

Simplified Spelling Society, Journal 5. 1987/2

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The Society

Founded in 1908, the Simplified Spelling Society has included among its officers: Daniel Jones, Horace King, Gilbert Murray, William Temple, H G Wells, A C Gimson. Its stated aim is to "bring about a reform of the spelling of English in the interests of ease of learning and economy of writing". The Society's present officers are:

President: Professor John Downing

Chairman: Chris Jolly

Secretary: Laurence Fennelly

Treasurer: Alun Bye

Public Relations Officer: Mona Cross

Enquiries to the Secretary,

Subscriptions (£5 or \$10 p.a.) to the Membership Secretary and Editor (see below).

The Journal

The *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* appears three times a year.

Editor and Membership Secretary: Chris Upward.

Material for the 1987 No.3 issue should reach the editor by 31 July 1987.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society 5 1987/2 p2 in the printed version*]

[Chris Upward: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Pamphlet](#), [Leaflets](#), [Media](#), [Book and Papers](#).]

1. Editorial

Chris Upward

THIS ISSUE

This issue features the psychology of reading, with contributions from our President, Professor John Downing, and from Valerie Yule. They are concerned first and foremost with spelling as a practical matter: with the need for us to take the functioning of the mind into account in designing spellings for real people in the real world.

And in that context John Downing records and reminds us of what must surely be the most significant development in English spelling since Johnson's dictionary: the Initial Teaching Alphabet (but watch for IBM-sponsored *AMERICAN* coming up fast). Whatever objections are raised to the i.t.a. (Haas listed its inconsistencies, its symbols were never popular with the public, and its use has seriously declined in recent years), John Downing's painstaking research 20–25 years ago showed its effectiveness for learners. We now know there can be no doubt about the value of a more regular spelling system in enabling children to achieve literacy faster, more easily, and to a higher level of proficiency; and there are intriguing suggestions that learning a logical system in itself enhances children's intellectual capacity more generally.

But i.t.a. is not only educationally effective. It also demonstrates that, given the will and the organization, a new generation can be taught an improved system — not just in one country, but across the English-speaking world. Referring to earlier experiments with regularized spelling, John Downing comments sadly: "Good ideas have not lasted, but have disappeared". We must not let the lessons of the i.t.a. experience be forgotten. Renewed contact between the SSS and the i.ta. Federation would help.

Not forgetting the lessons of the past is also the reason for Richard Lung's article on Reginald Deans' *Britic*. No doubt the weakness of that orthography, and perhaps (as Harry Lindgren realized) the weakness of *New Spelling* and of all other total reform-schemes too, is that they do not address themselves to the immediate practical question of how people, or how society at large, can actually be persuaded to change the unquestioningly accepted spelling habits of centuries. As we see from the editor's article *Cut Spelling a Linguistic Universal?*, compatibility between old and new seems to be a key factor. Yet the very name *Britic*, (pronounced *British*) surely epitomizes its fatal flaw of incompatibility: how can anyone used to the form *critic* suddenly accept *Britic* as the normal way of writing *British*? Unless spelling reformers consider how we move from t.o. to whatever system is proposed, that system will just be an academic exercise.

CUT SPELLING

Enclosed with this issue is a leaflet outlining the case for Cut Spelling (CS) and its main features as a Stage I reform proposal. The leaflet is subtitled *A Report from the Society's Working Party 1984-1986*, and as such it is by no means the sole outcome of the Working Party's deliberations. Discussions on a revised *New Spelling* as a final system, and on other possibilities, are also continuing. Readers may have noticed some variations in CS as presented over the past 18 months, from the first introduction in the [Autumn 1985 Newsletter](#) (Item 10), through the transcription of *The Chaos* ([Summer 1986](#), Item 5.) with strictly no letter-changes but quite a few doubtful spellings, to the generally more conservative version on Item 8 of this *Journal*. Many readers have commented on CS over this period, and a great deal of lively correspondence has ensued. The new conservative version has thus been a collective effort, insofar as it has

responded to readers' criticisms of some of the original CS features. The revision however only concerns points of detail, rather than any fundamental modification of the CS concept. Essentially, that concept is that omitting redundant letters is not just economically attractive, but overcomes many of the worst problems of t.o., while yet ensuring two-way compatibility with it. Readers' views on the new version are again keenly sought.

KINGMAN COMMITTEE

Education Secretary Kenneth Baker has set up a committee under the chairmanship of Sir John Kingman, Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University, to inquire into English Language Teaching in Britain (see House of Lords report on p.4). In some ways the enterprise is reminiscent of the Bullock inquiry, whose report, *A Language for Life*, appeared in 1975 and to which the Society (notably Sinclair Eustace, Stanley Gibbs, George O'Halloran and Bill Reed) made a submission on spelling. Kingman is asked to "recommend a model of the English language" and consider what children ought to know about it. The idea of a "model" sounds like an invitation to the Society to make its views known, and it is planning to do so in May. Readers who wish to suggest points for the Society to make should let the Secretary know at once.

WELCOME TO MEETINGS

All those interested are welcome to attend the Society's meetings (dates Item 13). The Secretary will be happy to send full details of time, place and items for discussion on request. All members receive papers for the AGM.

ANECDOTE (apocryphal no doubt)

A Frenchman came to England to improve his English. But on arriving the first thing he saw was the headline *New Film Pronounced Success*. "Ah, non!" he exclaimed in despair, and went straight back to France.

NEXT ISSUE

[The 1987 No. 3 issue](#), to appear in the autumn, will be devoted to the proceedings of the Society's Fifth International Conference, but it is hoped also to feature a proposed revision of New Spelling.

[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society 5 1987/2 p3 in the printed version]

2. Correspondence

Antony Alexander, Douglas, Isle of Man.

I would be interested in joining the SSS if a House Style were adopted.

Robert Craig, Weston-super-Mare, England.

le sujet wee ubandun N.S. and udopt dhu speling yoohzd in Longman'z dikshuneriz az dhu susieuti'z ufishul Hows Stiel (iksept dhat shwa iz riplaysd bie <u>). Laytu, le wood wish chaynjiz too in an intunashunuliezing direkshun (and in dhu direkshun ov eekonumi), e.g. <j>-><q>, <y>-><j>, <ie>-><ij>, <oo>-><u>, <ch>-><c>, <sh>-><x> ets. Then *juj->quq*, *nyooh->njuh*, *hie->hij*, *good foohd->gudfuhd*.

Young blacks thruout Britain are writing voiced <th> as <d> in the definit articl and a number of other words; and in London their exarnpl is being followed by som whites. Similarly <ng> in polysyllabic words is being written <n>. De Society should suport dese developments, seekin general acceptance for both of dem. A singl letter for voiced <th> would giv a savin of two percent and dat aint peanuts for th printin world.

(cf. Item 7 — Ed.)

Prof, David Crystal, *Editor ,LINGUISTICS ABSTRACTS, Holyhead, Wales.*

Many thanks for the SSS Journal. I think you're right to call it a Journal — there's far more in it than you'd normally expect to find in a newsletter, and it's very well presented.

Prof. John Downing, *Faculty of Education, Victoria University, Canada.*

It is sad that *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* is so little known. Perhaps it's too meaty. Maybe one day I'll rewrite it for more laymanlike readers. It could be brought up to date too — and the aim better focussed on spelling reform.

Madhukar N Gogate, *Bombay, India* despatched a copy of Proceedings of our Roman Lipi Sammelan. Participants did not favour use of <injekshn> and we have adopted <injekshan>. If world over English spelling reformers agree to use <injekshn> and various authorities (Governments, Universities) accept the reform, we would adopt it for usage in English, but we would still use <injekshan> within Indian languages.

Bill Herbert, *Queensland, Australia.*

Few spelling reformers can judge visual shock. Like most cyclists, they cannot understand how anyone can find it hard to ride a bike. Yet visual shock, for adults is probably the determining factor in acceptability. We found both CS and Ted Culp's Reformed English produced about the same visual shock. First-time readers were repelled. We don't agree that the shock of 44 phoneticized words is greater than CS's hundreds of different spellings.

Tom McArthur, *General Editor, ENGLISH TODAY, Cambridge, England*

Congratulations on going for a journal. We could do an exchange.

Edward Rondthaler, *New York , USA.*

An unprecedented opportunity to achieve spelling reform in the U.S. is rapidly developing. It is the by-product of IBM's phonetically based entrance into the illiteracy arena.

The industrial giant's *Writing to Read* system for children of 4, 5, and 6 years (sharing some concepts with i.t.a.), along with its *PALS* system for illiterate adults, provided the vehicle needed by the reform movement to 'piggyback' its way to ultimate acceptance. A more favorable climate for the advancement of reform is difficult to imagine...

The impact of IBM is beginning to be felt. At last count over 300,000 U.S. children were enrolled in *Writing to Read* programs in schools. Figures are not yet released for *PALS*, but it is clear that in the U.S. we are now creating a growing segment of the population that will not be bluffed into the false assumption that there is something mysteriously beneficial about our irregular spellings. We are creating a more informed public whose successful experiences with the logic of phonetic spelling will build an intelligent constituency firmly supporting reform.

It is entirely fitting that the acceptance of the IBM literacy programs happens to coincide with the publication of the *American Spelling* dictionary based on the concept of an alternative spelling for English. Response to the call for suggestions and approval of this experimental "skolarz' edishun" — published chiefly to elicit comments — has been quiet and encouraging. The criticisms and expressions of

diferent opinnyunz reseevd ar beeing
given cairful and thuro study. Thae wil surtenly be inflooenshal in deturmining th content of a
second reviezd edishun. Further coments wormly invieted, adrest to *The Anwrican Language
Academy*, NewYork.

Prof. Geoffrey Sampson, *Dept. of Linguistics and Phonetics, University of Leeds, England.*
You might like to know a paperback edition of my *Writing Systems* is coming out, which includes
corrections. If I had known of your Society's journal before I wrote my book, I would have been
very glad to make use of it. I do find many interesting items.

Ronald Threadgall, *General Sec., U.K. i.t.a. Federation, England.*
As to the future of i.t.a., that is difficult. We all know how beneficial it is, but it is another thing
persuading H.M.I.s etc of its efficacy. We think it is a matter of plodding on, and waiting for the tide
to turn. We are determined it shall not be a thing of the past.
... at the National Comniittee meeting there was enthusiastic approval for the contact between our
two societies.

F C Wingfield, *Denver, Colorado, USA.*

The Old Guard passes.

Geoffrey Dewey, deceased at 90, leaving as his legacy World English Spelling; simple indeed in
looks, yet hardly homografic.

Torskript, an extralfabet with added letters from the I.P.A. Victor Paulsen had a specially designed
typewriter.

Leo G Davis wrote he had spent some \$40,000 on spelling reform agitation; for some years he
published his periodical *Orthogra.fik Reform*.

Now Newell W Tune himself has checked out. For some 23 years he published *Spelling Progress
Bulletin*.

After the passing of Andrew Carnegie, 1919, who contributed subventions of \$260,000 (multiply by
10 to compare with present money) the curtain of spelling reform rolled down and has thus far so
remained!

Myself, since 1927, now in my ninth decade.

Valerie Yule, *Victoria. Australia*

Th new Jurnl. Congratulatns. It's super. I look forward to studying the artcils carefully, and am sure
they wil be an invaluable reference sorce in th futur for all reserch and development in spelling. Th
sujestns belo ar merely to perfect it stil further.

- a) Page numbering as in refereed jurnls.
- b) Letrs and society business at th bak.
- c) Think about an Editorial Board.

3. The House of Lords on English Spelling

On 4 March 1987 the House of Lords debated The English Language for nearly two and a half hours. We here give relevant extracts from those speeches that had some bearing on spelling, as printed in [Hansard](#) pp.656–687.

The debate was opened by **Lord Simon of Glaisdale**, who had previously had a meeting with the Society's Chairman, Chris Jolly. He noted the large number of members of the House who had put down their names to speak. His address then included these remarks:

"The other day there were some alarming references to illiteracy — even in this country after 100 years of universal education... We obviously owe a duty to those children in respect of the English language.

We also owe a duty to those who honour and benefit us by learning English as a second language. When considering an improvement, we must do nothing, I venture to suggest, that may cause the break-up of the English language, as Latin, a world language, broke up into French and the other Roman languages...

My third object is to identify, if possible, the means by which any desirable improvement can be brought about easily, painlessly and economically... the main difficulty in learning English is the divergence between spelling and pronunciation. The examples are numerous. I intend to mention only one or two of the most notorious. The most quoted points the way to ease of improvement. It is, 'OUGH', as in *bough*, *brought*, *cough*, *plough*, *though*, *through*, *thorough* and many others. The Americans spell *plough* *plow*. We have no difficulty with that. That saves two-thirds, does it not? We could spell *though* as it was spelt in the 18th century — *tho*. That is a saving of 50 per cent...

How do we improve matters? The Americans have again showed the way. Theodore Roosevelt directed that all government writing should be in the new, improved and easier manner. That could be done right away by the government. The Department of Education and Science and its predecessors have been pretty obstructive in the past in this respect. However, the new Minister seems to have come along with a stick of ginger. I hope that the noble Baroness will tell us something about Professor Kingman's new committee which... has to report in 12 months.

The final method I would suggest is that we have a language commission like the Law Commission... A language commission could well carry out wide consultations, circulate green papers, and then put forward recommendations for making our language easier to learn."

Lord Ardwick, as second speaker:

"...I wondered whether he" (Lord Simon of Glaisdale) "meant making English itself easier to learn or simply making it simpler to learn the English language. Did he want to change the language or the learning situation? Was he wanting to impose on us that monstrous spelling reform which was Bernard Shaw's terminal sick joke? This I always regarded as being as dangerous as it is ugly."

Lord Kilbracken said:

"As a former sub-editor... I know the perennial problems that arise in writing English. Hyphenation, the use of capital initials and italicisation are always difficult problems. Is a word ending in the suffix '-ise', spelt I-S-E or I-Z-E?... there are often no hard and fast rules and an ad hoc decision must be made for each publication..."

Lord Elwyn-Jones referred to the Bullock Report:

"The report looked, among other things, at the difficulties of spelling... It concluded that English shares with French the disadvantage of being among the most complex in its spelling pattern. The majority of the committee remain unconvinced — by the case for national reform of the system of spelling for English. They thought the issues too complex and made no recommendations."

Baroness Hooper, for the Government:

"Changes in language and language use take place all the time in a living language but they do so naturally and gradually. I am not convinced that attempts to regulate or direct that process would achieve the desired results. Indeed, I am inclined to think that English would not be as universally spoken as it is if it were not that it is already much more simple and flexible than many other languages.

Even if it were possible to wave a wand and reform or simplify English spelling or grammar across the world, would that be desirable? The richness and variety of the English language are matters of which we are rightly proud, and many people would be sorry to see them lost even in the interests of greater simplicity.

The Government are therefore concentrating their efforts not on trying to change the English language but on trying to improve the way that it is taught...

... the Secretary of State... also regards that as a priority and that is why he has recently established the high level independent committee of inquiry... to advise on what pupils should know about the English language. The committee is chaired by Sir John Kingman, Vice-Chancellor of Bristol University, and has a distinguished membership drawn from education, industry and the arts.

The committee has already invited evidence from anyone with views on how English should be taught in schools, and in particular on the needs of society in present day England as they relate to an individual's ability to communicate in speech and in writing; to the skills of literacy and communications generally needed in a rapidly changing world; and to the training, both initial and in-service, of the country's teachers in relation to those needs.

... adult illiteracy cannot easily be quantified and consequently the available evidence is not always consistent. The National Child Development Study survey of 1981 found that 10 per cent. of 23 year-olds asked said that they had had reading problems since leaving school. Of those, 3 per cent. said that those problems had made things more difficult for them in everyday life. A recent MORI survey of a sample of the population of Rochdale found that 10 per cent. of teenagers asked said that they had some problems with reading and 13 per cent. had some problems with spelling. The findings of the Department of Education and Science's Performance Assessment Unit suggest that only a small minority of pupils aged 15 have great difficulty with reading or writing.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 5, 1987/2, pp5–12 in the printed version]

[John Downing: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#) Item 7, [Journals](#), [Newsletter](#) Item 8]

4. The Transfer of Skill in Language Functions

John Downing

Professor Downing (University of Victoria, British Columbia) was Director of the research into the effectiveness of the Initial Teaching Alphabet in the 1960's, and his extensive writing on reading psychology culminated in the major study *Psychology of Reading* (New York: Macmillan, 1982). He succeeded Sir James Pitman as President of the Society in 1972. We here publish, with his permission, an edited version of his address to the Society on 6 September 1986.

(Professor Downing opened his address by commending the considerable progress the Society had made in its work and its publications in the previous two years.)

1 SKILLS

1.1 Transfer of orthographical skills

The subject I want to discuss is the psychological question of transfer from one spelling system to another, and I have entitled my talk 'The Transfer of Skill in Language Functions'. I shall discuss it under two main headings, firstly the psychology of skill, and secondly, how to maximize positive transfer of skill. In *Psychology of Reading* [1] by myself and my partner Che Kan Leong, we say a lot about skill, some of it relevant to orthography.

1.2 Four language skills

I shall talk about the four main language skills, which overlap with each other: speaking, listening, reading and writing. (There are perhaps other language skills, but they are better regarded as subskills.) The four don't necessarily come in that particular order, but speaking and listening are early skills, and reading and writing are later skills.

1.3 Skill as the integration of habits

A short definition of a skill, based on generally held views on skills in psychology and covering all the main aspects, is as follows: a skill is a complex integration of habits (in psychology we use the word habit not in its everyday meaning of bad or good habits, but meaning a small piece of learning), including cognitive, attitudinal, evaluative and motor behaviours. The most important word in the definition is integration: psychologically it is the most important feature of a skill, which is made up of numerous subskills, and the performance of the skill involves the integration of all of them by the brain.

1.4 Four kinds of behaviour

We need to recognize the different kinds of behaviour involved in a skill. There is obviously the *cognitive* aspect, which means the acquisition and use of knowledge. Less obvious, though extremely important, is the *attitudinal* aspect, which we recognize perhaps more for instance in sporting skills: in playing soccer you need not only to know how to play, but also to have the right kinds of attitude towards the sport; and in reading and writing too you need the right kinds of attitude towards those skills in order to perform well. The *evaluative* aspect means you have to be able to evaluate your own performance, to know whether you're performing well or not. And then there are *motor* behaviours, which are obvious in some skills like playing soccer or driving a car, but which are also important in all the language skills I have mentioned: in speaking, perhaps rather less in listening, but certainly in reading and writing. Eye movements, for instance, are extremely important motor behaviour in reading.

1.5 Applying psychology of skills

This kind of definition relates to any kind of skill. For instance Whiting at the Free University of Amsterdam would use the same definition in his area, which is physical skills like sports and physical education. Now, for our book *Psychology of Reading* we first of all considered what psychologists have written about skills in general, and made up a list of about 20 features. Then we examined the behaviour that goes on in reading to see whether it has those features — and it does. We were able to say, if reading is a skill, we should be able to take all the knowledge and research results we have in psychology concerning skills and apply them to the teaching of reading and writing. That's quite an important part of the book: we were able to apply a lot of research in psychology which had not yet been applied to the teaching of reading and writing.

1.6 Three learning phases

Something that was discovered a few years ago in experimental psychology is that any kind of skill passes through three learning phases. The *cognitive* phase is where learners figure out what they are supposed to do, how they are to understand the task — whether learning to jump, or learning to read or drive a car. The second phase is then to *practise* the skill until it can be performed perfectly. And the final phase in achieving highly skilled performance is becoming *automatic*, so you don't have to think about it any more, except when something unusual occurs.

1.7 The blending of phases

Of course a skill like reading or flying a plane is not just three phases. Those three phases occur over and over again, because a complex skill has many parts to it, which are called subskills, and you have to go through these phases every time you face up to a new subskill. Also there is no neat frontier or boundary between the phases, you can't just draw a line between phases in terms of actual human behaviour, they blend into each other. In other words, a phase is an abstraction. So in the cognitive phase you may think you've figured out what to do, and start practising away, and then you discover you've not got quite the right idea, and you have to modify your idea of what to do.

1.8 Skills never lost

Now from our point of view in the Simplified Spelling Society another very important thing is that we know from research that once a skill has become automatic, it's never lost — unless there is brain damage or something like that. Once normal humans have acquired the skill at the automaticity level, it's permanent. We can confirm that from our own experience: I became a skilled bicycle rider as a child and went on bicycling for many years as an adult, but I stopped doing so long before I emigrated to Canada nearly 20 years ago; but after I'd been there about 10 years, I bought a bicycle, and just got on and rode. I never had to think about the skill because it was so automatic that I hadn't forgotten anything. Similarly, I shall be working in France now for six months, and all my French language behaviour will come back, although I haven't used it for some time. There's no problem once a skill is automatic.

1.9 Transfer of skill

Another psychologically very important feature of skill is that, once it is automatic, it readily transfers from one particular subject or situation to another. Consider the skill of driving a car — I travel a lot, and very often I land at an airport and rent a car, but I don't know what sort of car I'm going to get; in that situation, all you have to do is find out where the controls are, which is sometimes a little difficulty but once you've located them, it doesn't take very long before your automaticity returns. That's very important for us because of what it tells us about the timing of transition. If you're going to simplify English spelling, there must be automaticity if you're going to get ready transfer from one spelling to another.

2 TRANSFER OF READING SKILLS

2.1 Information on i.t.a.→t.o. transfer

We found the same in the i.t.a. research. Fergus McBride did a special study in Edinburgh of the transition from i.t.a. to t.o. and found that transition only took place with ease if the child was already reading very fluently in the i.t.a. You'll find the details in a book I published in 1967, *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* [2], which contains a lot of information relevant to your own present work. If you look up Fergus McBride in the index, you'll find out what page the study is on. Unfortunately the book is difficult to find, but there will be some in libraries.

2.2 Coping with unfamiliar script

Fig. 1 is an excerpt from the first folio edition of *Hamlet*, 1623, and we don't really have much difficulty reading it, though of course we are helped by the fact that we know the text very well. It uses an older spelling of English, and if you have no experience of reading it, what slows you down at first is the <s> that looks like an <f>, and there is the confusion of <v> and <u>. When this was printed there wasn't consistent spelling, and there was a lot of freedom.

Fig.1

Ham. To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis Nobler in the minde to suffer The Slings and Arrowes of outrageous Fortune; Or to take Armes against a Sea of troubles, And by oppofing end them: to dye, to sleepe No more; and by a sleepe, to faye we end The Heart-ake, and the thousand Naturall fhockes	That Flefh is heyre too?' Tis a confummation Deuoutly to be with'd. To dye to sleepe, To sleepe, perchance to Dreame; I, there's the rub, For in that sleepe of death, what dreames may come, When we haue shuffled off this mortall coile. Muft giue vs pawfe. There's the refpect That makes Calamity of fo long life:
--	--

Or consider Fig. 2, which Sir James Pitman made up. Once you know there's one rule underlying it (it's written back to front), you can read it. Most people can read things backwards or upside-down.

[Fig.2 is no longer available]

And the following was written by A P Herbert in 1920:

A CRIMINAL TYPE

To-day I am MAKing aN inno6£vaton. as you mayalredy have gessed, I am typing this article myself Zz^{1/2} Intead of writing it, The idea is to save time and exvBKpense, also to demonstypap demonBTrike= =damn, to demonstratO that I can type /ust as well as any blessedgirl if I give my mInd to iT"" Typing while you compose is realy extraoraordinarrily easy, though composing whilr you typE is more difficult. I rather think my typing style is going to be different froM my u6sual style, but Idaresay noone will mind that much. looking back i see that we made rather a hash of that awfuul wurd extraorordinnaryk? in the middle of a woRd like thaton N-e gets quite lost? 2hy do I keep putting questiounarks instead of fulstopSI wonder. Now you see i have put a fullstop instead Of a question mark it nevvvver reins but it pours. [3]

These examples show that despite the strange orthography none of us has difficulty in transferring because we've reached the automatic level of skill which allows ready transfer.

2.3 Statistics on i.t.a. → t.o. transfer

Between 1961–67 we examined how well children transferred from i.t.a. to t.o. Fig. 3 compares children who had started learning to read with i.t.a. and children who had started in the usual way with to. It gives the proportion of "failures" in post-transition tests — "failures" in quotes because we didn't really think of the children as being failures; we meant just the number who fell below a certain score in the test.

Fig. 3**PROPORTION OF "FAILURES" ON POST-TRANSITION TESTS**

Test	Date	i.t.a. %	TO %	N
Schonell GWRT	after 26 mth	21.3	23.3	291
Neale Accuracy	after 19 mth	41.0	42.0	457
	after 34 mth	9.8	17.5	194
Neale Rate	after 19 mth	22.7	19.5	457
	after 34 mth	4.7	4.1	194
Neale Comprehension	after 19 mth	50.8	56.0	457
	after 34 mth	14.0	24.8	194
Standish	after 34 mth	17.7	24.6	175
NFER Sentence	after 54 mth	2.6	14.1	78
NFER Comprehension	after 60 mth	10.9	20.6	92

All the tests that the children did were printed in t.o., whether the children were in the i.t.a. group or the t.o. group. The t.o. children had learnt to read entirely in t.o., whereas the i.t.a. children had usually learnt for 18 months–2 years in i.t.a. (the average was 18 months before the change-over). Some of the i.t.a. children tested may not have transferred, but probably the majority would have done so when the tests were given.

2.4 Reading test results

On the Schonell graded-word reading test (GWRT) after 26 months of schooling, there isn't a significant difference between the i.t.a. and TO children, nor is there with the Neale accuracy test after 19 months. However, after nearly 3 years, there is a big difference on the same test. There are only about half as many i.t.a. children failing in TO as TO children failing in TO, and the other results show the same thing. When you look at the very late tests, at the bottom of the table, after about 4 ½–5 years there is a very big difference in favour of the i.t.a. group.

2.5 Conclusions: superiority of i.t.a.

It's clear that the i.t.a. children were much more likely to achieve automaticity in the reading skill and therefore to transfer readily. The t.o. group on the other hand hadn't reached the same level of automaticity, though in their case perhaps we shouldn't talk about 'transfer' at all, as the children were performing a task they had been taught from the start. The point is, the t.o. children had less reading skill to apply to t.o. reading than the i.t.a. children had, although the i.t.a. children were at a disadvantage in facing a less familiar script. If you had reversed the test and tested all the children in i.t.a., the superiority of the i.t.a. children would have been even more marked. Figures showing what happened a few weeks before the transfer reveal a big difference in favor of the i.t.a. group. The transfer was definitely a setback for the i.t.a. children in the first test after they changed over: they weren't reading as well in t.o. as they had read in i.t.a., but they were reading just as well as the t.o. children. A few months later they had recovered from that setback and were reading better than the t.o. children. The test on reading speed, we found, was not very valid, nor were the differences in number of words read per minute very significant. The comprehension test on the other hand showed slightly better results after 19 months for the i.t.a. group (only 50.8% 'failures', compared with 56% failures for the t.o. children), but the next test, after 34 months, shows a very significant advantage for the i.t.a. group with only 14% failures compared with nearly 25% in the t.o. group.

2.6 Spelling test results

We also tested spelling, and the results are interesting here too.

PERCENT 'FAILURES' IN OTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS

Test	Date	i.t.a. %	TO %	N
Schonell Spelling	after 30 mth	17.4	24.9	374
	after 42 mth	3.9	13.7	102
NFER				
English	after 5 yrs	13.1	32.6	92
Capital Letters	after 5 yrs	18.5	39.1	92
Tenses	after 5 yrs	29.4	58.7	92
Spelling	after 5 yrs	39.1	58.7	92
Sentence completion	after 5 yrs	8.7	27.2	92
Abbreviations	after 5 yrs	33.7	58.7	92

The Schonell spelling tests after 30 months show fewer failures among the i.t.a. children, although they suffered several disadvantages: the spelling test was in t.o., not in i.t.a.; no marks were given for the correct i.t.a. spelling; and no allowance was made for the fact that some of the i.t.a. children had not yet transferred to t.o. For all that, the difference in achievement is not significant statistically, despite first appearances. But the results of the tests given after 42 months show a very significant difference between the groups in favor of i.t.a.

2.7 Other i.t.a. — t.o. comparisons

Another test, the NFER (National Foundation for Educational Research) test, comprised several different subtests, and after 5 years on every one of them the i.t.a. group was significantly superior to the TO group even with capital letters, which in i.t.a. are just majuscule versions of the small letters. The performance of the i.t.a. children was superior with regard to tenses, sentence completion, and abbreviations. So there is a lot of spillover from starting out with something that works well and fits in with the child's level of ability.

3 SKILL-TRANSFER BETWEEN LANGUAGES

3.1 English-French

This same phenomenon of ready transfer from one situation to another of skills that have been learnt only once and have become automatic is seen not only between i.t.a. and t.o., but across languages. We can read the sentence *I say that you are right, the father works while the son does nothing* and we don't have to re-learn to read it in another language. To understand *je dis que vous avez raison, le père travaille tandis que le fils ne fait rien*, you have got to learn French, but you don't have to learn to read all over again. That skill is transferred from one language to another. This applies even to non-alphabetic languages like Japanese and Chinese. If you analyze what you're doing psychologically when you read English, and what you're doing psychologically when you read French, the skills that transfer are all the skills you already have in English. There are certain things in French that are quite different, and those will slow you down for a time, but the skill itself of reading will transfer from one language to another.

3.2 Learning environments in New Guinea

A few months ago I went out to New Guinea for a second fieldwork study comparing children in different environments. We were trying to find out more about how children think about language. We compared people living in a village where the people had never seen any writing, with children living in villages where they didn't have writing in their own village but saw writing (not in their own language but in other languages) when they went to market, and then with children living in villages where they had schools and churches, and where they learned to read and write at school. There is also a local pidgin called Tok Pisin, which is a lingua franca; it has an Australian flavour and a German admixture, but is influenced by the 750 languages of the country (not counting dialects).

3.3 Which language in school

I was in a village whose language is Hakö, and where an experiment had been in progress for three or four years. All of the children there are now taught to read and write in their mother tongue, which linguists had analyzed years ago and for which prayer books and the like had been produced. The children have their first lessons in their own language two years before being introduced to English, after which everything in the school is in English. But there is also the other language, Tok Pisin, in this village, which is never taught in the school, although its written form is seen everywhere, in the prayer books, on the health posters, on the police posters, and so on. In fact it's not taught anywhere in Papua New Guinea — it's just assumed that if you have learnt to read in one language, you can read Tok Pisin too (although there was a movement in the Lutheran missions a few years ago to teach Tok Pisin, and the idea still being thought about). A pamphlet in Tok Pisin which I picked up from a religious bookshop in the capital of the province where I was doing the research has the following sentence in it, particularly striking on account of the rude word in it: *Strongpela Dring i bagarapim yu*. It is taken for granted everyone can read that if they have learnt to read in another language.

3.4 Negative attitudes from English

We tested children for reading in three languages, their mother tongue, English and Tok Pisin, and what we found was this: if the children had begun to learn to read in the mother tongue, they had excellent transfer from mother tongue to both Tok Pisin and English; but if they'd started out in a strange language, English, the transfer was very poor. This was so marked that both in Tok Pisin and in English their scores were often near zero. And it wasn't only the scores: we also observed the children subjectively, and we saw the children who had started out in a foreign language were afraid to try in English, although they had been taught it. They were afraid to try any word that they hadn't been taught, any word that wasn't in their textbooks. And of course they transferred that negative attitude from the English experience into both Tok Pisin and their own mother tongue from their village.

3.5 Effect of English spelling

A very important point that has to be taken into account here is that the English spelling is bound to cause them to feel uncertain, because of the uncertainty of what the letters represent. Both in the mother tongue and in Tok Pisin there is a very straightforward relationship between the letters and the sounds. Usually the people who have made up the spellings for the languages — half of them have been written now — have tried to ensure a good connection between Tok Pisin and the mother tongue.

3.6 Transfer in the USSR

Another example of this transfer is from the Soviet Union. I've just finished the manuscript of a new book, to be published by the North Holland Company in Amsterdam, and called *Cognitive Psychology and Reading in the USSR*. It's a survey of all the major works in Russian on the teaching of literacy, and one of the things I learnt from making that study of what goes on in the Soviet Union in reading is the surprising fact that in the Soviet Union from 1917 the people of that vast area have had the right to learn to read and write in the mother tongue rather than Russian, as they had to before the Revolution. And so it's quite a normal thing for people in the Soviet Union to learn to read and write in one language and then switch over to Russian later because all the higher levels of education and the materials need to be in the more common language. So the Russians have had a lot of experience with transfer. Lenin decreed that it was the duty of every citizen to learn to read and write, and in his decree he said they could learn in the mother tongue or Russian, as preferred, and that has been the policy ever since. Perhaps it was because Lenin was a schoolteacher (as was his wife Krupskaya too) and had very good intuition about how children learn to read and write; the decision would seem to have been a correct one. Lenin of course was a Russian, unlike Stalin who was a Georgian.

3.7 Transfer in Chinese

There are also examples of transition, transfer of training, transfer of skill across orthographies. In China nowadays children begin with the Roman alphabet, learning the phonemic Pinyin spelling of Chinese, and then switch over to the classical characters, which though they've been reformed are quite unlike the Roman alphabet. I don't know whether Pinyin will finally prove to have been a success: when I was in China in 1982 there was some research being done by a Chinese professor in Shanghai, and it wasn't very favourable to Pinyin. But politically it had strong support: both Chairman Mao, whose influence is still there, and Chou En-lai believed that a phonemic spelling for Chinese would result in a universal pronunciation for Chinese across China. Whether they were right I don't know, but that was their hope. The difficulty is that Pinyin cannot take account of all the dialects. In the school in Shanghai I observed the teachers trying to get the children to pronounce the Pinyin characters according to the Pekinese dialect, a lot of which is meaningless to the children. The task isn't being tackled properly, and I don't know whether it can be. The research being done in Shanghai by this professor certainly did call into question the value of Pinyin.

3.8 Transfer in Japanese

Japan has a similar situation. Most Japanese books are printed in a combination of two types of characters, Kana and Kanji. Each Kana character represents a syllable in Japanese, and the Kanji represent morphemes or words. Beginners, young children, start out with everything printed in syllabic characters, in Kana, and then gradually then switch over more and more, and the Kana characters are dropped in favour of the Kanji characters, which came from Chinese originally. In Japan this works very well because as far as I know there isn't the problem with dialects — the situation is similar to that in this country. But the kana syllabary has a perfect one-to-one relationship between written syllables and spoken syllables, at least in standard Japanese. There is however a problem with homophones, which the syllabary cannot adequately distinguish. There are a lot of Japanese jokes about homophones, especially involving misunderstood telegrams, these being written in the syllabary and not in Kanji.

4 MAXIMIZING THE TRANSFER OF SKILL

4.1 Readiness

Our interest in the Simplified Spelling Society of course is in how to maximize the positive transfer of skill. What can we do to make sure that we get the most positive transfer between the reformed spelling and t.o.? Here the concept of readiness is important. Although the term reading-readiness has been subjected to quite a lot of criticism among teachers in the last few years, it is rather meaningless criticism, because you can't criticize something that's psychologically real. We know that, regardless of what the skill is, whether it's reading or playing tennis, you can't acquire it unless you're ready to learn it. You have to have the physical maturity to manipulate the tennis racket, and you have to have learnt something about the game of tennis which you can then use in the new learning that you're going to try to acquire. So when we think about how to maximize positive transfer of skill, we can use that concept of readiness.

4.2 Cognitive confusion in t.o.

Let us apply this to the cognitive phase, that beginning phase where you're trying to figure out the nature of the task. The i.t.a. experiment provides some examples, and the book *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* contains quite a lot of material it would be useful to look at, if you are concerned to maximize positive transfer of skill from one spelling to another. Before we look at a helpful example, let us remember that Professor Magdalene Vernon in 1957 was the first psychologist to put forward the idea that the main cause of reading disability is cognitive confusion, by which she meant that the child didn't understand the task to be performed. For instance, the

child may not understand why *road* is spelt <road>, and begins to doubt its ability to grasp the system rationally: though the teacher says <road> is right, it doesn't seem right. The advantage of i.t.a. was that it cut down this cognitive confusion: if you spell *said* <sed>, it isn't confusing any more. The t.o. children learning <said> are much more likely to be confused cognitively by the spelling form in question, but the i.t.a. children had no problem with <sed>.

4.3 Sister John's experiments

Following up Professor Vernon's theory, I wrote in *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* (pp233–34):

The reduction in 'general cognitive confusion' may also have been effective in two experiments conducted by Sister John... In her first experiment Sister John's subjects were an experimental group of twenty five-and-a-half-year-olds who had been learning to read i.t.a. and a control group of twenty five-and-a-half-year-olds who had been learning with t.o. Specially devised nonsense-symbols similar to characters of the Greek alphabet were used for two tasks: matching and recognition of the symbols. The experimental i.t.a. group achieved superior scores for both tasks.

Again you see transfer at work with the strange Greek-like characters.

On recognition the i.t.a. group's scores were significantly better. . .

In her second experiment Sister John used new subjects in the same schools. Two groups (one i.t.a., one t.o.) of twenty-five four-and-a-half-year-old pupils were studied during their first six months at school. The same nonsense symbols were used, but in this experiment the testing procedure was carried out twice: (i) soon after the subjects entered the school for the first time, and (ii) six months later. On the initial test the two groups were comparable,

(there wasn't any difference because they hadn't learnt anything yet)

but six months later the same significant difference had emerged as had been discovered in the earlier study, i.e. the children who had been learning i.t.a. for six months were better at recognizing unrelated nonsense-symbols than were children who had spent the same period learning t.o.

In other words, the i.t.a. children had learnt something about the task of recognizing symbols which they could transfer over into something completely strange like these semi-Greek symbols.

Sister John's results indicate that in learning to read i.t.a. her subjects had learned appropriate orienting responses, so that their attention was directed towards the general features of the task of discriminating and remembering abstract symbols... which were then relevant in the new tasks with the nonsense-symbols. Conversely, the greater irregularity of symbol-sound relations in t.o. seems to have inhibited the development of appropriate orienting responses to the task of remembering differences between graphic symbols. It seems likely that this comparative failure of the TO group represents a greater degree of 'cognitive confusion' surrounding the task of recognizing graphic symbols.

4.4 Starting from the familiar

Similarly in the Papua New Guinea work, we found that if you learn to read in the mother tongue first, you get better transfer to other languages than if you start with an unfamiliar language. So it's important to start off where the child is. What is the child bringing to the situation? And in the case of learning to read, it is clearly better to start, as all the research showed, with the mother tongue, because that's what children have got. If they have thought at all about their speech and other people's speech, it will be in terms of their own language, the sound of their language, not of course the sound of some strange language which they have hardly ever met.

4.5 Rationality with the alphabet

The same principle applies to the letters of the alphabet. So it was in the case of New Spelling and what we did with i.t.a.: the task was taken closer to the child's capability by the age of 4, 5 or 6 by having a simple relationship between the writing and the speech. The problems the child has to solve are much simpler in that case than with TO.

4.6 Avoiding negative transfer

In thinking about maximizing positive transfer of skill, we also have to avoid negative transfer. That's an area of psychology that we haven't time to go into in detail, but we talk about negative pro-active interference. That means we've got to avoid teaching something at the beginning which is going to get in the way of learning something else later on. It is a very important principle that hasn't been applied sufficiently in education. One of the things I found in my Russian studies is that the Russian education authorities are very keen on this particular concept. You should never teach reading and writing for example in Year 1 in such a way that it is going to get in the way of some other aspect of linguistic achievement at a later stage. Not only in school but even at university level you should never teach something in a way at the beginning which is going to make it harder to learn something else later on. You should always learn from the beginning right through.

4.7 Negative transfer from i.t.a.

There was in fact some negative transfer from i.t.a. I.ta. did a good job, as we saw from those results, but it could have been better. I said so in the book, though Sir James Pitman, God rest his soul, was not very pleased about it; but it had to be stated, because I was doing a scientific study of his work. As I said earlier, when children were tested in t.o. just after the transfer, they did less well in t.o. than they had in i.t.a., and it is possible that i.t.a. could have been designed better, to cause less of a setback when the children switched from one to the other. That is a point to bear in mind with spelling reform.

4.8 Lessons for Stage I spelling reform

Pages 163–167, 241–44, 285–87 in *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* deal with the test words in the Schonell test and the Neale test. We examined them under various skill modes, and some words caused much more difficulty than others. One was the i.t.a. form *wurk* which changed to *work*. We found that it wasn't so much the configuration of the whole word, but details within the words which caused the errors; and in *work* the change from <u> to <o> produced a lot of errors. On the other hand a word like *church* did not cause problems. Another example of a gross negative effect from something for which i.t.a. didn't plan ahead was the word *show*. In i.t.a. it looked like *shoe*, so when the children saw *show*, they didn't read it right, and then when they saw *shoe*, they would probably have read it as *show*, because that is how they learnt it in i.t.a. We didn't analyse whether vowels or consonants caused more trouble, but that analysis could be done from this book. On p.164 and p.167 there are tables of words showing the number of errors, and that kind of analysis could be done from them, indeed it would be important in formulating a first stage of reform. I think that is definitely one of the advantages of Cut Spelling: there is much less likelihood that that kind of difficulty could arise.

4.9 Need for experiments

Also relevant to the design of a reformed spelling system is this passage on p.245:

... one conclusion seems clear, and that is that in the future development of this transitional alphabet approach to the teaching of reading, a series of experiments should be carried out to ensure that every element in the design of such an alphabet and its spelling rules has been established empirically as the best possible solution in the total complex of problems involved in making the needs of the beginner compatible with maximal transfer efficiency at a later stage.

In other words, before you decide between several alternatives, you need do some experiments to find out which will produce the results that you want. They wouldn't have to be big experiments like the i.t.a. ones, but could be quite small, such as Valerie Yule does. And then on p.247 I say:

... it seems possible that improvements in the design of a simplified alphabet, improvements in teaching material, and improvements in the methods of teaching with a transitional alphabet could reduce the extent to which t.o. sets back pupils' progress at the transition stage.

So besides the design of the alphabet, one needs to think about how it's going to be presented to children for teaching. When we set up the experiment, we went straight into it with very little idea of what was going to happen. But many of our teachers did develop of their own accord very good ways of making sure that children got over from i.t.a. to t.o. We published some of their findings in a magazine that we had at the time for teachers. A lot could be done in preparation for transition however.

5 CONCLUSION

What I've tried to say is that reading, writing, speaking and listening are each what we call in psychology a skill. And in each case the many subskills that go into those major skills pass through those three phases: the cognitive phase (figuring out what you have to do), then mastery through practice, and then to automaticity. If you want to maximize transfer, it's that automaticity that you have to try to achieve in the beginning stage of teaching children in school, because once you've achieved automaticity, you never lose the skill, and you're going to have the easiest transfer of that skill to other orthographies and other languages.

6 POINTS RAISED IN DISCUSSION

6.1 Earlier experiments

Chapter 2 of *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* is entitled 'A Review of Previous Investigations', and reports of Miss McCallum of Cowdenbeath, Scotland, getting good transfer to t.o. after using the International Phonetic Alphabet in a small experiment. Maurice Harrison's history of the Simplified Spelling Society [4] refers to the Society's pamphlets [5] outlining earlier experiments carried out in 1915–24 in 16 schools, mainly in Northern England, but also in Scotland, London and elsewhere in England, where children had been taught to read using a reformed orthography; the headteachers wrote very graphically about it. What we notice is that good ideas like this have not lasted, but have disappeared.

6.2 The i.t.a. Federation & Foundation

I.t.a. hasn't disappeared yet because the teachers formed the i.t.a. Federation to support each other. It started in Australia, and at my suggestion it was set up in Britain too and gave the teachers the strength to carry on. Then there is the i.t.a. Foundation financed by money left by a millionaire in the United States. It mainly exists as a funding organization, giving grants to people for research. They've got quite a good service going where they go round and give workshops and so on, but it no longer operates in Britain.

6.3 Why i.t.a. declined

Dr Dewey had a furious argument with Sir James Pitman, trying to persuade him not to use the strange characters he had designed for i.t.a., and to use something like New Spelling instead. And i.t.a. lost popularity because parents objected to the unfamiliar letters, the augmentations. They didn't like them because they hadn't had them at school themselves, and they couldn't help their children because they didn't know how to use them, although we published a pamphlet for parents which was given away free. Parental objections were much stronger in the United States than in Britain, and i.t.a. has newly disappeared in the United States, because in the United States the schools have to do what the parents tell them, and the parents have succeeded in squashing nearly all innovations that caused them any disturbance. But in Britain by the summer of 1986 less than 100 schools were still using i.t.a.

6.4 Effect of i.t.a. on different abilities

It is sometimes said that the brightest, children were helped least by i.t.a., the least able children more, and those of average ability most of all. From the graphs in *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet*, on the other hand, it looks as though the brightest children gained most, and the slow ones didn't gain at all. But Professor Vernon of Reading University took me to task about that and said I should have looked at the results in another way, which is why afterwards I published a short article *i.t.a. and Slow Learners — a reappraisal*. [6] There I analysed the data as she suggested, and it showed that the slower children did gain from i.t.a. I'm very glad she drew my attention to that, because the graphs in the book are misleading in suggesting that slower children were not helped. The problem was that the slow achievers probably didn't have enough time with i.t.a. to show on the graphs. Vera Southgate and her colleague Professor Warburton [7] went round the country interviewing and did a very good non-statistical study which showed the teachers really felt the slow learners had got a lot out of i.t.a., and I think they were right.

6.5 Testing for the Hawthorne effect

It is often asked how far the Hawthorne effect may have helped the success of i.t.a., in other words, whether those involved may have been additionally motivated by the sense of being given extra attention rather than by the advantages of i.t.a. itself. We did an experiment deliberately to create a Hawthorne effect in the control group that was using t.o. Whenever we did something for the i.t.a. teachers, we did something for the t.o. teachers too. We had two days of workshops for teachers in i.t.a. so they could learn how to use the new characters. Of course, we couldn't teach the t.o. teachers how to use the t.o. characters, but we did put on workshops for them too, for which we brought in well-known educational speakers and so on. They were given hints and special treatment. Then we compared the children in their classes with the children in the previous year, where the teachers hadn't had any special care, and there was no difference with them. I don't think there was any evidence for the Hawthorne effect with i.t.a. It would be the teachers rather than the five-year-olds who would be susceptible to it, and they would pass it on to the children; but the children seemed unconcerned by us coming into the classroom and soon got used to us.

6.6 Why teachers adopted i.t.a.

We should perhaps have done a social psychological study on whether the teachers involved might have been self-selected as the most enthusiastic. I did talk informally to headmasters and headmistresses about why they were in the experiment, and there was a wide range of reasons. In Wolverhampton we had two extremes. One was a school in a very poor neighbourhood, and the headmaster said, "Oh, there are so many problems of reading here. We'll try anything, and this is something we haven't tried". Then at the other end of the town, in an upper-middle-class suburb, the headmaster, who had a very good reputation with the local authority for his school, said, "Well, when I saw the people who were volunteering to do i.t.a., I thought you ought to have one person who had his head on his shoulders". Then in another school, in Stoke-on-Trent, the headmistress, who had the best reading results in the city, had looked at i.ta. and decided it would produce better result, — she didn't want to lose her place being top in reading in town. So there were all kinds of different reasons for them being in the experiment. It was the headteachers who decided, some more democratically than others — some decided and then told the staff, and some consulted the staff first.

6.7 Teachers' objections to i.ta.

I.t.a. was designed as a transitional system for children, and was never intended for general use. One of the reasons why i.t.a. didn't succeed as Sir James Pitman hoped it would, and one of the reasons that was given by many teachers and headteachers for not trying it, was that it was only transitional, and children couldn't continue to use it for the rest of their lives. They said, if you had

suggested spelling-reform, and hadn't brought in those new letters, but just used the alphabet in a more sensible way, then we would have accepted it, but not something like i.t.a. that was only going to be used in the first years of school.

6.8 Advantages of Cut Spelling

The idea behind Cut Spelling on the other hand is that it could serve both functions: it would offer an improved system to help children learning to read and write, which they could continue to use indefinitely. Insofar as it is compatible with t.o., children would be able to read t.o. but would never need to learn to write it. In this way t.o. and CS would exist side by side. Some people talked about children having to forget i.t.a. after the first two years of school, but CS would go on being useful for ever. And people can see it's got practical uses.

6.9 Cut Spellings [8] and New Spellings [9]

It is asked why New Spelling is less suited to immediate introduction and continued use than Cut Spelling, when for instance for *come* New Spelling proposes the fully phonographic form *kum*, while Cut Spelling *com* only removes the final <e> from the t.o. spelling. One reason is the need for compatibility with t.o., as was already demonstrated in §4.8 above over the difficulty of transfer from i.t.a. *wurk* to t.o. *work*. Another reason is that although you might say to parents that their child could continue to write *kum* for the rest of its life, they would fear the child would attract ridicule in the adult world by using such forms. On the other hand with Cut Spelling you could establish a parallel system of writing (Bernard Shaw used to talk about this) which had its own practical use for ever, just as we have Arabic numerals in parallel with Roman numerals, and both have their uses. This would appeal to the ordinary parent and the ordinary teacher as something that would help children to learn to read t.o. and then afterwards they could use it as an alternative system.

6.10 Selling points of Cut Spelling

Any new spelling scheme, Cut Spelling or New Spelling, would have to be sold to the public, and CS has several selling points. Judging from my earlier background in public opinion research, Cut Spelling has a lot to offer from the point of view of public acceptance. There's a lot in it which would appeal to people lacking specialist knowledge of the subject. Some aspects of it are things I've done for myself — I've never learnt any particular shorthand, but I've made up my own as many people do, and a lot of things that you've done in Cut Spelling are very like shorthand. I think a lot of people would be attracted by its economy, and it wouldn't look as strange as i.t.a. If I was a member of the general public, I'd look at CS and say, "Ah, that looks useful to me, I could use that for making my notes, because it's so short, much shorter — that'll save me a lot of writing, that will". You've got the economy, quite a big percentage, and then if everybody used it in business and so on, it would save a lot of time and paper, etc. You could sell CS on those lines, as well as on educational lines. It might also become popular because of computing.

6.11 Selling New Spelling

What you'd have to do to sell New Spelling would be something that Chris Jolly and I have been talking about for quite a long time: you might be able to sell it on the grounds that this would be a good way of being able to write down the way people pronounce things. But you can't assume in my opinion that the public is going to buy spelling-reform. My feeling as a psychologist is that Cut Spelling would be much easier to sell to the public.

6.12 CS leading to Revised New Spelling

The way in which CS had been seen as relating to New Spelling is as a first-stage reform eventually leading on to a thoroughgoing reform like New Spelling, which would be the ultimate destination after a series of intermediate reform-stages. The Simplified Spelling Society's Working Party has been considering reform from two opposite directions at once, discussing a revised

version of New Spelling at the far end of the process, and Cut Spelling at this end as the first stage. As yet the CS Rule for omitting letters representing post-accentual schwa before <1, m, n, r> constitutes a discrepancy between the two ends, which should be brought into line with each other. Both a first-stage reform and a long-term proposal are needed.

6.13 Japanese

In Japan the children transfer from the Kana syllabaries to Kanji because the education system requires them to learn nearly 2,000 Kanji characters by the time they leave school. I believe the Kanji characters are needed to avoid confusion of homophones, such as can occur in telegrams, for which only Kana is used. In normal adult writing you see a combination of Kana and Kanji, the Kana words being used for the less important words, while the nouns will be in Kanji characters, which are complicated ones derived from Chinese. The difference between them hits you in the eye, with the important Kanji characters standing out in the sentence, and Kana in between. There are two kinds of Kana, Hiragana and Katakana, one of which is used for foreign words. They print words in the Roman alphabet, or Romaji, for foreigners. But if you hire a car, the maps are not in Romaji, and it's an interesting exercise to transfer your reading skills from English to Japanese, map-reading as you drive. The important items will be in Kanji, not Kana, and for instance we had to look out for the sign of the man hanging on the gallows!

6.14 English in India

There's a tendency in India now for reasons of snobbery to send children to convent schools where English is the medium of instruction. That is spreading to smaller towns now, where there is not the English atmosphere which can obtain in a city like Bombay, where quite a lot of people use Indian English. Instead there's a total Marathi atmosphere, in the midst of which there's an English-medium class, taught by Marathi speakers. There must be a danger the children there would be much better off speaking their own mother tongue first and then transferring to English — unless they're extremely bright.

6.15 Age of optimum transfer

There have been a lot of studies comparing different age-levels of introduction to a second language. The popular idea is, the younger you start, the easier it is (that's the reason for the current Canadian fashion for French immersion with very young children). But it's not true: studies show that in general adults are better at learning a second language, and that the older the child, the better the result. There is one important exception: younger children pick up the phonology, the pronunciation better. So perhaps children should learn to speak a foreign language when they are young, but leave formal study of it until later.

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5. The Spelling of Esperanto

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For anyone who wishes to reform language the path is strewn with frustration, whether the aim be to reform spelling in an ethnic language or to introduce an auxiliary, neutral language. Indeed the history of the spelling reform movement in many ways parallels that of Esperanto. Both have tried to influence those in authority and appeared to take two steps backwards for every step forward. Both have been supported by people who were ready to dedicate time and money to what appeared to them to be glorified common sense. Both have tried to work through the education system and met with little support and sometimes downright hostility.

In the case of Esperanto however these factors have not been limited to the English speaking world. Since English is at present as near as we have to a de facto world language, it may well be that reform of English spelling is now a world necessity rather than merely a national one.

There may well therefore be things the two movements can learn from each other in ways of getting their messages across. One of these is the sheer practicality of phonetic spelling. Esperanto is as near phonetic in its spelling as a language can be, and it comes as a surprise to most students of the language that they do not have to look up the spelling of any word they know how to pronounce nor the pronunciation of any word they know how to spell.

Esperanto uses the Latin alphabet with certain minor modifications. Many of the consonants sound as in English and for practical speech can be said to be the same. These are: <b, d, h, k, l, m, n, p, t, v, z>. Several more have the same value as the most common use in English: <f> as in farm (never as in *of*); <g> as in *gate* (never as in *age*); <s> as in *star* (never as *infuse or sugar*); <r> is lightly trilled as in *trap* and never used to extend a vowel. Two letters have quite different values to English: <c> has the /ts/ sound found in *tsetse*, and <j> has the <y> sound found in *yes*.

There are five additional consonants formed by the addition of a circumflex accent (^). These are: <ĉ> as <ch> in *church*.; <ĝ> as <g> in *age* or <ĵ> in *jam*; <ĥ> as <ch> in Scottish *loch*.; <ĵ> as <si> in *vision*; <ŝ> as <sh> in *ship*. <q, x, w, y> do not occur in Esperanto.

The vowel system unlike English has only 5 vowel sounds compared with the approximate 20 of English. These are: <a> as in *father* (longer than in *cat* but shorter than in *cart*); <e> as in *bed*-, <i> as the <ee> in *seen*; <o> somewhere between the <o> in *hot* and the <ow> in *narrow*; <u> as the <oo> in *boot*.

The one semi-vowel <ŭ> is like our <w>, but except in non-Esperanto proper nouns it usually occurs in the diphthongs <aŭ> like <ow> in *cow* and <eŭ> like *few* in a Welsh accent. There are 3 other diphthongs: <aj> like <y> in *try*; <oj> like <oy> in *boy*; <uj> does not occur in English but is like <oo> in *good* followed by <y>.

It is worth comparing the vowels in the two languages. Most monophthong English vowels are included in a kind of scale of sound in the following sentence: *shoes to sole, all clogs are done first and men say it's cheap*. This scale of vowels is here given in the I.P.A., with the corresponding Esperanto vowels well spread out beneath them:

/U:, ɪ, ʊ, ɔ:, D, Ct:, A, ɜ:, @e, ɛ, ɪ, ɪ:/
<u> <o> <a> <e> <i>.

Thus it does not matter very much if the vowel is not precise in its value since it is unlikely to cause confusion.

It may surprise readers to find that word-origins are easy to discover despite the phoneticized spelling. Can you guess the origins of the following Esperanto roots: *kverel* (from English); *fenestr* (from German and French); *kverk* (from Latin); *kanjon* (from Spanish). (Answers at end of article.)

A further strength of Esperanto spelling is that the sounds are much nearer to the international norm with <i> and <u> instead of New Spelling's <ee> and <oo>, and similarly among consonants, <j> instead of <zh> and even <j> instead of <y>. On the other hand some people might dislike <kv> as a replacement for <qu>. I regret the use of diacritical marks, particularly the <ŭ> instead of <w>. To my mind a limited use of digraphs for the other accented letters would have been preferable. Diacritics are a confounded nuisance on a typewriter, almost impossible on my word processor, and too easily omitted in script. All these however are carping criticisms: both Esperanto and New Spelling show the indubitable value of consistency.

A new spelling in English gains from having regard to past spelling, and it is difficult to know whether this is more important than international custom. <i> for <ee> or <u> for <oo> leave the problem of distinguishing the sounds already signified by those letters. However, an acquaintance with Esperanto would help spelling reformers to see the value of phonetic spelling in everyday use and would demonstrate the pitfalls of diacritical marks. On the international stage a purpose-built International Auxiliary Language is a better solution to the language problem than tinkering with English.

Answers: *kverel*-quarrel; *fenestr* - G Fenster, F fenêtre, window; *kverk* - L quercus, oak; *kanjon* - S cañon, canyon.

GLOSA, evolved 1978 by Ashby & Clark from Hogben's *INTERGLOSSA*, claims to be the simplest international language, with vocabulary based on Latin & Greek. Its numbers are *mo, bi, tri, tet, pen, six, sep, ok, non, dek* or *mo-ze*, 11 = *momo*, 14 = *motet*, 100 = *cento*, 1,000 = *kilo*, 1987 = *mo non ok sep*. Vowels are pronounced as *in fAther, thEy, machlne, mOre, lUnar*, while the vowel in *blte* is spelt <ae>. Consonants diverge from t.o. as follows: <c> as <ch> in *riCH*, <j> as <y> in *Yes*, <y> as <ee>, <th>= <t>, <ph>= <f>.

6. Changes in the Spelling of Dutch

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1 The background

It is often considered a typical Dutch characteristic that the Dutch generally discuss things, express a great many opinions and make proposals without reaching clear decisions. This would seem to be true in the case of the proposed spelling reforms and the so-called 'spellings-kwestie' (spelling question) or 'spellingstrijd' (spelling dispute). Indeed, spelling matters are an important and topical issue at all levels of public life: government, education, writers, journalists, academies, mass media, public opinion, etc. In the Netherlands as well as in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, a great majority of people think that the spelling of their language ought to undergo some changes; a number of them believe that Dutch spelling ought to be radically adapted and simplified, and that the large number of foreign words, in particular, should be 'dutchified' ('vernederlandst') in order to assimilate them completely into the language. Unfortunately there is great disagreement among the twenty million Dutch speakers in Europe about new spelling rules that could be introduced to set up a spelling reform.

2 Dutch-Flemish co-ordination

Initially there was no agreement between Flanders and the Netherlands, and each country had its own regulations in spelling matters. In the Netherlands, the first attempt to standardize spelling was made by Professor Siegenbeeck on behalf of the then Minister of Public Education, and the 'Siegenbeeck Spelling' was officially adopted in 1804. In Belgium, the philologists De Vries and Te Winkel elaborated spelling rules which became official in 1865 under the title: *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*. In 1883, the Dutch authorities decided to adopt the spellings recommended by De Vries and Te Winkel, so that there has been in theory a common spelling for all the 'Low Countries' since that time. In 1891, a first attempt was made by Kollewijn to simplify this official spelling, but we have to wait until 1934 for a Royal Decree ratifying certain amendments to the spelling of De Vries-Te Winkel. This revised spelling is known as the 'Marchant Spelling', and it has been taught in all Dutch schools since 1934. However, this only became the official spelling in both the North (Netherlands) and the South (Flemish Belgium) in 1946–47. Following this, in 1954 a mixed Dutch-Flemish commission published a 'Glossary of the Dutch Language' ('Woordenlijst van de Nederlandse Taal'), often called 'de Groene Bijbel' ('the Green Bible'). Nowadays, this is still considered as the official reference book in spelling matters. Since 1946–47, no new spelling regulation has been adopted. It is therefore not appropriate to speak of very recent changes in Dutch spelling.

3 'Bastard words'

Meanwhile, in the Sixties, the Dutch-Flemish 'Pée-Wesselings' commission was formed in order to propose new spelling rules, mainly for the so-called 'bastaardwoorden' ('bastard words'). These are foreign words, mostly from French, and they quite often have two, or sometimes even more

possible accepted spellings: generally a traditional and a progressive one ("de traditionele en de progressieve spelling"). One of them is chosen as the preferential, preferred one ("de voorkeurspelling"), e.g.:

Traditional	Progressive	Preferred
<i>accent</i>	<i>aksent</i>	<i>accent</i>
<i>acclimatiseren</i>	<i>akkliernatiseren/akjdimatizeren</i>	<i>acclimatiseren</i>
<i>accoord</i>	<i>akkoord</i>	<i>akkoord</i>
<i>caricatuur</i>	<i>karikatuur</i>	<i>karikatuur</i>
<i>cachemire</i>	<i>kasjmier</i>	<i>kasjmier</i>
<i>chagrijn</i>	<i>sjagrijn</i>	<i>chagrijn</i>
<i>christelijk</i>	<i>kristelijk</i>	<i>christelijk</i>
<i>chronisch</i>	<i>kronisch</i>	<i>chronisch</i>
<i>confisqueren</i>	<i>konfiskeren</i>	<i>confisqueren</i>
<i>consequent</i>	<i>konsekwent</i>	<i>consequent</i>
<i>douane</i>	<i>doeane</i>	<i>douane</i>
<i>productie</i>	<i>produktie</i>	<i>produktie</i>
<i>overproductie</i>	<i>overproduktie</i>	<i>(but: overproduktie)</i>

As we see in these examples, the preferential spelling is sometimes the traditional, sometimes the progressive type. There is no clear reason that justifies the choice made. The fact that hundreds of words have double forms does not facilitate their correct use. The so-called progressive spelling is generally a 'dutchification' ('vernderlandsing'), but not always a simplification: sometimes the result such dutchification is more complicated, as in these examples when <x> is uneconomically expanded to <ks>.

equivalent-ekwivalent, exemplaar-eksemplaar, examen-eksamen, succes-sukses, text-tekst.

Moreover, in the last ten to fifteen years, a new trend has appeared: a provocative, anti-establishment spelling, modelled on the progressive type, which created new dutchified forms. The results are often rather surprising:

biscuit-biskwie, chantage-sjantaazje, chic-sjiek, chauffeur-sjofeur, chocola-sjokola, suite-swiete, communicatie-kommunikaatsie, circuit-sirkwie, eau de cologne-odeklonje, sociale unit-sosjale joenit.

Obviously, the task of the Pée-Wesselings commission was not an easy one: the commission had to advise how a consistent spelling of these 'bastard words' could be obtained without confusion; the commission had also to continue the process of dutchification and to take the phonology of these words into account. Finally, in 1969, the commission presented its final suggestions, but they have never been officially adopted.

4 The Dutch-Flemish 'Dutch Language Union'

From 1969 until 1985 the spelling dossier remained forgotten at the bottom of a drawer. Then, in October 1985, the Dutch Language Union ('de Nederlandse Taalunie'), which had obtained official responsibility in spelling matters, decided to set up a working party. Its task was to draw up a programme of research. The results of this programme were to be used by a new commission which was to be set up to bring about a new spelling reform. Recently, this working party has

started to conduct a survey of spelling preferences among the public and among the professions. At the moment, this investigation is in progress and its results are expected by the end of 1987.

The fact that both the Netherlands and Dutch-speaking Belgium have coordinated their efforts of spelling unity in the recent past is to be seen as a very straightforward step for the cultural collaboration of these countries, as well as an important contribution to Flemish emancipation against the French-speaking Belgians. This common effort to organize a joint language evolution in both the North (the Netherlands) and the South (Flemish Belgium) is stated in the Agreement of the Dutch Language Union 'Taalunieverdrag') of 1980 as follows:

- joint decisions on matters of spelling and grammar (which have always been controversial topics in Dutch linguistic history);
- joint action in the fields of lexicography, terminology and language teaching.

5 Different Dutch-Flemish spelling preferences

Nevertheless, the Dutch used in the two countries is not quite the same, despite the official 'A.B.N.' ('Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands') or General Educated Dutch. As far as the spelling is concerned, the differences are partly due to the different orthographic preferences which Dutch and Flemish people often have, and which are noticeable from reading a Flemish newspaper, say, *De Standaard*, and a Dutch one: many Belgians, for example, prefer to replace <c> by <k> in order to avoid similarities with French. This preference for non-French forms is political in Flanders. On the other hand, the progressive spelling used by certain Dutch people is often influenced by some "provocative" spelling forms, such as 'de sien' (the scene).

6 Trend to Cut Spelling in 1947

Let us now analyse some concrete results of the last Dutch spelling reform, officially adopted on 1st May 1947. Interestingly enough, this reform, which aimed to correspond more closely to the recent evolution of modern Dutch, was mainly a simplification of existing spellings. However, one consideration of the Netherlands-Belgium commission may have been the wish to avoid a number of resemblances to German. R G Baker [\[1\]](#) remarks that: "an analysis of reforms in writing systems throughout the world indicates that they tend to coincide with major political upheavals.(...) After the defeat of Nazi Germany minor orthographic changes were carried out in formerly occupied Holland and Denmark".

- The old spelling had many nouns ending in <-sch>, where the new spelling has <-s>, e.g.:

<i>bosch</i> > <i>bos</i>	<i>fransch</i> > <i>frans</i>
<i>hollandsch</i> > <i>hollands</i>	<i>mensch</i> > <i>mens</i>
<i>nederlandsch</i> > <i>nederlands</i>	<i>oostenrijksch</i> > <i>oostenrijks</i>
<i>vaderlandsch</i> > <i>vaderlands</i>	<i>visch</i> > <i>vis</i>
<i>vlaasmch</i> > <i>vlaams</i>	<i>vleesch</i> > <i>vlees</i>

- The plural of such nouns ended in -(s)schen; in the new spelling this has become (s)sen, e.g.:
fleschen>*flessen*

- Similarly, the old spelling had various verbal forms ending in <-sschen, -sch, -scht, -schte, -schten>, which have respectively become <-ssen, -s, -st, -ste, -sten>, e.g.:

<i>eischen</i> > <i>eisen</i>	<i>heerschen</i> > <i>heersen</i>
<i>waschen</i> > <i>wassen</i>	<i>wenschen</i> > <i>wensen</i>
<i>(wasch, wascht, waschte, waschten</i> >>>> <i>was, wast, waste, wasten)</i>	

— Adjectives which previously ended in <-sch> have in the new spelling lost the <ch>: *frisch*>*fris*

- In the declensional form, <-ssche> is now <-sse>: *frissche*>*frisse*

This does not apply to the suffix <-isch>, which has been retained, e.g. *belgisch*, *historisch*, *electrisch*, though <-sch> here is pronounced /s/. The ending <-sch> has remained in some geographical names too, e.g. *Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen*, *Hoogeveensche Vaart*, *Hollandsch Diep*, and nouns ending in <-bosch>: *Oudenbossche kwekers*, *Bossche koek*, *s' Hertogenbosch*.

— In a number of open syllables the former spelling had <ee> or <oo> where the new spelling has just <e, o>, e.g.:

<i>algemeene</i> > <i>algemene</i> (feminine or plural)	
<i>grote</i> > <i>grote</i> (f. or pl.)	<i>roode</i> > <i>rode</i> (f. or pl.)
<i>teere</i> > <i>tere</i> (f. or pl.)	<i>traditioneele</i> > <i>traditionele</i> (f. or pl.)
<i>deelen</i> > <i>delen</i>	<i>droomen</i> > <i>dromen</i>
<i>eertig</i> > <i>enig</i>	<i>excuseeren</i> > <i>excuseren</i>
<i>landgenooten</i> > <i>landgenoten</i> (plural)	<i>noodig</i> > <i>nodig</i>
<i>oogenblik</i> > <i>ogenblik</i>	<i>regeering</i> > <i>regering</i>
<i>saarnhoorigheid</i> > <i>samenhorigheid</i>	<i>tooneel</i> > <i>toneel</i>
<i>toon</i> > <i>tonen</i>	<i>uitnoodigen</i> > <i>uitnodigen</i>
<i>vereeniging</i> > <i>vereniging</i>	<i>zooveel</i> > <i>zoveel</i>
Other examples:	<i>broeder</i> > <i>broer</i>
<i>eene</i> > <i>een</i>	<i>phosphore</i> > <i>fosfor</i>
<i>philanthropie</i> > <i>filantropie</i>	<i>terloopsch</i> > <i>terloops</i>
<i>tezamen</i> > <i>same</i>	<i>tusschen</i> > <i>tussen</i>

— Before obviously masculine words like: *man*, *heer*, *boer*, *stier*, *kater*, the definite article formerly had to be accusative *den*, e.g. *de man loopt op straat*, but *ik zie den man*. After 1947, this so-called 'sexist' <-n> disappeared.

7 New patterns of simplification

Some new trends have appeared in recent years, such as:

— the ending <-ies> tends to replace <-isch>: *socialistisch*>*socialisties*.

— the ending <-lik> tends to replace <-lijk>, although it implies different pronunciation.

— <th> tends to be shortened to <t>: *apotheek*>*apoteek*.

— for phonological reasons, people tend to simplify <ei/ij> and <ou/au>.

These shortenings are certainly not negligible though they have not greatly changed the general appearance of Dutch. By comparison, Afrikaans, whose etymology is at least 95% Dutch, experienced simplification earlier and more deeply, not only in spelling, but in syntax and grammar too. Many people in the Low Countries tend to think that their language has already undergone too many changes this century: they are right to object that it is now difficult for a Dutch native to read

what was written in the 19th century, because of the different reforms and subsequent changes. Unlike the spelling of French and English, Dutch is already very close to the spoken language. Perhaps priority should be given to the spelling of foreign words.

8 Future reforms?

In their recent history, the Dutch and Flemish have managed to organise a joint evolution of their common language and spelling. The Dutch Language Union is now responsible for all further linguistic developments, which it will be interesting to observe, such as the results of the investigation into spelling preferences in the public and the professions. Which groups in public life would prefer to simplify the spelling? Which groups would choose to change some spelling forms even in an uneconomical way? Who would keep the present spelling intact? The only point everybody seems to accept is the urgency of a reform of the spelling of bastard words. But again, multiple solutions are suggested. Obviously the task of the Dutch Language Union is not easy, and the future will tell us how far the 'Taalunie' will be able to pursue spelling reform.

Note [1] R G Baker *Spelling Reform and Politics: the Case of Norwegian*, in Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter, [Autumn 1985](#), Item 7.

Acknowledgment The author wishes to thank Mr L Ravier of the Dutch Language Union, as well as Dr C Jans of "De Orde van den Prince" for their valuable assistance in the preparation of this article.

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[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, 5, 1987/2 p16 in the printed version]

[Robert Craig: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

7. English Spelt by West African Standard Pronunciation Robert Craig

This spelling, based on the sounds of West African standard English, shows diafones expanded to cover a wide range of fonemes. All standard languages are hypothetical, being based on theories of which forms of language will best reach a targetted population. Today the targetted population for English is the world. In reforming written English it is desirable to select a form which can encompass a wide range of dialects. W.A.S.E. fits the bill since:

- 1) Its sounds are closer to Latin than are most forms of English, so it can make better use of the Latin alphabet; it has only 10 vowels, incl. 3 diphthongs (which could be cut to two).
- 2) Most languages have /v/ or /w/, not both. Indians and Europeans tend to have /v/, most Africans and Asians have /w/, whose width printers dislike.
- 3) W.A.S.E. has no non-prevocalic /r/, which is useful.
- 4) I have eliminated the troublesome <h>, except in digraphs.
- 5) Voiceless <th> is retained as it may be pronounced /t, θ, f, s/ and because of international words based on Greek via Latin. Voiced <th> is spelt <d>.

VAI NU SPELIN SHUD YUZ VEST AFRIKIN STANDAD PROONONSIEESHIN

Risintli it az bikom klia dat di rivaizaz ob Nu Spelin most luk fo e aipoothetikul standad proononsieeshin on vich tu bees dea rifomz.

Of Di rifomd spelin most ab e nomba ob spesifik fichaz. Fo igzampul, it shud (az fa az iz posibil) iksklud ol dooz fichaz vich ol fomz ob di langvij du not ab. Dis iz bikoz pipul u du not ab sotin saundz in dea oon spich vil not noo, from dea oon spich, au tu rait dem. Dat iz, dee vil not noo vich letaz tu yuz ven dee kom tu rait di langvij daun.

Non pri-vookalik /r/ iz e ficha vich most bi ikskludid. Onles von az non pri-vookalik /r/ in von'z oon spich von kanot bi sotin about vea tu rait <r>. Di seem gooz fo /ð/. Pipul u proonauns /d/ fo /ð/ kanot noo veda tu rait <d> o <th>. Iksept in daigrafz, <h> shud not bi ritin aida.

Nau, vich fom ob English komz nirst tu mitin diz kraitiria? Ai sojest dat it iz di Vest Afrikin standad proononsieeshin ob English.

E meeja rizin fo yuzin Vest Afrikin English az di beesis fo rifomd spelin iz dat it iz e fom ob English vid neetif spikaz, yet it az e moch rijusd foonimik sistim. It kan deafo, inkompos meni proononsieeshinz. Olsoo it kan yuz di Roomin alfabit tu e ikstent vich di majoriti ob proononsieeshinz kanot aprooch. It az oonli ten vauul saundz, ob vich thri a difthongz. Dis minz dat vi oonli nid tu yuz daigrafz fo tu ob di pyua vauulz. Diz a kloos <e> and kloos <o>, vich kan bi shoon bai doblin. Az vi si, soch e spelin iz kvait izi tu rid and it yuziz di intanashinul saundz fo di vauulz. It olsoo solfz di problim ob au tu reprizent di nutrul o shvo vauul. Befo e neezul it iz spelt <i>, befo <1> it iz spelt <u>, bifo <s> it iz spelt <o>, and inishuli o fainuli it iz spelt <a>.

In di foggoin it vil bi sin dat <v> doz duti fo booth <v> and <w>. Dis iz bikoz meni spikaz ob English a oneebul tu difarenshieet bitvin di tu saundz. Dis iz di sot ob fakta vich vil ab tu bi teekin intu konsidareeshin as English kontinyuz tu divelop az di Vold'z praimereri okzilieri langvij. Di rivizhin ob Nu Spelin az mo ramifikeeshinz dan moost ob os ad priviosli rializd. It iz not soch e simpel task az it vud at fost apia.

8. Cut Spelling — a Linguistic Universal? Christopher Upward

Folloing coments from readrs on Cut Speling (CS) as demonstrated in th *Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter* [Sumr 1986](#) (Item 7), this articl incorporates sevrl amendmnts to th systm. Th most impornt ar:

- i) letrs representing post-accentul shwa afr palatized <c, s, t, x> and in th ending <-ual> ar kept (*special, nation, actual* ar not now cut to *specl, natn, actul*);
- ii) letrs ar not cut if a hetrofone results (*hopping, comma* ar not now cut to *hoping, coma*);
- iii) <rr> between vowel-sounds is not simplifyd, and final <ss, se> is not cut to <s>;
- iv) th foloing letr-chanjes ar introduced
 1. <gh, ph>=/f/=<f> (*tuf filosofy*),
 2. /dz/=<j> (e.g. *brij, jinjr*),
 3. <ig>=/ai/=<y> (e.g. *syn, nyt*).

1 TH BAKGROUND

1.1 Linguistic Universls and this articl

David Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* defines a linguistic universe as "a property claimed to be common for all languages" wich is "biologically necessary" [\[1\]](#). This articl makes no such sweeping, profound, but ultimally perhaps unprovebl claims. Rathr, it has th mor modest aim of examning sevrl languajs, and abov al english, to see if over th centuris they hav tendd to shortn ther spelings. If so, then CS wud apear in an iluminating historic perspective. No longr, as it may now seem to som observrs, wud it be a somwat eccentric proposal that has insuficient regard for th fonografic principle Insted, CS wud exemplify th norml, natrl process by wich riting systins ar graduly refined in th corse of time, avoiding upheval, but sheding th superflus vestijs of erlir forms of th languaj.

1.2 Do languajs becom simplr over time?

Inseprbl from th qestion of th posbl simplification of riting systms is that of th simplification of languajs themselvs. Otto Jespersen rote: "the main direction of change in the development of our written alphabet has been towards forms requiring less and less exertion — and similar causes have led to analogous results in the development of spoken sounds". [\[2\]](#) We wud modify this statemnt to hylt th way in wich chanjes in speech bring chanjes in th ritn forms in ther train. Thus th romance languajs gretly simplifyd th inflections found in latin, and ther ritn form has natrly folod this simplificatn, tho ritn french now lags seriously behind th spoken form in this respect. Likewise th elabrat Old English systm of cases and jendrs has disapeard, as has its reflection in th ritn languaj. Modrn ritn english howevr retains numerus featur of Midl English, especialy vowel-spelings, many of wich hav long cesed to corespond to pronunciation. Som of these featur hav been subject to fonolojicl chanje (e.g. thru th vowel-shift), wile othrs hav becom entirely silent (e.g. <gh> in *night*). Th overal claim that languajs becom simplr over time is by no means th hole story (it ignores th developmnt of new forms by boroing from othr languajs, by compounding, by intrusion, etc.), but in practice we see it as a major tendncy afecting both th morfology and th fonology of european languajs. An incidentl aim of this articl wil be to sho how spelings hav developd, or faild to develop, in paralel with this process of morfolojicl and fonolojicl simplification.

2 LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

2.1 Chinese

The non-alphabetic script of Chinese does not provide a specifically phonographic motive for simplification, but the advantages of simplifying the more complex characters have been recognized. It is reported in *Writing without Letters* [3] that from 1958–65 2,330 characters were simplified which contained on average 15 strokes each before simplification but only 9 strokes each after it, as illustrated by the following 4 examples, the simplified character being the lower of each pair.

1.	2.	3.	4.
難	國	義	幹
难	国	义	干

Although no letters as such are omitted, this reform has some affinity with CS, since both simplify learning and writing.

2.2 Dutch

Jean-Marc Trouille's account [4] of recent changes in Dutch spelling describes a widespread tendency to cut out letters to match pronunciation. Thus we have <-sch> in many words cut to <-s>, as *nederlandsch*>*nederlands*, *visch*>*vis*, *heerschen*>*heersen*; and <ee, oo> cut to just <e, o>, as *algemeene*>*algemeen*, *noodig*>*nodig*; likewise we have <f> for <ph> and <t> for <th>, as *philanthropie*>*filantropie*. In the recent 'Dutchification' of some foreign words however there have been instances of lengthening, especially when <x> is replaced by <ks>, as *text*>*tekst*; lengthening is also seen in *chic*>*sjiek*, *unit*>*joenit*.

2.3 French [5]

Of all languages using the Roman alphabet, the orthography of French is perhaps the most problematic after English. By the 12–13th centuries those Latin letters that were no longer pronounced had been cut, and, as the orthography then served to indicate how *chansons de geste* were to be read or sung aloud, it was fairly phonographic. But especially from the 14th century legal rather than literary texts set the standard, and phonographic representation was less important. Scribes tended to insert extra silent letters in ways which are familiar from the development of English spelling too: there were etymologizing or latinizing tendencies (insertion of <p> in *corps*, and — mistakenly — of <d> in *poids*, or expansion of *povre* to *pauvre* because of Latin *pauper*); there was the temptation to increase piece-work remuneration by padding out text with extra letters (*animaux*, *genoux* for *animaux*, *genoux*); and letters were inserted to differentiate homophones (*mets* acquired its <t> to distinguish it from *mes*). In general, as in English, many letters were used to represent several phonemes, and many phonemes could be represented by several letters. The forms that arose at that time have been the basis of French spelling ever since, and have not kept pace with changing pronunciation. As in England, spelling reform was a live issue in the 16th century, but achieved little. The following brief paragraph from 1534 with a transcription into modern spelling, gives some impression of the shortening of text that has occurred:

—L'advis feut trouvé bon. Adoncques produit toute son armée en plein camp, mettant ses subsides du costé de la montée. Le moine print avecques luy six enseignes de gens de pied, et deux cens hommes d'armes, et traversa les marays, et gaingna au-dessus le Puy, jusques au grand chemin de Loudun.

—L'avis fut trouvé bon. Adonc produit toute son armée en plein camp, mettant ses subsides du côté de la montée. Le moine prit avec lui six enseignes de gens de pied, et deux cents hommes d'armes, et traversa les marais, et gagna au-dessus le Puy, jusqu'au grand chemin de Loudun. [6]

The development of diacritics from medieval scribal practices was haphazard, but their use often saved letters, as *seur*>*sûr*, *mesme*>*même*, *escouter*>*écouter*. The dictionaries of the Académie Française cut many superfluous letters in the 17–18th centuries (<h> in *mélancholie*, <1> in *aultre*, <c> in *droict*, <d> in *advocat*), and in fact, although a 16th century text will have been longer than its modern equivalent, an early 18th century text may well have been slightly shorter and have used fewer diacritics. The following sentences, taken from a work [7] published in 1696, show some of the differences:

—Bon[foir , Me[ssieurs, êtes-vous contents du [ouperé.. Il ne [çauroit marcher... Joüons trente [ols pour pa[sser le tems... Voyez cette piece ici... Y a-t'il long-tems que vous le connoi[ssiez?... A vôtre service.

—Bonsoir, Messieurs, êtes-vous contents du souper?... Il ne saurait marcher... Jouons trente sous pour passer le temps... Voyez cette pièce ici... Y a-t-il longtemps que vous le connaissez?... A votre service.

The last two centuries have seen few changes, though *rhythme* dropped its first <h>, and a number of common forms have regained a lost silent letter (sometimes for reasons of morphological regularity), as *enfants*>*enfants*, *innocens*>*innocents*, *tems*>*temps*.

In the early 1960s the then minister of education, M. Paye, set up the Beslais commission to examine possibilities of simplifying French spelling. The commission recommended "une réforme prudente", with several patterns of regularization but above all the omission of letters rarely in accordance with the CS rules of cutting out letters irrelevant to pronunciation, simplifying doubled consonants and replacing <ph> by <f>; further shortening would be achieved by using more diacritics in place of letters. Changes would include the following shortened forms, several of which have a marked resemblance to English CS: *orthographe*>*ortografe*, *personne*>*persone*, *d'ifficulté*>*dificulté*, *nommer*>*nomer*, *commission*>*comission*, *rapport*>*raport*, *effet*>*efet*, *supprimer*>*suprimer*, *consonnes*>*consones*, *théâtre*>*téâtre*, *rythme*>*ritme*, *pharmacie*>*farmacie*, *technique*>*teqnique*, *relais*>*relai*, *legs*>*leg*, *asseoir*>*assoir*, *acquérir*>*aquérir*, *stock*>*stok*, *oignon*>*ognon*. This proposal has since been buried, but M. Leconte is launching a campaign to revive it. [8]

2.4 Greek [9]

Modern Greek, though remarkably close to its Ancient ancestor, has nevertheless undergone a process of simplification. However in the 19th and 20th centuries veneration of old forms led to the restoration of some older features, such as inflections, in the 'purified', traditionalist *katharevousa* form of the language advocated for official use; but since the return of democracy to Greece in 1974, the popular *demotic* form has prevailed. Even educated Greeks had perennial problems with orthography, especially the accents, the breathings, the spelling of /i/, and the doubled consonants. In 1982 some reforms were introduced by presidential decree into education and the civil service to combat these difficulties: grave and most circumflex accents are merged with acute, the dieresis is sometimes omitted, and a single consonant can replace a doubled consonant in many words of non-Greek origin (Italian *capello* 'hat' can be written καπέλο). On the other hand, one regularization requires an extra letter: <-η-> in subjunctive verb endings becomes <-ει->, as in the indicative. The so-called 'monotonic' or single-accent system that simplified the previous complex array of diacritics was based chiefly on the following principles — the breathings are abolished, monosyllables are written without an accent, and words of more than one syllable are written with an acute accent over the stressed vowel. Exceptions are allowed, to prevent some common words becoming retrographs. The extent of simplification is shown by the fact that previously the typesetter needed 13 different alphabets, according to the diacritics required, but now there is a choice only between alpha with and without acute accent. The following sentences (from Mackridge) are given first in traditional and then in the new simplified monotonic orthography:

— Ἀπὸ χτῆς οἱ δικοὶ τοῦ ἔλειπαν σὲ διήμερη ἐκδρομῇ. Μ' ὄλο ποὺ θᾶθελε νὰ τὴν ἀράξει δίπλα στὸ μαγνητόφωνο, ἔπρεπε νὰ διαβάσει αὐτὲς τὶς μέρες.

— Ἀπὸ χτες οἱ δικοὶ τοῦ ἔλειπαν σὲ διήμερη ἐκδρομῇ. Μ' ὄλο ποὺ θά 'θελε νὰ τὴν ἀράξει δίπλα στὸ μαγνητόφωνο, ἔπρεπε νὰ διαβάσει αὐτὲς τὶς μέρες.

2.5 Jermn

Jermn too has seen fluctuation in th length of ritn words. Many forms in Midl Hy Jermn [10] texts (c.1200) ar shortr than ther modrn equivalents, modrn digrafs frequently being ritn as singl letrs: *niht*>*nicht*, *komen*>*kommen*, *got*>*Gott*, *wise*>*Weise*, *hus*>*Haus*. Th shortr spelings represent pre-vowl-shift pronunciations, but conversely th erlir pronunciation cud also giv rise to a longr speling: *genuoc*>*genug*. Syncopation (th disapearance of sounds and ther letrs from th midl of words) has not been particulrly comn, but we note exampls such as th foloing: *ambet*>*Amt*, *angest*>*Angst*, *arzet*>*Arzt*, *babest*>*Papst*, *dekein*>*kein*, *einlif*>*elf*, *endelichen*>*endlich*, *Engellant*>*England*, *etelich*>*eltich*, *gelouben*>*glauben*, *handelunge*>*Handlung*, *misselingen*>*mißlingen*. Apocope has ocured in *lamp*>*Lamm*, *tump*>*dumm*; caractristicly, english has not cut th coresponding letr in *lamb*, *dumb*.

In th 17th century many extra letrs wer insertd, som surviving today in surnames (*Lüdtcke* cud wel be ritn *Lüdke*), but th gradual standrdization of th languaj in th 18–19th centuris revertd toward mor economicl forms. In 1901 a confrnce atendd by Austrian and Swiss delegats decided that th silent <h> shud be dropd from words like *Thier*, *Thor*, *Thür* — *but*, out of defrnce to th Kaiser, not from *Thron* — and th forms *Tier*, *Tor*, *Tür* ar now standrd [11]. One longr form has been preferd over a comn shortr 19th century alternative th erlir <-iren> suffix on many loand verbs is now always <-ieren>: *amüseren*.

Th speling of loan-words in jermn has somtimes been jermnized and therby ofn shortnd. Th widespred substitution of <k> or <z> for <c> (*Akzent*) dos not afect length, but wen <k> replaces <que>, it shortns: *grotesk*. Th germnization of french vowl-grafemes firqently shortns: *affaire*>*Affäre*, *boutique*>*Butike*, *bureau*>*Büro*, *meuble*> *Möbel*, *gracieux*>*graziös*, *portrait*>*Porträt*, *raison*>*Räson*. Direct modls for english CS ar a numbr of suffixs, as in *Aggregat*, *aktiv*, *Kultur*, *Medizin*, *Prolog*, and th midl vowl in *Akustik*. Forms like *akut*, *abstrus* perhaps also merit considration for english. A few jermnized forms on th othr hand hav lengthnd th orijnl french speling: *annuel*>*annuell*, *race*>*Rasse*, *charade*>*Scharade*; and th comn <ie> ending as in *Akademie* is longr than th english singulr *academy* (but plural *academies*). It is notable that altho syllabografic <1> is familir from bavarian-austrian dialect forms like *Dirndl*, no advantaj was taken of its potential for econmy in jermnized spelings like *abominabel*. (In english CS this device is fuly exploitd, as in *abomnbl*.)

2.6 Italian [12]

Italian has lost letrs in many contexts over th centuris: <h> has almost vanishd (*huomo*>*uomo*, *honore*>*onore*, *teatro*>*teatro*, *christallo*>*crystallo*), <ct> became <z> (*direzione*), <ph> became <f> (*fisico*, *sferico*), <n> is slipping in th vacilation between forms like *constatare*:*costatare*, initial <e> has gon from many words like *spedizione*, and ther has long been uncertnty as to wethr consonnts shud be dubld or not. One instnce of lengthning from th latin form is th replacemnt of intrvocalic <x> by <ss>, as in *massimo*.

2.7 Russian

Frank Knowles tells us [13] that after the Revolution so many redundant letters were dropped from Russian (especially the hard sign, Ъ) that *Anna Karenina* became 35 pages shorter. The parallel texts below show how the reform shortened the written language:

–Вечное блаженство достигается хождением по узкому пути «наибольшего сопротивления». Таким и был путь Саровского чудотворца. Он до конца умер во Христе – и потому так радостна Его Пасха. Томление Гефсиманской ночи, бичевание в претории Пилата, Голгофа, богооставленность, сошествие во ад – вот что лежит в основе Ново-Заветной Пасхи, вот что преобразившись, «ад умерщвляет блистанием Божества».

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2.8 Spanish [14]

With its highly phonographic orthography, Spanish has simplified and regularized many of the Latin forms it inherited, most notably in the middle ages by simplifying nearly all the doubled consonants, as in the merged prefix and root in *abreviación*, *acomodación*, *adición*, *afección*, *agravación*, *alegación*, *anotación*, *aparición*, *adquirir* (=acquire), *asistente*, *atención*. Consonant clusters that have been reduced in speech have also widely been reduced in writing. The <p> in *prompt*, *assumption* has been dropped in *pronto*, *asunción*, and in the month *setiembre* the now silent <p> is written only by the older generation. An attempt has also been made to remove initial silent consonants in words of Greek derivation. Thus the new spelling norms (*Nuevas Normas de prosodia y ortografía de la Academia Española*) promulgated for use from 1959 permitted words beginning with <gn-, mn-, ps-> to drop the first, silent, letter, giving such forms as *nomo*, *nemotecnia*, *sicología* for the English *gnome*, *mnemonics*, *psychology*. The reduced forms of these often rather rare words have only in part been adopted, but the shortened form *seudo-* for the prefix *pseudo-* is now widely used, and *asthma* is written *asma*. Greek-derived <ch> has been cut to <c> as in *carácter*, *coral*, *crónico*, but before <e, i> is just changed to <qu>, as in *quimera*, *química* (=chimera, chemistry).

2.9 Discussion

Sketching this survey is, the evidence it provides clearly suggests a dominant tendency towards the shortening and simplification of spellings in many languages. Sometimes shortening occurs because sounds have disappeared or because traditional spellings were unnecessarily and/or confusingly cumbersome, and sometimes simplification took the form of reducing the number of pen-strokes, rather than the horizontal length of text. Cases of lengthening are of various types: some were motivated by (sometimes mistaken) fidelity to supposed etymology, some arose from the desire of scribes or printers to improve their remuneration by extending their text, some were intended to distinguish homophones, some reflected shifts from simple vowels to diphthongs or otherwise lengthened vowels which were then spelled with a digraph, and some arose through nativization of loan-words. While the reasons for shortening and simplifying appear rational and beneficial, some of the reasons for lengthening are perverse and unhelpful; to that extent, it is hard to escape the conclusion that cutting redundant characters is an easy, natural procedure while new ones have often been inserted without regard for efficiency or facilitating literacy.

3 ENGLISH

3.1 Selection of evidence

3.1.1 Sources The main contrast of English spellings we present here is between present-day t.o. and those of the 16–17th centuries (broadly speaking, Shakespearean), before printers had achieved a consensus on standard spellings. But to extend the perspective we also refer to earlier and later periods: to the Middle English of the late 14th century (broadly speaking, Chaucerian), before printing had been developed in Europe (1453), as well as briefly to Anglo-Saxon (c.500–1100 AD) and to the early 18th century. Three kinds of source have been used. The first is the Bible, since it is taken to be the standard English text par excellence in those past centuries, with the most widespread currency and greatest influence, and since it affords the most direct comparison between the orthography of different eras (in each case the same section of the Sermon on the Mount has been chosen — Matthew vi, 25–34). The second source is literary, with text-samples from Chaucer, Shakespeare and Swift. And the third source is the word-lists given in histories of the language. A separate section deals with differences between the older, present forms of British English and the more advanced Websterian forms adopted in America.

3.1.2 Validity of the evidence In examining the orthographic evidence of past ages before t.o. had become standardized, we have to be careful not to regard individual texts or words as offering incontrovertible proof that can justify absolute, clear-cut conclusions. As D G Scragg [15] demonstrates, the variety of spelling (arising from different dialects, different scriptorial traditions and different personal practices) found particularly before the age of printing makes it impossible to claim that the samples given here are necessarily typical of the period in which they were put to paper. At best we can hope they are broadly indicative of general tendencies, and that global calculations of length (if not individual spellings) do have some validity. Similarly with the 16–17th century texts: since they do not represent a standard, we cannot make precise comparisons with t.o., but if as a whole they are all longer, that fact is of some significance. When Scragg (p.71) gives the forms *pity*, *pyty*, *pitie*, *pytie*, *pittie*, *pyttye* all as being current among Elizabethan printers, it is clearly not entirely accurate to say "the Elizabethans used a longer spelling for *pity* than t.o. does"; but we can make general observations such as that most Elizabethan spellings of *pity* were longer. In all the calculations the letter <y> has been taken as equivalent of <i>, although both typographically and in handwriting it is a less economical symbol.

3.1.3 Presentation of material The texts are chosen to illustrate the effect of earlier spellings on continuous written English, though they have the disadvantage of limited and repetitive vocabulary. They have been reproduced here using as far as possible the typographic devices such as the letter yogh and the long <f> for <s> which were found in the copy from which the text was taken, i.e. if the copy was modern and did not use the old devices, they have not been used here. The word lists on the other hand provide a wider selection of vocabulary, though many of the words will have been less common.

The transcriptions show word-length as follows:

1. **bold typ** indicates more letters than t.o.
2. *italics* indicate fewer letters than t.o.
3. underlined words or letters indicate a CS form.

Words of the same length as t.o. (though the spelling may differ), or which do not occur in t.o., are printed normally.

3.2 Middle English

Wycliffe Bible translation (dated 1389) [16]

The letter yogh <ȝ> may usually be read as a precursor of <y>, as in *ye*, *you*, but in rhotic it foreshadows <gh>.

25 *Therefore* Y say to 3ou, that 3e **ben** nat **besie** to 3oure lijf, what 3e **shulen** ete; **othir** to 3oure body, with what 3e shuln be clothid. Wher 3oure lijf is nat more than mete, and the body more than clothe?

26 **Beholde** 3e the flee3ing **foulis** of the eir, for thei **sowen** nat, ne **repyn**, neither gadren in to **bernys**; and 3oure fadir of *heuen_fedith hem*. *Wher* 3e **ben** nat more worthi than thei?

27 Sothely who of 3ou **thenkinge** may **putte** to to his stature oo **cubite**?

28 And of clothing what **ben** 3c **besye**? **Beholde** 3e the lilies of the **feelde**, how thei **wexen**. Thei **trauellen** nat, *nether spynnen*;

29 **Trewly** I say to 3ou, for whi neither Salamon in *al* his **glorie** was keuerid as oon of these.

30 For 3if God **clothith** thus the **heye** of the **feeld**, that to day is, and to *morwe* is **sente** in to the **fourneyse**, how **moche** more 3ou of *litol* feith?

31 *Therefore* nyl 3e be **bisie**, **sayinge**, What **shulen** we ete? or, What **shulen** we **drynke**? or, With what thing **shulen** we be keuered?

32 Forsothe heithen men **sechen alle** these **thingis**; **trewly 3oure fadir wote** that 3e *han* need to **alle** these **thingis**.

33 *Therefore* seke 3ee first the kyngdam of God and his *ri3twisnesse*, and **alle** these **thingis shulen** be cast to

3ou.

34 *Therefore* nyle 3e be **besie** in to the *morwe*, for the *morew* day shal be **beste** to it self; sothely, it **sufficith** to the day his malice.

Ignoring th problms of comparing this East Midlands orthografy with t.o. wich result especialy from fonolojicl and morfolojicl chanjes, we note 31 cases of aditionl final <e> (*beholde*), 13 cases of aditionl final <n> or <en> (*sowen*), 4 cases of aditionl medial vowels (*thingis*), 3 cases of consonnt dubling (*putte*), and a few othr extra lettrs. On th othr hand som forms ar shortr than in modrn english, especialy wen a t.o. digraf is representd by a singe letr, as with yogh for <gh>, <d> for <th> (*fadir*), som shortr vowels (as in *fedeth*, *heuen*), and singl consonnts insted of dubl (*litol*, *morew*). Four forms in fact anticipate CS: *al*, *shal*, *ther*, *wher*. A few forms wud also look wel in a foneticized modrn english orthografy: *thei*, *feith*, *worthi*. Overal, compared with th t.o. forms, about three times as many words ar longr as ar shortr.

Chaucer

As a littry sampl of Midl English, we here giv th opening to the Prolog to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: [\[17\]](#)

HERE **BYGYNNETH** THE BOOK OF THE TALES OF **CAUNTERBURY**

Whan that **Aprill** with his shoures soote
The droghte of March **hath** *perced* to the **roote**,
And bathed every **veyne** in **swich** licour
Of which *vertu engendred* is the *flour*;
When **Zephirus** eek with his **sweete** breeth
Inspired **hath** in every holt and heeth
The tendre **croppes**, and the yonge **gone**
Hath in the Ram his **halve cours sonne**,
And smale **foweles maken melodye**,
That **slepen** *al* the nyght with open ye

(so *priketh hem* nature in *hir corages*);
Thanne longen folk to **goon** on pilgrimages,
And **palmeres** for to **seken straunge**
strondes,
To **ferne** halwes, kowthe in sondry **londes**;
And specify from every shires **ende**
Of **Engelond** to **Caunterbury** they **wende**,
The **hooly blisful** martir for to seke,
That *hem hath* holpen when that they were
seeke.

These 18 lines of Londn orthografy merely serv as an ilustration, and th figrs givn belo for relativ word-length covr th first 100 lines. Decisions had to be taken on sevrل points of uncertnty. For exampl, th verb-inflection <-(e)th>, as in *hath*, *bygynne*, was countd as a longr speling of th

present inflection <-s>, rather than as a form with no t.o. equivalent, since insofar as *hath* (which occurs very frequently) uses 4 letters to spell 3 phonemes, the 3-letter modern form is graphemically more economical. But by the same logic, we then have to say that the forms *hem*, *hir* are more economical than their modern equivalents *them*, *their*. With grammatical forms like *foughten*, which are both phonemically and orthographically longer than the modern English *fought*, shortening has occurred in both respects. Chaucer's language being that of pre-great-vowel-shift English, we also find spellings like *lyf*, *wys* that reflect the pronunciation before the present long vowel was introduced; in one sense, the t.o. forms *life*, *wise* represent a lengthening since Chaucer's day, but in another sense, the modern spelling merely reflects the modern vowel-length, and to talk of the modern spelling being less economical is perhaps not meaningful; nevertheless Chaucer's forms have been counted as shorter, just as *Caunterbury* has been counted as longer, and just as we noted the pre-vowel-shift forms of Middle High German as shorter than their modern equivalents. The results were as follows: with the title, the 100 lines contain 755 words, of which 545 were either the same length as the t.o. equivalent, or else had no direct modern descendant; 133 were longer than the modern equivalent, and 77 shorter. Of those that were shorter, 26 were precisely CS forms (notably, repeated occurrences of *al*, *wel*, *ful*, *ther*), while 16 other words contained CS features (notably simplified dental consonants in *maner*, *riden*, *litel*, *acordaunt*).

3.3 16th & 17th century English

Tyndale's Bible Translation (1526)

We here give the same verses from St Matthew as in the Wyclif translation. A direct comparison between them is difficult because Wyclif translated second-hand from Latin, while Tyndale had access to the original Greek.

25 Therefore I **saye** vnto you, be not **carefull** for **youre** lyfe what ye shall **eate**, or what ye shall **dryncke**; nor yet for **youre boddy**, what rayment ye shall **weare**. Ys not the lyfe more worth **then meate**, and the **boddy** more **off** value then rayment?

26 **Beholde** the **foules** of the **air**, for **they sowe** not, *neder reepe*, nor yet *cary* into the **barnes**; and **yett youre** *hevenly* father **fedeth** them. Are ye not better then they?

27 **Whiche off** you though he toke *taught* therefore **coude** put one cubit vnto his stature?

28 And why care ye then for rayment? **Beholde** the *lyles off* the felde, **howe thy growe**. They labour not *nether spynn*;

29 And yet for all that I **sale** vnto you, that even Solomon in all his royalte was **nott** *arayed* lyke vnto one of these.

30 *Wherfore* yf God so clothe the **grasse**, which ys **to daye** in the felde, and **to morowe** *shalbe* cast into the **fournace**, shall he not **moche** more do the same vnto you, o ye **off lytle** fayth?

31 *Therefore* take no thought, saynge, What shall we **eate**? or, What shall we **dryncke**? or, Wherewith shall we be clothed?

32 Aftr all these **thynges** seke the *gentylys*; for **youre** *hevenly* father **knoweth** that ye have **neede off** all these **thynges**.

33 But rather seke ye fyrst the kyngdom **off** *heven* and *the rightewesnes ther of*, and all these **thynges** *shalbe ministred* vnto you.

34 Care not *therfore* for the **daye foloyng**, for the **daye foloyng** shall care **ffor yt sylfe**; eche **dayes** trouble ys sufficient for the saine **silfe** day.

In this version we find 57 words longer than in t.o., and 22 shorter (not counting *ye*), of which 14 have at least some feature of CS. Inconsistency is particularly marked.

The Bishops Bible (1588). The Gospel by Jaint Matthæwe

25 Therefore I J say vnto you, Be not careful for your lyfe, what ye *shal* **eate** or **drinke**, nor yet for your body what ye *shal* put on: Is not the life more **woorth** then **meate**; and **the** body then rayment?

26 **Beholde** the **fowles** of the **ayre**: for they **ſowe** not, neyther **doo** they **reape**, nor **carrie** into **barnes**, yet your heauenly father **feedeth** them. Are ye not **muche** better then they?
 27 Which of you by taking of careful thought can **adde** one **cubite** vnto his **ſtature**?
 28 And why care ye for rayment? **Learn** of the **Lilies** of the **fielde**, how they grow; they weery not (themſelues) with labour: **neyther** (**doo** they) **ſpinne**.
 29 And yet I **ſay** vnto you that euen **Solomon** in al his **royaltie**, was not **arayed** lyke one of theſe.
 30 Wherefore, if **GOD** ſo clothe the graſſe of the **fielde**, **whiche** though it **ſtande** to day, is **to** morowe caſte into the Ouen: **/hal** he not **muche** more (**doo**) the ſame for you, (O) ye of **little** fayth?
 31 Therefore take no thought, **ſayeing**, what **/hal** we **eate**? or, what **/hal** we **drynke**? or, **wherwith** **/hal** we be clothed?
 32 (For after **al theſe thynges doo** the Gentiles ſeeke:) for your **heauenlye** father **knoweth** that ye haue **neede** of al theſe **thynges**.
 33 But **ſeeke** ye **fyrſte** the **kyngdome** of God, and his **righteouſneſſe**, and **al theſe thynges** **/hal** be added vnto you.
 34 Care not then for the morowe: for the morowe **/hal** care for **it ſelfe**: Sufficient vnto the day, is the euyl **therof**.

Th ſpeling here is much closer than Tyndale's to t.o.: altho ther ar actuly 37 final <e>s not presnt in t.o. (Tyndale had 35), ther is only one dubld conſonnt not in t.o. (*spinne*), wher Tyndale had 15; like Tyndale, the Bishops Bible has 14 CS forms, of wich 8 ar *shal*. One word has been relengthnd from Tyndale: *heven* has becom *heauen*). A new peculiarity is th ſpeling *doo*. Overall, 46 words ar longr than in t.o., and 15 shortr.

The Authrized Version (1611)

This version moves yet nearr to t.o., with only 19 final <e>s not found in t.o., and exopt for th compound *shalbe* <1> is usuly dubld as in t.o. (and aditionally in *wherewithall*, *lillies*, *evill*). Th only othr CS forms remaining ar *therfore*, *arayed*. Th Authrized Version dos howevr tend to lengthn *we*, *ye to wee*, *yee* in a manr not found in elrir versions, and th freqency of *yee* for *ye* and *shall* for *shal* means that insofar as the Bishops Bible and the Authrized Version hav th same wording, th latr is 5 letrs longr. For th first time we meet th t.o. form *little*. Of th 251 words of this extract from th Authrized Version only 4 hav fewr letrs than t.o., wile 31 words hav mor (these totals include repeatd words).

Shakespeare

We here giv th ſpeling of th First Folio edition (1623) of th *To be or not to be* soliloquy in *Hamlet*.

To be, or not to be, that is the Queſtion:
 Whether 'tis Nobler in the **minde** to ſuffer
 The Slings and **Arrowes** of outrageous Fortune,
 Or to take **Armes** againſt a Sea of troubles,
 And by oppoſing end them: to dye, to ſleepe
 No more; and by a **ſleepe**, to ſay we end
 The Heart-ake, and the thouſand **naturall ſhockes**
 That Fleſh is **heyre too**? 'Tis a conſummation
 Deuoutly to be wiſh'd. To dye to **ſleepe**,
 To **ſleepe**, perchance to **Dreame**; /, there's the rub,
 For in that **ſleepe** of death, what **dreames** may come,
 When we haue ſhuffel'd off this **mortall coile**,
 Must giue vs pawſe. There's the reſpect
 That makes Calamity of ſo long life:
 For who would **beare** the Whips and **Scornes** of time,
 The Oppreſſors wrong, the **poore** mans Contumely,

The pangs of diſpriz'd Loue, the **Lawes** delay,
 The inſolence of Office, and the **Spurnes**
 That patient merit of the vnworthy takes,
 When he **himſelfe** might his Quietus make
 With a bare Bodkin? Who would theſe Fardles **beare**
 To grunt and ſweat vnder a weary life,
 But that the dread of ſomething after death,
 The vndiſcouered **Cowntrey**, from whoſe Borne
 No Traueller **returnes**, *Puzels* the will,
 And makes vs rather **beare** thoſe **illes** we haue,
 Then **flye** to others that we know not of.
 Thus Conſcience does make Cowards of vs all,
 And thus the Natiue hew of Reſolution
 Is ſicklied o're, with the pale caſt of Thought,
 And enterprizes of great pith and moment,
 With this regard their Currants turn away,
 And **loofe** the name of Action. Soft you now,
 The **faire** Ophelia? Nimph, in thy Orizons
 Be all my ſines *remembred*.

Of th 275 words in this text, 32 ar longr than in t.o., *sinnes* being 2 letrs longr; 12 words ar difrntly spelt but of th same length (disregarding th <u, v> altrnations); and only 3, *ake*, *puzels*, *I* (and perhaps *remembred*) ar shortr, tho th absnce of apostrofes to indicate poſeſſion (*the Lawes delay*) shortns 3 mor words. (Apostrofes ar howevr used for omiſſion: *there's*). No CS forms occur, unless we take th secnd <r> in *remembred* as ſylabografic.

3.4 Erly 18th century

Jonathan Swift A Modest Proposal (1729)

Altho John Wilkins' 1668 reform proposal (Scragg p. 101) includes ſuch obviuſ CS forms as *erth*, *giv*, *bred*, *gost*, *ded*, *shal*, its radicl incorporation of diacritics and greek letrs ruled it out as a practicl proposition. By th late 17th century a conſenſus among printrs had developd wich amountd to a larjly ſtandr orthografy and was ſubſtantialy wat we no as t.o., tho certn featur had yet to be eſtabliſhd, th moſt obviuſ (if ſuperficial) deviations from t.o. being th ſurvival of th long <f> and th much mor librl use of capitl letrs. An analysis of Jonathan Swift's pamflet, *A Modest Proposal*, givs a fair impreſſion of othr ſpelings that difrd from th futur t.o. Th 10 pajes contain 25 words with longr ſpelings than t.o., 30 words with non-t.o. forms of th same length, 4 words hoſe form is shortr than t.o., plus anothr 3 or 4 doubtful cases (e.g. miſſing apostrofes). Of th 25 longr words, moſt hav extra conſonnt-letrs: 9 end in <-ick> wher t.o. has <-ic>: *publick* (7), *prolifick*, *catholick*; 6 hav a hyfn or ſpace wher t.o. dos not: *common-wealth*, *play-house*, *over-run*, *our selves*, *my ſelf*, *land-lords*; and 3 hav dubld <1> wher t.o. has it ſingl: *melancholly*, *tollerably*, *skill'ul*. Th only longr vowel-spelling is *cloathing*. Th forms having th same length as t.o., on th othr hand, moſtly deviate in vowel-speling, with ſevrl patrnſ aparent: <y> for <i> in 9 words: *likelyhood*, *dye*, *lyable* (2), *boyled*, *dyet*, *ſupplied*, *crucified*, *tythes-*, <e> for <i> or vice verſa in th unſtreſsd initial ſylabl of 7 words: *encrease* (3), *imploy* (tho *employ* occurs mor ofn), *degreſſed*, *incumbrance*, *intailing*; <c> for <s> in 5 words: *expence* (4), *parcimony*; and <-ance> for <-ence> in *conſiſtance*, *ſubſiſtance*. Th shortr words ar *ſtrolling*, *dropt*, *fricasie*, *inclemences*. Clearly this text, wich was publiſhd a century aftr Shakespeare's firſt folio, has progresſd a long way towards t.o. (only ſom 60 words over 10 pajes hav non-t.o. forms, wheras in th *To be or not to be* ſpeech nearly one word in 5 had yet to achve th t.o. form); but a major continuing ſource of deviation is th failur to cut redundnt letrs that t.o. later removed.

3.5 Discussion of th texts

The above texts demonstrate above all inconsistency of spelling, both regarding choice of letters, and in the number used. Not economy, but with the advent of printing typographical requirements often determined the number of letters, the compositor using more or fewer to complete a line or to fit words into his justified text (see Scragg Ch. 5). The extra letters were predominantly <e> and doubled consonants, which Scragg analyses as follows: "writers used final <e> in a quite haphazard way; in printed books of the sixteenth century <e> was added to almost every word which would otherwise end in a single consonant, though the fact that it was then apparently felt necessary to indicate a short stem vowel by doubling the consonant (e.g. *bedde*, *cwnw*, *fludde*) shows that writers already felt that final <e> otherwise indicated a long stem vowel." That some Elizabethans were aware of this superfluity of letters, and indeed of the CS principle as such, is shown by Claude Desainliens' remark [18] in 1576 concerning "the great strife between them that would have our tongue written after the ancient orthographie, and those that do take away many letters as superfluous in writing". However, random variations our sample of texts contains, the average printed word had more letters than its t.o. form. But was this true of handwriting too? Scragg quotes (p.68–69) from a letter by Queen Elizabeth I (1586), with the inconsistent spelling 19 out of 116 words with an <e> not found in t.o., nevertheless shortens as many words as it lengthens (13) and uses several full CS forms: *wer*, *wel*, *dout*, and several partial ones: *counselar*, *shuld*, *folowe*. Likewise Pitman's list [19] of 34 variants on the surname used by members of Shakespeare's family contains 24 shorter forms (*Shaxper* is the shortest), 8 forms of equal length, but only 2 longer ones. This suggests the intriguing possibility that private persons used more economical spellings than did printers with their typographical constraints — a hypothesis which a wider survey of Elizabethan manuscripts could easily verify or refute. If it proved to be the case, it would imply that printing techniques were to blame for many of the cumbersome and irregular forms of t.o., and that scribes left to their own natural inclinations would long ago have taken the Cut Spelling road.

3.6 Shortening of individual words

We already noted (§2.5) that some German spellings became shorter as a result of syncope. The same phenomenon occurred in English, with the spoken form of a word losing syllables or phonemes, and the written form contracting to match; a strikingly apt example is *copse* (it derives from French *couper* 'to cut') whose longer form *coppice* still exists. The Oxford Dictionary of Place-Names [20] offers a massively comprehensive collection of examples, mostly going back to Anglo-Saxon times; the first 20 names it lists (excluding Celtic Abergavenny) require 156 letters today, whereas their early forms required 200, the two most extreme cases being *Abberton* (Worcestershire), written *Eadbrihtincgtun* in 972, and *Abson* (Glossop), written *Abbedeston* in 1167. Similar streamlining is obtained when CS is applied to some modern place names, such as *Lestr*, *Birmingham*, *London*. Heller [21] gives some striking examples of the same process affecting ordinary words: *bryd-ealu*>*bridal*, *clerec*>*clerk*, *conestable*>*constable*, *enaleofon*> *eleven*, *furhlang*>*furlong*, *God be with you*>*goodbye*, *gose-somer*>*gossamer*, *hengestmann*>*henchmen*, *Magdelin*>*maudlin*. Strang [22] gives a more systematic account of the way many Anglo-Saxon forms have shortened through the centuries; her examples include: *cylen*>*kiln*, *ealle*>*all*, *eornostlice*> *earnestly*, *godspel*>*gospel*, *heafod*>*head*, *heall*>*hall*, *hlafo*>*loaf*, *hlafo*>*lord*, *makede*>*made*, *munuc*>*monk*, *mynet*>*mint*, *saternesdæg*>*Saturday*, *sweostor*>*sister*. More modern examples (some of them exemplifying aphesis rather than syncope) are: *escheat*>*cheat*, *keverchef*>*kerchief*, *moneth*>*month*, *napron*>*apron*, *perambulator*>*pram*, *onmibus*>*bus*, *caravan*>*van* (and soon *telephone*>*fone*?). Such shortenings are good models for CS forms like *business*, *cupboard*, *hansman*, *history*, *poison*, *raspberry*, *sovereign*, *Wednesday*. But there have been other patterns of shortening which do not lend themselves so obviously for CS: the loss of the Anglo-Saxon inflections has meant that for instance verbs of Anglo-Saxon origin have lost endings, as *singan*>*sing* (though some redundant final <e>s in t.o., as in *have*, *love* etc, can be similarly shortened in CS); for purely practical, semantic reasons *inflammable* has recently reduced to *flammable*; and English is well-known for verbal contractions like *they'll*, *we've*, *wouldn't*, *won't* in which the exceedingly common spoken form has its accepted (if somewhat informal) written equivalent.

3.7 Lengthning of individual words

Alongside all these cases of phonological and consequent orthographic shortening, English has also seen various patterns of orthographic lengthening. One category involves the replacement of a single letter by a digraph, as *wen* with the advent of printing *thorn* and *eth* finally gave way to <th> and pre-consonantal *yogh* gave way to <gh>; between <th> and <d> we find both lengthening and shortening: *modor*>*mother*, *fadr*>*father*, but *murther*>*murder*, *burthen*>*burden*; the use of the 'French' digraph <ch> after the Norman invasion gave rise to such lengthenings as *cest*>*chest*; vowel-digraphs were introduced to reflect vowel-lengthening, as *boc*>*book*, *dohtor*>*daughter*, *fyr*>*fire*, *mus*>*mouse*, *swin*>*swine*. (Similar patterns of lengthening are proposed by such spelling-reform schemes as New Spelling [23], which would substitute <ks> for <x>, and write *tuberculosis* as *tueberculoosis*.) An interesting case is Anglo-Saxon *æpl* which lengthened to t.o. *apple*, but which CS would cut back to *apl*.

A completely different category consists of words whose spelling was deliberately lengthened for supposedly etymological reasons, and whose pronunciation was then sometimes adapted to match (spelling-pronunciation). Scragg (p.57–59) lists the following: *perfit*>*perfect*, *assoil*>*absolve*, *amonest*>*admonish*, *caitif*> *captive*, *cors*>*corpse*, *langage*>*language*, *trone*>*throne*, *cedule*>*schedule*, *samon*>*salmon*, *ceptre*>*sceptre*, *teatre*> *theatre*. Occasionally a word was shortened despite the addition of a letter: *dette*>*debt*, while *doute*>*doubt* kept the same length. One word was lengthened, only to be shortened again centuries later: *fantasy*>*phantasy*>*fantasy*. A good few additional letters were based on mistaken etymology: *sithe*>*scythe*, *yland*> *island*, *avauncen*>*advance*, *avauntage*>*advantage*, *avice*> *advice*, *amiral*>*admiral*, *ancre*>*anchor*; one of these was shortened while being lengthened: *emeraude*>*emerald*, while *auctor* kept its length as *author*. *Could* acquired its <1> by false analogy with *would*, and *whole*, *whore*, *whoop* acquired <w> to distinguish them from homophones.

3.8 Lengthening v. shortening: discussion

While we can describe the shortening of spellings to match their reduced phonological length as a natural and logical process, many of the above cases of lengthening are far from natural or logical, being rather an eruption of linguistic erudition which, even when not based on totally false premises, has little to do with facilitating communication and literacy. Shakespeare satirized it in the character of Holofernes (supposedly based on the Elizabethan orthographer Mulcaster) in *Love's Labour's Lost* (V, 1), who is made to say (here in t.o.): "I abhor... such rackers of orthography, as to speak *dout*, when he should say *doubt*; *det*, when he should pronounce *debt*, — d,e,b,t, not d,e,t... This is *abominable*, which he would call *abominable*." We have already quoted Desainliens, and we may here repeat Scragg's quotation (p.98) from Coote's 1596 statement of the CS principle: "I have differed in writing many syllables from the usual manner, as *templ* without (e), *tun* with one (n) and *plums* not *plummes* etc; my reason is, I have put no more letters than are of absolute necessities.." Thus the Elizabethans themselves were clearly aware of the perverseness of many lengthenings, and as both Scragg and our analysis of the Swift text (§3.4) show, after the Elizabethan age most spelling changes involved cutting: the silent final <e> largely disappeared unless it served to indicate a preceding long vowel, the <ie> ending as in *academie* became <y>, the <-ick> ending as in *musick* lost its <k>, *controul* became *control*. But although the silent final <e> in words like *are*, *were*, *there*, *done*, *gone* was often dropped back in the 16th century, in those common words, and in others like *give*, *live*, *love*, t.o. has retained it. Similarly the common simplification of <1> in *al*, *ful*, *wel* etc. 300 years and more ago has not been adopted in t.o. (except in compounds like *also*, *fulfil*, *welcome*). In such cases CS is proposing fidelity to simpler, older forms that t.o. has thoughtlessly inflated.

3.9 American shorter than British [24] [25]

Those American spellings that differ from those customary in Britain today were mostly fixed at a later date than we have so far discussed, being due to the American lexicographer Noah Webster, who put forward quite radical reform proposals in 1789, and then progressively watered them down in successive editions of his dictionary in 1806, 1828, 1838. If American English is regarded as less conservative than British English, that difference is widely reflected in the more economical spelling, particularly in racy forms such as *tonite*,

tho, thru which have not however yet achieved official status. Among the fully accepted differences, we find that British <ou> in *mould, moult* and in the <-our> ending becomes <o> (*mold, molt, labor*); British <ae, oe> are often plain <e> (*aesthetic, maneuver*); verbs ending in an unstressed syllable with a final consonant often don't double the consonant before inflections (*worshipd* rather than *worshipped* — compare also *woolen, wagon* for *woollen, waggon*); and final <-e> is more often dropped than in British English when a following suffix begins with a vowel (*milage, salable* as against *mileage, saleable*); silent <ue> endings disappear as in *catalog*, and a *programme* becomes a *program*; some tools have shortened their handles (*ax, adz*); and some <gh, ph> digraphs have been rationalized, as in *boro, plow, draft, sulfur*. An isolated case is US *check* for British *cheque*. The shorter American forms are not always just a matter of spelling, but occasionally reflect the 'shorter' American pronunciation (*mustache, aluminum* as against *moustache, aluminium*). Some American forms have taken the preference for <i> over <y> or <e> further than British (compare Swift) as in *inclose, tire, stories for enclose, tyre, storeys*. America may also economize by using fewer hyphens than British, as *cooperate* rather than *co-operate*. Scragg notes (p.85) that some shorter American forms are increasingly used in the British press. There are however also a few American spellings which are no shorter than the British form (*center, defense, gray*), and a few British forms are shorter than the American, particularly where a doubled consonant is involved: US *biased, skillful, fulfill, benefitted* as against British *biased, skilful, fulfil, benefited*.

4 IS CS A LINGUISTIC UNIVERSAL?

4.1 Linguistic, sociological, economic

To describe CS as "biologically necessary" is clearly to overstate the case, but in this article we have assembled evidence that the omission of superfluous letters, characters, symbols, marks, diacritics or graphemes has in the past and across many languages been a prime technique of rational reform. Usually the omissions relate to the internal requirements of the writing system, as when they reflect phonological simplification, or the fact that morphological distinctions made in earlier forms of the written language were later no longer felt to be necessary or helpful. But it is not unreasonable to suggest that in addition to such strictly linguistic motivations, powerful logical, sociological and economic motivations are also at work. Call it laziness, or call it efficiency, human beings will naturally wish to carry out their appointed tasks with the minimum of effort (the more economical Elizabethan handwriting, and the frequency with which spelling mistakes shorten words, are further indications of such a tendency which need exploring). The basic tasks imposed by a writing system are firstly learning and secondly using, and compactness clearly represents an important component in a system designed for the efficient performance of both tasks, especially when compactness reflects systemic simplicity as well. But the sociological attraction of simplicity is reinforced by the potential economic and financial benefits. Whether or not a global, carefully planned spelling reform is introduced for English, economic pressures will all be operating in the direction of CS. As Scragg says (p.85–86): "Printers in particular are attracted by the appreciable savings in production costs to be made by the use of spellings which economise in space... it is likely that publishers will be unable ultimately to resist the saving in paper, ink, and type-setting labour involved in the shortened forms... Brevity is the keynote of present developments in spelling. Fully established in the style-sheets now are *loth* against *loath*, *curtsy* against *curtsey*, *hiccup* against *hiccough*... against the *Daily Express* *dulness* and *fulness*, *The Guardian* has *dullness* and *fullness*."

4.2 CS as a natural reform strategy

CS also has to be considered in terms of practicality of implementation. Major upheavals in writing systems are rare, and when they have taken place, we note the combination of a largely illiterate society and an authoritarian regime, as when Turkey replaced Arabic script with the Roman alphabet in 1928, or when the Soviet Union converted Azerbaijani from Arabic script to Roman in 1924, and then to Cyrillic in 1940. [26] By contrast, in the many societies of the English-speaking world which are culturally sophisticated and more or less fully literate, with highly developed publishing industries and educational systems, not to mention public opinion as a crucial influence on decision-makers, a radical upheaval could not be countenanced. The only feasible reform would be one that capitalized on the natural processes and tendencies we have observed operating in other languages and at earlier periods of English. These processes and tendencies

are characterized by gradualness, which ensures the mutual intelligibility of old and new systems, so that while children and advanced publishers use the new spellings, the older generation and more conservatively minded people can still use the old. English requires new spellings which readers and writers will accept as readily as today we accept such radically different forms as *gaol*, *jail*. Bernard Shaw, Sir James Pitman and John Downing have all drawn a parallel with the coexistence of Roman and Arabic numerals: each has a role, but just as Arabic numerals are by far the more efficient for all practical purposes of calculation, so if CS and t.o. existed side by side for a transitional period, there can be little doubt which would soon be preferred for most practical purposes of efficient communication. As part of our argument in favor of spelling reform, we must be able not just to present an orthography that we can demonstrate is systematically superior to t.o.; we also have to show that it fits smoothly into normal historical and social processes. The evidence presented in this article surely suggests that by its very nature CS fits the bill.

5 REFERENCES AND SOURCES

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[Reginald Deans: see [Bulletin](#) Item 6, [Anthology](#) Item 6. Richard Lung: see [News2](#) Item 7]

9. Reginald Deans, Inventor of 'Britic' Richard Lung

Richard Lung reported on the death of Reg Deans in the [1987/1 issue](#) of this Journal (Item 2), and now pays tribute at greater length.

BIOGRAPHICAL

Reginald Deans, one of the most active spelling reformers for over 50 years, died from a fall on 7th April 1986. On hearing the sad news, his former housekeeper, Annie Hinchcliffe, informed me late last year. She accompanied Reg on his second visit, summer 1982.

Reg Deans was born 10 September 1892. He had come for his holidays to Scarborough from Leeds since he was a small child. Before the 1914 war he taught English to Chinese students from Shanghai. Some of them wrote to him afterwards. He met and corresponded with many people for many years.

As he put it, "In priiwor dyz ai woz in ediwkycn and korld Dr". He taught French airmen at Dijon during the 'phoney war', then made his way north by train, escaping from Dieppe before the fall of France. He was at Farnborough for the rest of the war and retired from engineering afterwards. With his wife he caravanned across Europe and preached spelling-reform to the locals on the way! His son also became a university teacher.

CAUSES

Dr Deans was a humane rationalist in the Voltaire tradition that profoundly influenced Shaw and Wells. "If you really want to make the world a better place, you will help every good cause" is the challenge of Reg's shortest leaflet. It is the note struck by Tom Paine and the idealism of new-found hope from the English radical working class of the 19th century. It included the Painite Thomas Spence's phonetic alphabet, [1] in which he published an account of his trial in 1801. The Chartist William Lovett proposed a national reform association to bring together good causes in one strong movement. The same idea was behind Dr Deans' attempt to launch a monthly called Bettur Wurd to give free publicity to any cause, whether or not he agreed with it. It was printed in Deans' 'Britic' alphabet and also championed lost causes which were to become commonplace, say, 25 years later, such as: the need for drink tests against drunken driving; the need for safety gear against accidents; precautions against injuries at home and at work. The League of Cruel Sports was given its say on the humane sport of foiling fox hunters. The Vegetarian Society was featured. However he was dismissive of much unorthodox medicine.

Possible coalitions of pressure groups should be looked to by spelling reformers, provided it is done democratically. That also implies the need for a world federation of spelling reformers, to negotiate joint publicity campaigns with other kinds of reformers. Or, for instance, to become a member of the United Nations Organization. The Electoral Reform Society successfully sought affiliation. Mr Deans believed, like the E.R.S., in transferable voting, as another of his lifelong interests. But G K Chesterton's distinction that Bernard Shaw was an excellent republican but not a

democrat, applied also to Reg. He didn't think that most people were well enough educated to judge the issues. The standard of literacy, which he fought so hard to raise, he thought too low even in the great majority. I believe that the difference between Reg and Britain's leaders on this is that he said what he thought. But that is another debate.

Nevertheless, Deans was a powerful questioner of convention. His 'perpetual calendar' scheme would allow the same calendar to be reused without adjustment for over 1,000 years. It was based on a 52-week year of 364 days and a leap year every 5 years of 53 weeks except once in every 50 years). Months would be left out. But, no doubt like myself, everyone is a sentimental lunatic, in this respect. If humanity ever survives itself, and aught else awaits, to colonize other planets, very few are likely to have a hulking great moon tumbling round them. Last laugh to Reg, I think.

BRITIC

If all of us were required to justify our existence (before each other, democratically, not before an inquisition), then Reg would have justified himself as the inventor of 'Britic' (characteristically ignoring his distinguished career). The key to his approach to reform is in his book's title *Universal Language and Simplified Spelling* [2] — in that order. Isaac Asimov's support for spelling reform also seems to relate to the need for a universal language — by 'universal' he means universal in his S.F. Dr Deans had already adopted at any rate a global approach to spelling reform, before Prof. Jesús Mosterín's excellent advice on those lines. But the nearest to an international alphabet the world has to work with is not some basic I.P.A. It is simply the roman alphabet. And Deans' 'Britic' shows it is just about adequate for consistent spelling of the English language. That is, if you use the 26 (mostly) roman letters rationally with one sound, and one sound only, each. No system does that perfectly, spell rationally, not even the International Phonetic Alphabet. But for practical purposes, Britic is near enough.

If that is true, it is very important, because it means spelling reform does not have, to wait on some technological millennium before a whole new alphabet or just one new letter can be magically added to the world's printing machines.

CONSONANTS

The consonants <m, p, b, f, v, t, d, s, z, r, l, n, k, g, h> offer no real problem to rational spelling. This is also true of <j> for English spelling. But there is a European perspective. Europe may once again have a common roman alphabet, which may well form the large core of a world alphabet. It would be reasonable to anticipate that English <j> (or /tʃ/ in I.P.A.) harmonize with French, Portuguese, Romanian and Turkish <j> (or /ʃ/ in I.P.A.). Of course that would depend on all those countries in Europe changing from their <j>=English <y> usage, so as to make available a roman letter for the /tʃ/ in a standard European and probably world usage. Until then, little use for <j>= /tʃ/ in English tho.

The sound of /k/ is repeated in <c, q, x>. Since <k> is common to the Greek, Roman and Cyrillic alphabets, we would be daft not to confirm it in its present purpose. Deans' 'Britic' gives the 3 spare letters to English phonemes without distinct letters of their own. Hence *British* is spelt *Britic*, as in hundreds of existing words like *social*, *officious*, *ocean*. In European languages <c> is associated with the /s/ or /tʃ/ sounds, often with the difone /ts/. In Italian <c>=/tʃ/, and French <ch>=/tʃ/. So if

you want to give this European foneme its own European, as well as.' English, letter, the choice of <c> is the only good option.

Of English consonants, this leaves only <th> without its own letter. Britic gives it <x>, reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon letter <ð>, called eth. It is rare for any language to use both breathed and voiced <th>, as English speakers to some extent do. But even in English the two versions of <th> are not given a separate identity, and rightly so. From the European point of view, <x> might have been better reserved for its sound-value in the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets, the <ch> sound in *loch* or *Bach*. But the similar sounding <h> might serve. In the main Latin languages <h> is a silent letter, except Romanian, where <h>=<ch>. <h> used to be silent in English too, whereas Greek and Russian, for instance, only have <x>=<ch> and not <h> in their alphabets. So, even if they wanted to adopt the roman alphabet in its present form, <x>=<th> and <h>=<ch> would perhaps do. Users of non-roman alphabets might do better to wait on the general adoption of a simplified roman alphabet, tho, as I shall discuss below.

VOWELS

Britic spells the five English vowels as in: *pat*, *pet*, *pit*, *pot*, *put*. Controversy arises from the divergent pronunciation of *put* from traditional northern close-back tongue position for <u> to a relaxed or unstressed central or near central tongue-position pronunciation, as in the word *about* or *above*, spelt in Britic *ubawt*, *ubuv*. In effect, Britic uses <u> for this neutral vowel or near-neutral vowel (that is, for /?/ or /?/ in the I.P.A.) as well as for residual use of the close-back <u> in English speech, such as in the word *good* spelt *gud* in Britic. In a letter to Reg Deans, the well-known Canadian reformer Arnold Rupert doubted whether North American speech could do without the traditional <u> usage. I too always disagreed with Reg on this. And I'm not inclined to think now that, for the purposes of English as a world language, two such divergent sounds as /u/ and /?/ or their close variants, require distinct signs. I have favoured Harry Lindgren's suggestion that the neutral vowel be shown by an apostrophe. When one has learned where it occurs in a word, so that its pronunciation offers no problem, then one might want to leave out the apostrophe. Britic assumes this in words like *nation*, spelt *nycn*. An apostrophe in *nyc'n* shows the word is spoken with an unstressed vowel in it

The Britic use of <y> for /ei/ is, in my opinion, a minor flaw in the system. Since Britic uses <w> as the Welsh do, literally as a double <u>, so *rude* is spelt *rwd*, it would be consistent to spell <y> as in *glory*, so as to rhyme with *free* (as it does in the words to the Elgar march). Failing consistency, it would at least have been more conventional to keep <y> as in *my*, *why*, *by* etc.; the second-best rather than the 3rd best option! As it is, Britic spells *free* as *frii*; <ai> as in *aisle*; <oi> as in *boil*. The <-i> diphthongs are consistent combinations. But when it comes to the <-u> diphthongs, Britic use of <u> as the unstressed vowel means that he must use <w>. This does not matter much tho, because, English spelling does too, e.g. *due* and *new*, spelt *niw* in Britic, and now spelt *naw*. *Old*, *mould*, *bowl* Britic would either spell <-ow> or replace with the letter <q>, which looks like <o>, so *old* is *qld*.

Britic retains the European convention of spelling the centring diphthongs with an <r> after the vowel and applies it consistently. It stems from our traditional pronunciation and is still near enough to the truth. so, *air* is spelt *er*, as in *ther*, are is *ar*, or is *or*, *her*, *purr* etc. become *hur*, *pur*. *Poor* becomes *puur*. An apostrophe in *poor*, spelt *pu'* or *pu'r*, would avoid the inconsistency of the two <u> sounds in *puur*. But this not only applies to Britic, but to the SSS Nue Speling and a lot of other proposed

systems. Britic spells ear as *iur*, rather than *i'* or *i'r*, depending on the general adoption of Lindgren's apostrofe.

Since the apostrofe is on the typewriter's upper deck, using a full stop for the shwa would be quicker. The end of a sentence could be marked by two spacings instead of a full stop and one spacing. But this would have to be a generally agreed and taught reassignment — for those who could not work it out for themselves.

To sum up, after this extensive criticism: it may come as a surprise that in my opinion Britic is the best spelling reform of the roman alfabet that I've come across. It might or might not be helpful to add Lindgren's apostrofe (alternatively the full stop as shwa dot). And <y> for <ii> instead of <ei> in *vein* or <ey> in *grey* consistently so spelled would be a less important improvement.

I've said nothing about what I see as the special virtue of Britic to justify its pre-eminence in my regard. Britic virtually chucks out all the dead digrafs, all those meaningless combinations of letters. Notably the pseudo-symmetry of <-h> digrafs (<sh, th, dh, ph, wh, ch> for consonants and <-e> digrafs for vowels (<ae, ie, oe, ue, ee>). Britic does away with this unnecessary dilemma of whether consistent falsehoods are better than chaos in spelling. Britic is alive with the intelligence of its inventor, that may awaken others to more intelligent spelling habits.

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— also many leaflets on Britic. A limited number of these are available from myself (and possibly others who corresponded with Dr Deans). One such leaflet is from Sir David Eccles' fine speech to the Commonwealth and American Clubs of Rome, in support of Britic, when he was Minister of Education. After the House of Lords debate on 'The Simplification of the English Language' on 28 January 1981 Reg was pleased with replies from Lord Eccles, Lord Boyle, Lord Simon and Lord Tweeddale, who wrote a long letter "in perfekt Britic". In debate, judging from quotes Reg sent me, the latter two spoke with magnificent forthrightness. Baroness Young made the point that spelling reformers are not in reasonable agreement that can be acted on. Dr Everingham of Brisbane wrote about Britic in *The Australian Medical Journal*, 17 December 1960; he is known to the world's spelling reformers for making 30 September 'spelling day', when he became Australian Minister of Health.

S S Eustace (former chairman of the Simplified Spelling Society) sistem 2, an authoritative guide to the main European fonemes. There is a short account in Spelling Progress Bulletin, [Fall 1980](#), and all SSS members received a copy of the study.

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 5, 1987/2, pp28,29 in the printed version]

[Valerie Yule: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Quarterly](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Personal Views](#) 10 & 16, [Media](#), [Books](#).]

10. Andrew W Ellis Reading, Writing and Dyslexia Review by Valerie Yule

Andrew W Ellis *Reading Writing and Dyslexia: A Cognitive Analysis*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1984, 147 pp.

This book for a non-specialist audience is a clear and readable account of the subject which will interest those of the general public who are interested in spelling, as well as the students for whom it is primarily designed. Andrew Ellis is one of the foremost British psychologists working in the area of normality and pathology in cognitive functions. I would be critical of only two aspects. One of these is the model of how children naturally learn to read; and the other is the temptation of laboratory researchers to assume that when 'dyslexic' children show the same difficulties in reading or spelling as adults who have brain disorders, it means that similar processes of reading or spelling or writing are affected. How is the book useful for those of us who would like to see an English spelling that suited human abilities and needs better than what we have now?

There are two pages about spelling reformers, mostly about those who made matters worse from medieval times to the eighteenth century — but this should help conservatives to realize that changes are made by human intervention. The only modern development mentioned is that of resolving the spelling problem by trends in 'spelling pronunciation' — if you can't change the spelling, change the way you speak to match it.

The first chapter is a clear, brief account of the development of writing systems and of English spelling in particular, with an explanation of 'levels of representation' in present-day spelling. This includes the way that units of meaning, 'morphemes', form the roots of English words — so that for example the endings of *cats* and *dogs* show a common plural inflexion rather than showing the difference in sound (*cats* and *dogz*). However, Ellis takes on trust, as most people have done, Chomsky's influential theories about how useful ('optimum') English spelling is in showing how words are related even at the cost of loss of sound-symbol relationships. As Ellis does refer at another point to Downing and Leong's remarkably thorough work *The Psychology of Reading* (1982), it is surprising that he ignores their critique of Chomsky, in which they summarise the barrage of evidence against Chomsky's claims about how clever English spelling really is, underneath.

The first chapter ends very quotably:

"The irregularities, inconsistencies, and multiple levels of correspondence in English spelling undoubtedly create problems for the learner. English spelling has been described as adapted to suit the needs of the already skilled reader and speller, and there is certainly an element of truth in that generalization. However, while being a nuisance for the learner, the vagaries of English spelling constitute a rich vein of material for the psychologists to exploit, which is one reason why we have devoted some time to analyzing them." (p.9)

The first comment on this is that it is time psychologists started to do something about removing these "problems for the learner", not just commenting on them or treating the learners as the problems. The second comment is that there is need for *evidence, not assumption*, about how efficiently English spelling really does suit the needs of adult readers and writers. And the third comment is that here we have yet another argument for English spelling — that it gives psychologists something to investigate. Indeed it does.

Chapters that follow discuss research on the question of how much we really "read by ear or by eye", and concludes that familiar words can be recognized without having to be phonically analysed or 'heard' in the mind, The third chapter is more technical, including complicated diagrams, on the question of what elements are seen in reading and what elements are assembled in decoding new words.

Chapter 4 describes very clearly the complex issues involved in understanding the 'acquired dyslexias' which can result from injury to the language-dominant hemisphere of the brain — which is the left side in most people. The fact that different patients may show such varied forms of problems with reading and writing (at least seven different types have been described) is used to support the idea that many separate cognitive components must be orchestrated to enable normal people to be literate. It is not a completely straightforward matter of matching sound and symbol — particularly for English.

Much (far too much) psychological research on reading has been done with single words, because that is the easiest to study in laboratories. It is very difficult to design rigorous experiments using normal reading, because so many different variables are involved, many of them quite out of the psychologists' control. So when Ellis moves from research on the reading of isolated words into discussing normal reading of connected prose, Chapter 5 is really a collection of a few approaches to its study, rather than the comprehensive account that must eventually be built up, and possibly will be in the next few years. The difficult question that is set is: how direct is the reader's route to comprehension? Can you read 'directly for meaning' — and if so, how is it done? (And, we ask ourselves, how might the design of spelling assist this, if it is possible?)

Chapter 6 is on how we spell when we write. The answers here seem to be clearer — but they are based on experiments with present English spelling and observations of English-speaking patients. They may give clues about an improved spelling — but it is also possible that with an improved spelling we might not need such complex reading and writing processes after all.

Chapter 7 shows a psychologist dipping a foot into an area unknown to him, and again taking someone else's theories on trust. This time it is about how children learn to read and write. Ellis cites, uncritically, "a sequence of stages which seems to capture quite well the way in which many children in present-day Britain and America learn to read" described by Marsch, Friedman, Welch and Desberg (1981).

If this sequence is true, then it is a major reason why many children in present-day Britain and America don't learn to read. .

According to this account, the four stages of learning to read are:

1. Children are taught to recognize a small set of words by sight, without any clues. Sometimes they will try to use context to guess a word, often wrongly.
2. Within the first year of learning to read, the child increases her/his set of words that can be recognized on sight, and guesses other words incorrectly if they look at all like the words they know (e.g. *house* for *horse*), at first because they share initial letters, but later through other letters as well.
3. *By about the age of seven*, the child starts to be taught or to see for itself, how to decode words by sounding out the letters or letter groups. Now children can start trying to read new words without having to be told what they are, and next time around can recognize them visually too.
4. Stage 4, adult-type skilled reading, is reached "somewhere between *the ages of eight and ten*", as children have enough experience to be able to use analogy with known spelling patterns of other words to help decode new words.

There are several reasons why there will be illiteracy problems if children are set to learn to read like this.

1. Imagine you were set to learn something other people thought you should learn, and at the end of a year you still couldn't understand more than a few words. And it was three years before you could use your learning to do anything interesting at all. Even a six year medical course is not like that. Unless you live with adults who are obviously keen and enjoying the result of being able to read, wouldn't you give up, as a child, if so much of the first years at school was spent being allowed and even forced to guess and make mistakes, or be continually spoon-fed with each new word? In most other languages learners can start to make sense of what they are doing as soon as they have learnt the letters. It may take them some years to become proficient, but at least, like ice-skaters, they are 'on the ice'.
2. There is research to show that most really proficient adult readers have read more than a quarter of a million words before they are aged eight. That would be out of the question for all children learning the way described above.

And in fact, although teachers of classes may believe their pupils are learning like that anyone who really observes what an individual child is doing when she/he is succeeding in learning to read will notice that the child is picking out specific features to help her/him recognize a 'whole word' in the first place. It might be a milk-stain on the flash card. For a lucky child it is identification of a letter or letters, right from the start. That child is lucky, because she/he is starting with a strategy that will work, not one that will have to be discarded after many disappointing failures.

3. The final point that may be made is: what an argument for spelling-reform this should be — that because of our present English spelling, respectable people should accept that young children be taught to learn to read by such a disgracefully inefficient and stressful sequence of stages. It is time that learners were given a reading system that was a more approachable and 'user-friendly' task to learn — to get to grips with in weeks rather than years. Then the next three years can be spent in *learning by reading* as well as becoming proficient through practice in the new skill.

When Ellis moves back into fields more familiar to him, he is able to discuss and compare a variety of the controversial research findings in the field of dyslexia and acquired dyslexia. They help us to realize that the ideal writing system for readers and writers must take into account more than just sound-symbol relationships. Even the spelling mistakes cited show that even a perfectly phonemic spelling would not prevent people making errors in it — although at present we have the problem that many people make mistakes with 'regular' words simply because they have no means of knowing whether they are regular or not, and so guess on, since guessing is their usual strategy.

This is the book if you would like a good, clear and short introduction into what psychologists are doing and thinking about questions of how we read and write. If you want to study the subject in more depth, but still written intelligibly, go to Downing and Leong (1982), and if you would like to know more about writing systems themselves, including non-Roman alphabets, and hear a lively conservative discussing spelling-reform, I recommend Geoffrey Sampson's recent book *Writing Systems* (1985).

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 5, 1987/2, p30–33 in the printed version]

[David Stark: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

11. Escaping from a Dialect Straitjacket 2.

David Stark.

This is the fifth in a series of articles of which the first three appeared in the *Simplified Spelling Society Newsletter* in [Summer 1985](#), [Spring 1986](#), [Summer 1986](#), and the fourth in the [1987 No.1](#) issue of this *Journal*.

My last article set out principles for making a revised orthography more applicable to various accents by allowing certain pairs of similar phonemes, which can be easily confused in some accents, to be represented by single graphemes. This is possible because differing phonemes do not just appear in different accents, but are the result of phoneme splits or convergences in the historical development of language. These changes have taken place in some accents but not in others, and are consequently only recognized in some of them.

The next two articles explore the potential for such an approach by looking at some of the features which separate the major accents. The main source of reference for this study is *Accents of English* by J C Wells. This excellent book should be on the bookshelf of every serious orthography reformer.

1. GLIDE CLUSTER REDUCTION.

The London newsreader's announcement that groups were campaigning against the impending extinction of Wales, largely brought about by excessive wailing by Japanese, filled me with indignation and disbelief at the fate awaiting my fellow Celts. The momentary misunderstanding was caused by the RP feature of reducing /hw/, or a slightly different phoneme in my accent, to /w/. This is known as Glide Cluster Reduction and makes pairs like *Wales: whales and wailing: whaling* into homophones.

This feature, although present in the south of England before the time of Shakespeare, did not become acceptable in educated speech until the late 18th century. While some RP speakers still use /hw/, probably because of spelling pronunciation, most accents of England, Wales, West Indies and the southern hemisphere have only /w/. Although there is evidence that Glide Cluster Reduction is growing in the United States, it is not common in North America, and it is not present in the accents of Scotland and Ireland.

As discussed in my previous article, the functional load of the opposing phonemes is probably small enough for them to be represented by the one grapheme.

2. THE LASS: PASS SPLIT.

The distinction between the vowels in *lass* and *pass* was discussed in the last article and it was concluded that it would be unwise to express them as two separate graphemes because of the variability of these vowels in various English accents. Someone who does not possess the distinction at all, or in a different way to RP, would have to *learn* lists of spellings non-phonetically, so that he knew that *lass*, *gaff*, *hath*, *mascot*, *hassle*, *manse*, *rant*, *gander* and *trample* had different initial vowels from *pass*, *staff*, *path*, *basket*, *castle*, *dance*, *grant*, *slander* and *example*. Minimal pairs like *ant: ant* are few, and t.o., predating the *lass: pass* split, normally represents both phonemes with the same grapheme. It would seem sensible for a revised orthography to do the same.

3. GOOD: MOOD: BLOOD.

Most accents of English distinguish between the vowels in *put: putt* or *stood: stud* and those in *pool: pull*. The fact that some do not is the result of several changes in pronunciation since the original, relative consistency in the Middle Ages. The results of these changes, which in themselves would require lengthy explanation, are shown the following table.

	mood	blood	good	cut	put
Middle English	o:	o:	o:	u	u
Great Vowel Shift					
Output (RP & Gen Am)	u:	u:	u:		
Output (N England)	u:/u	ʌ	ʊ	ʌ	ʊ
Output (Scotland)	u:	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ
	u	ʌ	u	ʌ	u

The result is that *put:putt* and *could:cud* are homophones in some local accents in the north of England and in Ireland. If one could represent these vowels with the same grapheme in a revised orthography, the alphabetic advantages of spelling affected words would be enjoyed by adherents of these local accents as well as the rest of the English-speaking world. There are not many minimal pairs, indicating a low functional load in accents which have this distinction. The common ones are *book:buck*, *could:cud*, *put:putt*, *rook:ruck*, *stood:stud* and *took:tuck*. The main reason that there are so few minimal pairs is that the lexical set of words containing the *put* vowel is relatively small, numbering about 60 common words plus the <-ful> ending. One could therefore conclude that it is possible for the two vowels to be given the same grapheme, or alternatively one would accept that a small section of the English-speaking world would require to learn these 60 words by non-alphabetic means.

The above table also shows that *pool:pull* are homophones in most of Scotland. Also, these two phonemes, while present in most accents, have some lexical variance in different areas. For example, words like *hoof*, *roof*, *tooth*, *soon* and *spoon* are pronounced with a short /ʊ/ in parts of the west of England, as opposed to the /u:/ of RP, and even within RP some words like *broom*, *groom* and *room* can be pronounced either way.

Again one is faced with a similar choice, whether or not to allow the one grapheme for both. There are even fewer minimal pairs than with the *putt.-put* vowels, these being *fool: full*, *pool: pull* and *too: two: to*. However, if one does combine the *pool:-pull* vowels one would exclude the opportunity to combine the *put:putt* vowels, as the number of minimal pairs for /u:, ʊ/ v. /ʌ/ is large, numbering about 35 common pairs of words.

While New Spelling advocated <oo> for the *pull* vowel and invented <uu> for the *pool* vowel, it did not prohibit a Scotsman writing <oo> in all the relevant words. The necessity to invent a new grapheme <uu>, and then place it with the more common of the two sounds, would cause a large amount of alteration to traditional orthography, which itself does not positively distinguish the two phonemes. For these reasons, and the number of people who would be adversely affected by a written differentiation between the two, I would favour the combination of the *pool:-pull* vowels in the one grapheme.

4. YOD DROPPING.

During the 16th century, the phoneme /ju:/ lost the /j/ element (the yod) in words like *threw*, which then became homophone of *through*. This occurred in certain environments, namely after palatals

(as in *chute, chew, juice*), after /r/ (as in *rude, crew, shrew, grew*), and after consonants plus /l/ (as in *blue, flue, flew, glue*). While there are some accents in Wales, the north of England and America which remained conservative in this respect, the vast majority of accents now have a /u:/ phoneme in such words. Only a small number of words, like *enthusiasm, suit, resume*, can be pronounced both /ju:; u:/ in RP.

This process continued to develop in General American until the /ju:/ is now only present after a few consonants, for example *beauty, cute, mutant*. The /j/ element has disappeared for most Americans in the following environments:

/t-/ *tune, student, attitude*

/s-/ *suit, assume, pseudonym*

/d-/ *duke, reduce, during*

/z-/ *presume, resume*

/n-/ *new, numerous, avenue*

/l-/ *lewd, allude, solution*

/θ-/ *enthusiasm*

We are then faced with the problem of coming to terms with the majority of people having /ju:/ in words where a large minority of the English-speaking world has /u:/. One might consider combining the two by representing them with a single grapheme. The number of minimal pairs is fairly small, about a dozen common words in RP, with a few less in General American where *tooter:tutor, do:due:dew, overdo:overdue* are homophones.

The phoneme /ju:/ is almost always represented within words in traditional orthography by <uCe> (C = consonant) with the <e> dropped if another vowel immediately follows, and simply by <u> if a vowel follows the /ju:/. Examples of this are *cute, future, fuel*.

The same spelling rule exists for /u:/ in traditional orthography, as illustrated in words like *rude, rudiment, gruel*, this method of representing the phoneme being only slightly less common than <oo> as in *boot*.

There would be a disinclination to allow /u:/ and /ju:/ to be represented by the one grapheme by reformers who have always separated them, and by those who reckon that minimal pairs like *coot:cute, booty:beauty, food:feud, ooze:use, moo:mew, moot:mute, poor:pure, who:hue/hew* need to be differentiated in writing to avoid widespread semantic confusion. All that can be concluded is that, since these minimal pairs are few in number and the functional load of the difference between the phonemes is consequently low, it is possible to use one grapheme for both, and maximize the alphabetic spelling potential on both sides of the Atlantic for the relevant phonemes.

5. YOD COALESCENCE.

In association with yod dropping, a preceding /d, t, s, z/ sound will change in some accents to /dʒ, tʃ, ʃ, z/ in words like *during, tune, issue, visual*. The only solution to this variation seems to be to retain the existing spellings, or at least to simplify them, so that the Standard Spelling

Pronunciations indicate /dju:, tju:; tju:, zju:/ rather than /dʒu:, tʃu:, ʃu:, zu:/ respectively. These pronunciations and spellings would be learned irrespective of which way one would naturally say them. At the moment, many people who would normally display yod coalescence in their everyday speech would claim that the proper pronunciation contains the yod, probably being influenced by the spelling pronunciation.

6. PALM, LOT, CLOTH, THOUGHT.

The following table illustrates a problem for spelling reformers trying to ameliorate the difficulties of dialect in a revised orthography.

	RP	Gen Am
<i>palm</i>	/ɑ/	/ɑ/
<i>lot</i>	/ɒ/	/ɑ/
<i>cloth</i>	/ɒ/	/ɔ/
<i>thought</i>	/ɔ:/	/ɔ/

The pronunciation of the *cloth*, *lot* vowels has been subject to a lot of change throughout their development, explaining why they have become fixed differently in different dialects as these dialects developed at different speeds.

The RP vowel in *lot* can vary in Britain from /ɒ/ to /ɔ/, but in Southern Ireland, Canada and most of the USA it will have the /ɑ/ vowel of General American, making the vowel in *pot and* part homophonic.

Many non-RP speakers will perceive the vowel in *thought* as identical to that in *cloth* despite its different historical development. The *thought* vowel has several origins, although it was usually Middle English /a v/ and /ɔv/, with spellings <augh, ough, au, aw, al> resulting. These vowels merged before /xt/ as in words like *daughter* and *thought* where the <gh> was traditionally pronounced /x/, the sound spoken in present day Scottish *loch*.

Middle English /av/ has not always developed to /ɔ/. It has also become the vowel in words like *laugh*, or in words like *palm*. Also, some RP speakers will use /ɒ/, not /ɑ/, for words like *halt*, *salt*, *alter*, *fault*.

In order to find a solution to the orthographic problem posed, one might propose that all the vowels in *palm*, *lot*, *cloth*, *thought* be assigned a single grapheme. If General American can do without the distinction which RP speakers make between *palm* and *lot* words, it probably means that the number of minimal pairs is within the practical range for allowing a merger between the two. (I have not been able to check the minimal pairs involved as I do not possess an American pronouncing dictionary.) However, I suspect that there are many minimal pairs between *palm* and *cloth or thought* vowels, leaving this difference between RP and General American seemingly irreconcilable in a revised orthography.

There are only a few minimal pairs illustrating the difference between the *cloth:thought* vowels, *god:gaud*, *cot: caught*, *tot:taut/taught* being all I could find, this indicating that these vowels could combine easily under the one grapheme. This phonic simplification would solve part of the problem while leaving most American and some other dialects requiring to memorize the spellings of the *lot* type words, without alphabetic help from their own pronunciations.

7. THE HAPPY VOWEL.

Usually, weak unstressed vowels occur within words but the vowels at the end of *letter*, *comma* and *happy* are weak. The first two of these will be discussed in a future article, but the *happy* vowel is worth looking at on its own. The approximate pronunciations in common use can be tabulated as follows:

/ʊ/ most RP, conservative varieties of Gen Am, centre of the north of England (Manchester, Le@e&), Jamaica and the American south.

/ɛ/ Nottingham and certain varieties of RP (particularly associated with army officers).

/i,/ some Americans (/i/ before a vowel, // elsewhere).

/i/ much of the south of England, the peripheral north of England (Liverpool, Newcastle, Hull, Birmingham), Gen Am and Canada.
 /e/ some Scottish.

The *happy* vowel retains its identity despite various possible pronunciations, not only among different dialects but in literature and song, where different poets at different times will rhyme *happy* with *tree* or *troy*. Perhaps, as it is the only non-stressed vowel found at the end of words, apart from schwa, it has no phonetic opposition. That is, there are no minimal pairs illustrating its opposition to another vowel, and this allows it more leeway.

It is identified not only by its lack of stress in a final position, but by the usual <y> spelling, and the meaning of many words in which it is found. In the lexical set of words with the *happy* vowel, there are various subsets which seem to belong together — pet words, nicknames, familiar or informal terms, and words expressing common human emotions and states. For example: *baby, lassie, dolly, budgie, piggy, doggy, pussy; Tommy, Johnny, Willie, Maggie, Sally; darky, Paki, lefty, commie, goody, baddy; happy, lucky, angry, silly, funny, fussy, bossy, edgy, tetchy, sexy, dopey.*

At any rate, the *happy* vowel seems to be identifiable despite varying pronunciations, and it would seem unnecessary and complicating to impose one of these pronunciations on everyone in a revised orthography. It would surely be better for the *happy* vowel to be assigned the presently predominating <y> and for other spellings to be altered to this. This would not preclude the letter <y> being used for other phonemes where its environment will indicate its pronunciation, for example, *yellow* (<y> is a consonant before a vowel) and *sty* (the <y> is a stressed vowel).

8 CONCLUSION

J C Wells addressed the Society in January 1986 on the problems of accommodating different accents in spelling reform proposals. This article was in draft form at the time and, perhaps not surprisingly given the heavy reliance on his book for my material, my analysis and conclusions were very similar to his. In the summary list below, only my analysis of the yod vowel and the *happy* vowel are additional to the content of his address. The rest of the recommendations for the combination of pairs of phonemes being represented by a single grapheme are his as well as mine.

To most spelling reformers, the content of this and my previous article will be somewhat radical. However, most of it is in agreement with the analysis of one of the world's foremost authorities on English accents, and reformers would be wise not to reject my conclusions without a great deal of thought.

My next article continues the same theme, looking at a great divide between different accents of English, namely rhotic versus non-rhotic accents, that is, those which pronounce /r/ before consonants and those which do not, and the effect on vowels in the /r/ or /r/-less environment.

TABLE OF CONCLUSIONS

Phonemes	Examples	Suggested graphemes
/hw, w/	whaling, wailing	<w>
/æ, a: /	ant,aunt	<a>
/ʌ/	cut	<u>
/ʊ, u: ju: /	full, fool, feud	<uCe, uCV, uV> or <oo>
/ɒ, ɔ, ɔ: /	cloth, thought, lot (RP)	<o>

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J5, 1987/2 p29 in the printed version*]

12. Postscript to *The Chaos* Chris Upward

In the [Summer 1986](#) SSS *Newsletter* (Item 5) we published a 246-line rhymed compilation of eccentricities of English spelling, received indirectly from Germany with no indication of the author. Tom McArthur has now sent us a 156-line version published in Barcelona (*Perfect your English*, No.16), which is generally more polished in composition and consists largely of quatrains. The following further information is given as to its origin: *The Chaos* is "a poem which has been making its appearance — usually without its author's identity — in many parts of the world during the past fifty years or so. Copies were sent ... by readers in Denmark, Sweden, Portugal, and Turkey. You may find this hard to believe, but this little masterpiece was produced by a Dutchman, Dr Gerard Nolst Trenité, a linguist author, and world traveller."

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society 5 1987/2 p27*]

13. Conferences, Meetings, Dates to note

Simplified Spelling Society Fifth International Conference: theme — *Spelling for Efficiency*, Aston University Conference Centre, Birmingham England, 24–26 July 1987, full cost £60. Further details and application form from Chris Upward, [Full programme](#) available shortly.

Simplified Spelling Society forthcoming meetings: 10.45 on Saturdays 1987–6 June, 10 Oct, 1988–13 Feb, AGM 23 April. All meetings are open, and normally take place at the YWCA Central Club, London. All interested are welcome, and should ask the Secretary (see p.1) for confirmation of details shortly beforehand.

i.t.a. Federation National Course Conference 1987 — theme *The Right to Literacy*, Savoy Hotel, Cheltenham Spa, 23–25 October. Contact Martin Sirot-Smith.

United Kingdom Reading Association 24th Annual Course and Conference: theme — *READING: the abc and beyond*, Dunfermline College Cramond, Edinburgh, 27–31 July 1987, full fee £135. Applications to George A S Wilson, Conference Treasurer, For membership contact The UKRA Administrative Secretary,