

Further Consultation

1 Background

The International English Spelling Congress (IESC) voted earlier this year to choose TSR as the 'preferred option.' The Committee of the Society subsequently decided to consult the membership as to whether they were prepared to support TSR. That consultation is currently in progress with a deadline for responses of 31 August 2021. At the same time, I offered to consider further changes to the scheme, both those that were suggested from third parties and ones where I would particularly welcome some outside input.

2 TSR in a nutshell

TSR is a moderately conservative scheme. It seeks to identify the underlying rules of Traditional English Spelling (TS) and to apply them more consistently. The main changes are as a result of applying the doubling rule more consistently and in removing the ambiguity caused by certain letter combinations, which under TS can represent more than one sound (principally <ie>, <ow> and <ough>).

The most convenient summary of TSR is to be found in 'Personal View' on the Society's website, http://spellingsociety.org/uploaded_views/tsr-personal-view.pdf and in the one page summary http://spellingsociety.org/uploaded_iesc/a009r6wrk-linstead-s11ugry7-traditional-spelling-revised-thumbnail-misc.pdf. A fuller exposition of the scheme is to be found at http://spellingsociety.org/uploaded_iesc/a009r6wrk-linstead-s11ugry7-traditional-spelling-revised-portfolio-misc.pdf.

3 Changes already suggested by others

I set out the principal changes suggested below together with my initial comments in italics. They include:

3.1 From the radical camp

1. Reduce the number of irregular words and sub-groups whose TS spelling is retained.

Happy to consider. TSR has about 60 core sign words excluding proper names. Of course any reduction in this number would increase the number of respellings. It had in any case been part of my plan that proper nouns, irregular other irregular words and sub-groups should be reviewed at the end of a transitional period.

2. Reduce the number of ways in which the sounds of spoken English can be represented, thus making TSR more phonemic and predictable.

Again happy to consider. While TSR is designed to allow the pronunciation to be predicted from the spelling, the reverse is not always the intention. TSR attempts 'one-way phonemicity' There may however be a case for reducing some of the less frequent letter combinations for representing particular sounds which TSR currently retains from TS.

3.2 From the conservative camp

1. Reduce the number of changes made in the interests of greater acceptability. *I am happy to consider removing any such changes as are not strictly necessary in the interest of producing the predictability of the sound from the spelling. But I don't think many of the changes that TSR makes fall into that category.*

4 Areas where I would particularly welcome views

The 1,000 word list at ANNEX A marks some of these in red.

4.1 Representation of /e@ʳ/

The sound in <stair>, <bare>, <bear> etc. TSR suppresses <ear> for this sound, as the [ea] combination is reserved for the sound /i:/ (as in [bead]). However, continued use of [are] for this sound as currently proposed may lead to problems in words such as <baring, barring, staring, starring>. Should the /e@ʳ/ sound be represented only by [air]?

4.2 Certain digraphs representing two sounds

For example, <science>, <realize>.

The digraph [ie] is normally reserved by TSR for the sound /aɪ/, (as in [die]) with words such as <believe> being respelled [beleev]. So how does one deal with words such as <science>? One could write it [scyence], or [scie-ence]. Similarly questions with the digraph [ea] in words such as <realise>.

4.3 The interpretation of <s>

The TS rule is pretty simple: <s> represents /s/ at the beginning of words. In other places it usually represents /z/. If /s/ is to be represented other than at the beginning of a word, one doubles the <s> (e.g. <hiss>). Exceptions: when <s> is combined with /k/, /f/, /p/, or /t/ (e.g. <cliffs>, <pits>). This rule works in most cases, but there are problems with certain prefixes where the <s> can represent /s/ but not always (e.g. <dismay>, <dismantle>, but <dismiss>, <disaster>). Is there a need to refine the rule further or is one obliged to respell in these ambiguous cases?

4.4 Dealing with differences between British and US pronunciation

My intention was that wherever possible TSR should be capable of being interpreted by the main dialects of spoken English according to local pronunciation.

Views would be welcome on whether the formulae described at paragraph 12 of the Summary are reasonably reliable and acceptable.

5 Contacts

People wanting to make comments or suggestions can contact me via the blog pages on the Society's website, use REDDIT (<https://www.reddit.com/r/TheEnglishSpellingSoc/>) or email me on stephen.linstead@gmail.com.

A 1000 most common words transcribed into TSR

See http://spellingsociety.org/uploaded_jesc/1000-most-common-words-transcribed-into-tsr-misc.pdf.

B Proposals for an English Spelling Commission

I have suggested that the preferred scheme should be promoted and administered by an Independent Spelling Commission. The details would need to be fleshed out later. However, my initial thoughts are as follows:

To comprise a mix of experts and non-experts.

To be appointed by the Committee of the TESS.

Probably 5 or 7 members. Drawn from across the English Speaking World

Fixed term of office, renewable.

Remit: to oversee promotional material, administer scheme website, development of a converter software and dictionaries; also to rule on application of TSR rules to individual cases where there is doubt; to put forward recommendations for change (e.g. for respelling some irregular sign words or sub-groups).

C Notation used in this document

Normal text in this document uses Traditional Spelling (TS). However, TS text which is quoted to illustrate a point is enclosed in angle brackets, in Courier font, eg <stair>.

Phonemes are represented, using Sampa, in Courier font, eg /e@˚/.

Text in TSR is enclosed in square brackets, in courier font, eg [air].