. Originating in Australia, it is now supported by the Canadian Government which has financed the production of a full colour talking film to explain the system. This film can be had on loan free of charge from the Canadian High Commission. Such a system, being purely ideographic, would over-ride both class and national barriers. There are also Bliss books available. This year there is a course on Blissymbolics at the National College of Speech Sciences in Hampstead on October 1st.

Or should we not just go straight to the fountain head and adapt the 2,000 ideographs of the Chinese as these are used in Japan. It seems a lot to learn but the Japanese manage it and it does not seem to have kept them backward in any way. Perhaps the extra learning load would have a therapeutic effect on naughtiness in schools. As a bonus, we should be able to read a good deal of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Viet-Nameese. It is worthy of taking note of the fact that there is a very much higher standard of literacy in Japan than in Britain. A few years ago there was an experience in New York teaching the backward to read. They apparently learned much faster in this script. (Ed. comment: This is unbelievable!)

Do we ask for too much definition in our script? Is it not enough for most purposes, perhaps after all, that our writing signs should just stimulate the memory into the correct response? Or is this script business strictly a psychological thing: a kind of master/servant complex? We seem to want to tie other folks down: we have no good will to men and expect none. So we try to register every nuance and every comma into a forcing situation of spelling and rules. Are we manifesting our own character defect in our alphabet? – inherited with the writing from the Romans?

But for us who are in the E.E.C., it seems that we must not move too far away from our Euro-compatriots. English shares with most European languages a very large number of spellings exactly the same as those of other E.E.C. languages. Could we combine these into a form of simplified spelling? It could be a grievous mistake to move too far away from that of our Euro-compatriots and thus perhaps create greater division in our first real hope of unity with our neighbours. Are there echoes of Axel Wijk in this? Was the underlying unity of Euro-scripts another, if underlying, reason for the failure of i.t.a.?

It is true that the printed common forms of Euro-words often conceal very great differences of sound, but at least we have the shape of the words in common and often the meaning as well. The beginnings, perhaps, of a rather cumbersome pasigraphy. Also many of these words have become international in the correct export of European and North American culture and manufactures to fill gaps in third world countries. It could be a mistake to depart too far from these word-shapes. Would it be a good thing to produce a common Euro-vocabulary from these shapes? No work has been published on this task up to now. Used ideographically, such a vocabulary could have a unifying effect an the European communities.

## 8. "The inevitability of change: the happy alternative," by Harvie Barnard,

Tacoma, WA.

### Abstract.

The fixed mode of English spellings – but there are alternative spellings – variant spellings. Do literate persons fear and resent change? In accepting rational change, certain factors need to be considered. The computer compared with our brain: Failure to learn causes frustration. Dictionaries show pronunciation – why not use these respellings? Four types of simplification. Who would benefit from simplification?

### Corpus

In view of the gradual but relatively continuous changes in spoken language, it may seem surprising that written language tends to become trapped into a more or less fixed mode. This apparent rigidity of structure, both spelling and syntax, while varying from language to language, tends to crystallize into a traditional form for any one language. The reasons for this are not as logical as they are materialistic. This inflexibility is based upon nothing truly rational or psychologically humanistic, but since the advent of the printing press has become essentially mechanical! Also it could be successfully argued that the pervasive economics of dollars and cents, or British pounds and pence, have had much to do with the problem.

Altho the "better mousetrap" theory has not appeared to be working out with respect to a more rational alphabet for the English language, there has been a perceptible trend toward simplification and consistency with respect to better agreement between pronunciation and spelling of names of people as well as names of products of manufacture for world-wide use. In the granting of copyrights and trademarks, the use of fonemic or fonetic spellings has been fairly obvious and widely accepted for many years. Aside from the novelty aspects of thousands of unique trade names and copyrights, most of our English dictionaries, such as *Webster's New Collegiate*, consistently offer optional or alternative spellings, as *meter* for *metre*, *catalog* for *catalogue*, *honor* for *honour*, and even *thru* for *through*. Such choices, or reformed spellings, are also referred to as deviants or variants, and are more common than ordinarily supposed.

Variant spellings, researched by the National Collegiate Teachers of English, (U.S.A.), have been discovered to be fairly numerous. In a recent book by Donald W. Emery, *Variant Spellings in Modern American Dictionaries*, (1973), five principal American dictionaries were studied – 2494 variants are listed. If we were to assume a total of 100,000 listings, we find these variants to represent approximately 2.5%—a truly surprising proportion!

These alternatives are, of course, in addition to the usual respellings for explanations of pronunciation. The very fact that respellings are needed to enable us to pronounce many thousands of listed words is in itself proof that our traditional spellings are inadequate to indicate how to properly speak our English language. The additional fact that there are numerous pronouncing dictionaries such as the *Dictionary of Pronunciation*, by Abraham and Betty Lass (1978), testify to the confused state of our spelling, plus the peculiar truth that there are many words (in English) that have more than one acceptable pronunciation. In one such dictionary, there are 8000 commonly mispronounced words, which testify to the confusing inconsistencies of our traditionally perplexing spellings.

According to many outstanding teachers and successful scholars, "English spelling is a bewildering chaos to adults coming to it from other languages" (Laubach, Frank: *Teaching the World to Read*).

And to thousands, if not millions of children whose innate sense of logic becomes shattered by rules having numerous exceptions, our traditional spellings serve only to betray their faith in the rationality of adult learning, and perhaps also in the laws, written and unwritten, of our adult society.

Among the many remedies which have been proposed, the concept of fonetic or foneemic spelling appears to be the principal thread of rational thinking woven thru the fabric of spelling reform. Yet the implementation of the foneemic approach, while appearing reasonable and even simple to many reformers, presents a forbidding succession of obstacles when viewed in the cold light of practicability. Unless approached with utmost tact, circumspection and diplomacy, spelling changes by any process in any form, regardless of the merits involved, will be looked on with misgivings and doubts. Even though substantial financial advantages could be demonstrated, as suggested by our late and respected mentor, G. B. Shaw, there will be objectors, especially among the uninformed.

Still, there is hope! America has elected to go metric. Great Britain is converting from traditional English measurements to the decimal system – or is at least trying! Innovations which were looked upon with greatest suspicion a few generations ago are now considered indispensable to everyday living. The two most populous nations on earth have restructured their languages, and several smaller nations – Turkey, Finland, Czechoslovakia (Czechoslovakia), have made progress in simplification. And from what we hear, it seems that both the Soviets and the Chinese are trying to learn English, but are having discouraging difficulties with the spelling – which is certainly no surprise to anyone!

One basic question and incompletely solved problem still confronts us. How can English speaking peoples accomplish the conversion from traditional spelling to rational foneemic spelling with the least inconvenience, confusion, and disruption of the status quo? Although dozens of approaches have been suggested, none have appeared wholly acceptable. The basic objection seems to have been the inherent fear that most people are afraid of change, fear that they would have to go back to school again to learn to read and therefore approach it with general misgivings regardless of the benefits to be derived. In truth, a relatively small percentage of our useful vocabulary would be altered – less than 10% – and these changes would be so obviously foneemic that their intrinsic naturalness would tend to favor acceptance after being seen in print a few times.

The alternative spellings which would be proposed as acceptable are essentially those already widely used by business executives, newswriters, and others concerned with writing efficiency, speed and even clarity. Words now spelt as they sound would remain as they are – unchanged. Words encumbered with the burdensome 'ough' combination (fonogram), such as *rough*, *tough*, *through* and *thought*, would be candidates for simplification.

A change to the happy alternative is not intended to alter English speech, and it should be emphasized that English, or any other language, is the language which the people speak, and that writing is essentially an attempt to express that language most effectively in the form of symbols, whether alphabetic, hieroglyphic, or pictographic. Uncounted systems have been used, and while we have not achieved perfection, a considerable number of essentially foneemic systems have been developed based upon as few as 4 vowels, (a, e, o, u), and 11 consonant sounds. (Ref. Laubach's *Teaching the World to Read*.)

The basic 44 sounds, (or fones, fonemes, or phonemes), of English, while ideally represented by 44 symbols, are reasonably well expressed by our 26 alphabetical symbols which could do very well, provided the required symbol combinations were employed with a dependable degree of consistency. But instead of using the minimum of 20 consonants with 24 other consonant and vowel combinations, what do we have? None other than a serious student of English linguistics could believe the truth unless time was taken to read Godfrey Dewey's *English Spelling: Road block to Learning*, particularly Appendix A, "Spelling of Sounds."

Dewey's exhaustive compilation, based upon the minimum of 41 distinct sounds of English speech, reveal that according to standard dictionary spellings presently in use, there are 561 different symbol combinations, including 246 different spellings for only 9 usual vowel sounds, including the /oo/ in fool, and the /y/ as used in why. A curious question might be raised: "after committing to memory all these 561 different spellings for 41 basic sounds, who among our so completely programmed linguistic experts would want to relinquish an imposing array of academic accomplishments?" So, could we reasonably expect very many accomplished scholars to willingly change from T.O. (traditional orthography) for a system as uncomplicated and rational as WES (World English Spelling)? Why should you or I, or any other traditional orthographer wish to demolish a system learned thru countless trips to the dictionary which could be supplanted by anything so simple as to be learned by an infant school pupil in a matter of months, or at the most a year or two? Quite preposterous, eh what?

In accepting rational change, there are two basic factors to be recognized: 1) an attitude of reasonable compromise, which requires some degree of mental flexibility, plus a modicum of compassion for the millions of small children – those now with us as well as the many millions yet to come, and 2) an honest concern for economy which would enable the tax-paying public of the United States alone to save at least 10 billions of dollars every year in teaching children to read, spell, write and comprehend what they are reading. Spelling itself is definitely *not* the fundamental objective! Spelling is essentially a vehicle by which we approach the true objective, which is clear, unencumbered communication, unconfused and unimpeded by the needless maze of nonsensical, illogical symbol combinations which by endless repetition are programmed into the organic computers of students, young or old.

The human brain, our personal computer, operates on the same principles as any other computer. Logical, consistent and agreeable data are accepted for programming. If and when compatible with previously programmed information, data perceived as acceptable are accumulated and retained for an indefinite period, or until retrieved for later use. If the data presented for programming is incompatible, or in some manner inconsistent, or at variance with what has already been programmed, the computer will either reject, stop programming, or cancel previously recorded input.

In spite of repeated failures, frustrated children and confused computers, our insistence on traditional spelling is jamming or otherwise blocking the normal function of millions of organic computers, both young and old. Statistically, about 15% of our younger computers, public school graduates, after a few years of confusion and frustration, simply quit, turn off, or play a guessing game for the rest of their lives. Such semi-literates read only with the greatest difficulty and with little comprehension. And as for writing, that's virtually a "No-No." These are branded as illiterates, uneducables, or at best, "functional illiterates."

When functional illiterates are put in a situation where they must make an attempt to communicate in writing, some rather interesting spelling results. It is essentially pidgin English, neither traditional or fonic, although closer to the latter. The main effect of the effort is to spell according to the way the words sound, resulting in a horrible mishmash of symbols, because no two functional illiterates are at all sure which letters represent what sounds. The vowels are usually confused, and consonants, traditionally used but unsounded, are omitted – especially *b, d, h, k, l, n, p,* and *v*. Other common confusions include *c, k,* and *ck*; *s, sh,* and *z*; *g* and *j*; *f, ph,* and *gh*; double letters used as singles; the common digraphs *ei, ie, ea* and *ae*; the /er/ sounds, *ar, er, it, or,* and *ur* are equally often confused, to mention only a few.

Yet in spite of this "chamber of orthographic horrors," or labyrinthian confusion of sounds, the way out is amazingly straightforward and as readily learned by adults as by 6 year olds if we would simply use our present dictionaries for correct pronunciation as well as for meaning of words.

Every dictionary worthy of the name shows accepted pronunciations by means of respellings. These respellings use conventional diacritical marks which indicate "long" and "short" vowels as well as necessary spelling changes to correct for unneeded and/or unsounded letters. Write, wrote, and written are spelt: rīt, rōt, rīten, the macron above the vowel indicating the long sound, and without, leaving the vowel sound short. But because modern typewriters and most type fonts do not have symbols with diacritical markings, the latter, while very useful for dictionaries, are considered impractical for general use. However, a simple and reasonable solution is suggested by our usual spelling. When we hear the long /ee/ sound, as in *beet*, *feed*, *need* and *weed*, the obvious 'ee' is most often used. So why not adapt the 'ee' practice as a standard means of expressing the long *e*? Then it follows that the other long vowels are lengthened by adding 'e', to form the long vowels: *ae*, *ie*, *oe*, *ue*, as is done in World English. This makes it much easier to teach *all* the vowel symbols.

There may be an objection to this adjacent 'e' method because it is unconventional and we already have a means of accomplishing the same objective. This is the silent terminal 'e' rule, which is an acceptable rule when followed consistently. If followed, as in *mate*, *rate*, *secrete*, *hide*, *pole* and *mute*, the terminal 'e' is workable and well established, and when applied consistently need not be changed. But there are many words – a few taken from "Olde Englishe" – which have been given a useless, hence deceptive terminal 'e'. Words ending in *-ive*, *olive*, *deceptive*, *love*, *move*, *above*, besides *have* which we have shortened properly. There are many others such as *usable*, *possible*, *liable*, *double*, *trouble*, which are not helped by the terminal 'e'. Thus we have a rule which has been invalidated by more exceptions than conformals (see Sartorius), but which is too useful to be abandoned whenever it provides a true and useful purpose, (at least in an interim reform).

And what about the "short" vowels? They may and probably should be continued to be used as now, as in *bat*, *bet*, *bit*, *not* and *nut*. And whenever the distinctly short 'e' sound is heard, why shouldn't we write it as 'e', like in Harry Lindgren's SR-1, viz: *yet*, *bet*, *any*, *had*, *spread*, *merry* and *dad*? Although we will sometimes run into homophones such as *bred*, we have no difficulty with these common "sound alike" in speech or in our usual writings, such as *led* and *lead*, *rite*, *wright*, *right* and *wright*, which are readily distinguished by context. The subject being considered makes the meaning clear, which should apply to written material as well as to speech.

Another useful alternative, readily pronounced and more readily spelt, is the customary 'f' for the /f/ sound, as used in *first*, *fore*, *fone*, and *fix*, rather than *phirst*, *phore*, *phix*, and *phone*. Although 'ph' has an interesting etymology, as do many of our symbols, and for those who wish to pursue alphabetical history, this should prove both amusing as well as informative – if not useful. Such a study might clarify the confusion between the 'ph' and the 'gh' for the /f/ sound, yet at present we are still burdened with the needlessly burdensome *rough*, *tough*, *enough*, although most traditionalists have finally abandoned the '*plough*' for the simpler 'plow.' It has been sad that 'old soldiers never die, they just fade away,' but not "phade away."

The four easily learned and readily used alternatives described in the preceding 4 paragraphs are summarized here briefly as follows: 1) the long vowel sounds are indicated by an added 'e', either terminally, as in present spelling, or alternatively, immediately following the vowel to be pronounced long; 2) all vowels, used alone, except when used terminally, as in *vat*, *net*, *fit*, *hot* and the 'u' in *but*, are short and require no signs, aids, or signals to indicate the short pronunciation.

The #3 suggested alternative "rule" is that the short 'e', /e/, already mentioned in the preceding paragraph for short vowel sounds (as suggestion #2), is to be applied more broadly whenever the short 'e', /e/, is the accepted pronunciation, as in *bet*, *met*, and *pet*. The 'e' will replace, or will be used alone for any other symbol or combination of letters, as *merry* for *many*, *any* for any, *said* for *said*, *stedy* for *steady*.

The #4 alternativ is to use consistently the 'f' for the /f/ sound to replace both the 'gh' and 'ph' , as *fotograf* for *photograph*, and *fone* for *phone*. In the case of 'gh', we also drop the unsounded 'o', so that *tough* becomes *tuf*, *rough* becomes *ruf* and *enough*, *enuf* – as we alrady use *stuf* for *stough* and *puff* for *pough*. Here there is some question (or kquestion) about the use of the doubled consonant – in this case the 'ff'. This suggests a possibl fifth alternativ which could be dropping of the unsounded, hence unneeded double letters, since with our #2 rule the short vowel no longer requires a doubled consonant to signal shortness. But when the doubled letters are sounded, they are considered needed, as in *unneeded*, which would remain unchanged.

Yet in spite of the meny advantages inherent in the use of happy alternatives, their suggested usage is not to condem nor to wholly replace traditional orthogrfy. It would be hoping for too much to expect that literate adults, or any others who hav successfully mastered the intricacies of T.O., would warmheartedly embrace the alternativ concept. Having bin thoroly programmed for our customary inconsistent and irregular spellings, most literate adults would hav difficulty adapting to this change regardless of the benefits to be expected.

Aside from those attempting to lern English for the first time, immigrants as well as litl children, should we show compassionate understanding for the meny millions of semi-literates, those who read with difficulty and write not at all, the meny who redily admit to spelling difficulties without realizing the causes of their confusion and frustrations? Should we disregard the millions, if not billions of non-English speaking peopl who, in addition to millions of nativ-born English and Americans, including Australians and meny others, who could communicate much better in our English language if it was not for this unnecessary roadblock of what meny intelligent, literate and well informed persons refer to as our "crazy", irrational, and confusing spelling.

The meny millions who would profit from the opportunity to use alternativ spellings would include a substantial proportion of the English speaking public, those who fear of criticism and even ridicule, hav lapsed into a state of semi-literacy, and who communicate in writing with reluctance, if at all. Those who fail to become literate, or to communicate well, will founder economically, will rarely lern to comprehend the concept of responsible citizenship, and will likely remain that segment of society most likely to spawn our criminal population, and eventually to becum those enemies of society who will require constant supervision, if not institutionalization, at tremendous public expense!

It has alrady bin demonstrated in meny lerning situations, classroom controlled and otherwise, that material which is rational and logical – that which makes sense to the lerner – will be more eezily and rapidly lerned – as *well as remembered* for future use, than that which is irrational and therefore unreasonable. Altho there is ample room as well as need for further research to sustain the foregoing assertions, there should be litl or no pressing need to offer proof that sense is superior to nonsense! Time, history, growth and human development all serve to convince us that, "THERE IS NOTHING AS CERTAIN AS CHANGE!

Altho we would like to believe that miracles hav happened, and may yet occur, experience tells us that it will be human intellect and action which will bring about beneficial and desirabl change. Thus by providing a rational alternativ for what has proved cumbersom, tedious, and a roadblock to both lerning and communication, acceptance of the "Happy Alternativ" by all those in authority should pave the way toward progress 4n achieving successful understanding and cooperation in our ritten English language, both here, and hopefully, thruout the world.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1982 p20 in the printed version]*

## 9. To NEWELL W. TUNE

in recognition of more than two decades  
of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of spelling reform  
through managing, publishing, and single-handedly producing  
SPELLING PROGRESS BULLETIN

and compiling the scholarly source book

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