

Spelling Reform Spoofs & Jumbled letters.

Also see below: [October 1997](#) and [October 2003](#) versions. [Cmabrigde rscheearch](#).

Meihem in ce Klasrum.

From SSS newsletter [N6 September 1993](#).

An extract (with some adaptation due to lack of space) from an article of this title in *Astounding Science Fiction*, Anthology 1946, by Dolton Edwards, courtesy of Nicholas Vince.

English spelling is much in need of a general overhauling and streamlining, but this plan can achieve it in a less shocking manner than Mr Shaw's proposals.

As a catalytic agent, we suggest a National Easy Language Week. Some spelling change would be announced, to be adopted in the coming year. All schoolchildren would be given a holiday, the lost time being the equivalent of that gained by the spelling short cut.

In 1946 we could eliminate the soft c, substituting s. This would be celebrated in all civic-minded circles. In 1947, we could substitute k for the hard c, as both letters would be pronounced identically. So two years of this process would clarify confusion for students, and already we would have eliminated one letter from the alphabet.

By 1948 all school children would be looking forward to the annual holiday, and, in a blaze of publicity, ph would be banned, henceforth to be written f.

By 1949, public interest in the phonetic alphabet would allow a more radical step forward – eliminating all unnecessary double letters, whitch, although harmless have always been a nuisance.

The advance in 1950 would be to spell all diphthongs phonetically. Though perhaps not immediately apparent, the saving in time and effort will be tremendous when we later eliminate the silent e, making possible the change.

In 1959 we would urge a great step forward. As it would have been for years since anyone had used the letter c, we could substitute it for th. It would be some time before people would become accustomed to reading books with such sentences in common as "Ceodor thought he had cre cousand cistles crust crough ce cik of his cumb!"

So these processes would go on, getting rid of y in 1952, allowing it to be reused for sh from 1953. Continuing these processes, we would eventually have a really sensible written language.

In fact, by 1975, we venture to say, there would be no more of these terrible troubles and difficulties, with no more letters used to indicate the same noise, and likewise no more noises written with the same letter. Even Mr Yaw, we believe, would be happy in the new category his dreams finally keep true.

Linguistic Congruence within the European Union

This spoof was circulated on e-mail forums in October 1997.

1. Due to its widespread use on the so-called 'Information Superhighway', and so that growing anti-European sentiments in Britain may be reassured about the importance of Britain's role in the European Union, the European Parliament has taken the unprecedented step of selecting one language – English – to become the preferred common language of the European Union.
2. In order to expedite this process and to speed congruence, the European Parliament has commissioned a feasibility study of ways in which communications between departments of member governments can be made more effective. Its main recommendations are summarised below.
3. European officials have often pointed out that English spelling is unnecessarily complicated and illogical – for example, the different sounds of cough, plough and rough, or heard and beard. There is a clear need for a phased programme of changes to eliminate these anomalies. The programme would, of course, require administration by a committee whose members would be supplied by participating nations.
4. During the first year of implementation, it is envisaged that the soft "c" will be replaced by the more phonetically correct letter "s". This will certainly be resieved favourably by sivil servants in many European sities, and will insidentally render the "i" before "e" exsept after "c" rule unnesessary. The logical replasement of the hard "c" by the letter "k" will follow, due to the similarity in pronunsiation. This konkomitant step will, insidentally, not only klear up konfuzion in the minds of klerikal workers, but also klarify word prosessing sinse it kompletely removes the need for one of the letters on the keyboard.
5. The sekond stage will see the digraph "ph" written as "f". In addition to the fonetik logik of this move, words such as "fotograf" will be twenty per sent shorter.
6. The third fase will involve the removal of double letters in words. In many instanses, double leters do not afekt the aktual pronunsiation of a word. They are, however, a comon deterrent to akurate speling.
7. The fourth element will be the elimination of silent "e"s from the languag. Thes ar often stal reliks of past spelings. They do litl to enhans writen English and it is antisipated that they kould be droped with eas.
8. By this point, the Komision antisipats that publik akseptans of the changes will be at a high level. It wil thus be posibl to promot som other, smaler, but stil posibly kontentious, changes. For exampl, the unesesary "o" kan be droped from words kontaining the "ou" digraf. A similar proses kuld then be aplid to other vowel and konsonant kombinashuns.
9. However, no konseshun wuld yet hav ben mad to Uropean sensibilitis. To tak kar of som of the komon difikultis enkountered by non-nativ spekers, it wuld be sensibl for the "th" digraf to be replased by "z". Ze funkshun of ze "w" kan zen be taken by ze letter "v", vich is, of kors, half a "w" in any kas.

10. Zis proses vil kontinuu, in a kumulativ fashun. Eventuli English vil be ze komon languag ov ze Komuniti, vich vil no longer be merly an ekonomik sifer, but a kominashun ov fre pepls. Ve shal kontinuu to red and rit as zo nuzing has hapend. Evrivun vil no vot ze uzer sitizens ar saying and komunkashun vil be mutch ezier. Ze Komuniti vil hav achevd its objektivs ov kongrewents and ze drem of ze pepls of Urop vil finali hav kum tru. It is hopd zat zes signifikan konseshuns vil finaly reashor ze "Uroskeptiks"!

The New Governor's Plan

In October 2003, this version circulated on e-mail forums.

The New California Governor has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the state, rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations, The Terminator's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5-year phase-in plan that would become known as "Austro-English" (or, perhaps even better, "Austrionics").

In the first year, "s" will replace the soft "c". Certainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard "c" will be dropped in favour of the "k". This should klear up konfuzion, and keyboards kan have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome "ph" will be replaced with the "f". This will make words like fotograf 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkourage the removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate speling. Also, al wil agre that the horibl mes of the silent "e" in the languag is disgrasful and it should go away.

By the 4th yer peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing "th" with "z" and "w" with "v".

During ze fifz yer, ze unesesary "o" kan be dropd from vords kontaining "ou" and after ziz fifz yer, ve vil hav a reil sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubl or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech oza. Ze drem of a united urop vil finali kum tru.

Writer's toolkit: Jumbled letters

TES TEACHER – November 14 2003 p5. (Times Educational Supplement.)

This one is partly for the email junkies, and partly for people who wonder about spelling. In September, the chatterers on email started to send each other this passage (or something like it – it mutated):

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

Fascinating, eh? Maybe all this stuff about spelling being important is nonsense – it may be important to examiners and school-teachers, but ordinary readers just don't care. Maybe.

The first thing to know is that nobody seems to have been able to pin down this particular piece of Cmabrigde research. Where did it come from? But forgetting about the credentials, is it true?

To find out, we read a commentary on it by Matt Davis, a genuine researcher who specialises in the psychology of language (including reading). If you're interested you'll love it:

<http://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/personal/matt.davis/Cmabrigde/> (that's right – /Cmabrigde.)

The verdict is that the passage is a cheat, but contains a grain of truth.

It's a cheat because the letters aren't in fact as chaotic as they could be. For one thing, most of the short words remain unchanged simply because you need at least four letters before the order of the middle ones makes any difference. The happy consequence is that the grammar-bearing words like "to", "a" and "are" survive to guide us through the grammatical structure. That's really important for guessing the other words.

Second, none of the jumbled words have turned into a different word – there isn't a word "aoccdrnig", so the reordering doesn't mislead us as it would if we changed, say, "salt" into "slat".

And third, letters aren't very far from where they should be. Take "aoccdrnig" again. The only changes are simple reversals of pairs: cco >cc, rd >dr and in >ni. That's not much change. Here's how it might look if we really scrambled the letters in the middle: "arocnicdg". That's much harder to recognise. Why are anagrams so hard to solve if letter order doesn't matter?

The germ of truth is that a reader's mind is flexible enough to separate the identity of letters from their position, so we can cope with a lot of disruption. But there's a price – chiefly, speed and good will.

This spoof text really doesn't justify bad spelling. It does, however, conveniently remind us of the inherent fascination language has – even for thoes who mitgh not haev thoghut so.

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