

The

# ***LOJIKON***

System of simplified English spelling

by the LOJIKal use of KONsonants

simplifying the learning of English  
for the non-English-speaking world

Govind N Deodhekar

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## PREFACE

Govind N Deodhekar was born in March 1919 in Western India and educated in Bombay, where he took a degree in Science and in Law. A resident of London from June 1951, he taught science in London schools for over 20 years. Aware of the difficulties of Indian students in mastering English spelling, he was struck by the fact that much of the difficulty 'remedial' English children experienced in learning to read and write stemmed from the unpredictability and inconsistencies of English spelling. This led him to join the Simplified Spelling Society, of which he has been a member since the early 1980s, a committee member since 1985, serving as Vice-Chairman for 5 years.

His spirited call to non-English users of the English language to rebel against the illogical spelling system, supported, he hopes, by at least a few Anglo-Americans, may yet lead to a break in the log-jam of spelling reform, and eventually facilitate a rapid further spread of the English language.

The Society supports the dissemination of *LOJIKON* as a useful contribution to spelling reform.

Bob Brown,

Secretary, Simplified Spelling Society,

21 October 1995.

## INTRODUCTION

### **English, the world language**

The fact that English has emerged as the most popular international language will be accepted, I believe, by everyone, including the champions of French, Spanish or Arabic. The dominance of America in world affairs, the comparative simplicity of the structures of English, the legacy of the British Empire and above all the vast store of scientific and technical knowledge in English, have led to this wide influence of the language. Safety at airports depends on knowledge of one language — English, by common consent. The Cambodian students, who rioted in Phnom Penh in September 1995 to demand that that they be allowed to study English rather than French, highlight the need of developing countries for English.

### **English spelling, an obstacle**

The greatest obstacle to the learning of English is its illogical or semi-logical spelling. It is not the purpose of this short pamphlet to examine the pros and cons of spelling reform in detail. A few examples of the inconsistency of English spelling will suffice.

The long EE sound is written in several ways in *sea, see, she, seize, shield, Caesar*. So is the long O sound in *so, soul, soap, sloe, slow*. The letter U has many sounds in *but, put, mute, flute, busy, bury*, etc, and similarly the A in *fat, father, fate, fall*, etc.

As for consonants, the prevailing confusion will be obvious from the remedy suggested in *LOJIKON*.

## Will the English themselves reform English spelling?

Spelling reform is normal, and happens in other languages. In fact, the Simplified Spelling Society was established as early as 1908 and proposed a complete scheme of reform in 1910, but the response of the public has been disappointing. The conservatism of the English people has imbued them with a strong emotional resistance to any change in their spelling (compare their reluctance to accept decimal coinage and the metric system).

Perhaps they even see an advantage in the illogicality of their spelling. Lacking precision, it provides flexibility. For instance, it is fashionable nowadays to give boys' names to girls with a slight change in spelling, as when *Tony* the boy becomes *Toni* the girl, and *Robin* the boy becomes *Robyn* the girl. The fact that *y* confers masculinity on Tony and femininity on Robyn, while *i* does the reverse, does not worry the English. Eccentricity in a family name even confers social distinction: the *Chumleys* declare their ancient lineage by retaining the spelling *Cholmondeley*, and similarly with *Marjoriebanks* pronounced *Marshbanks*, and *Mainwaring* pronounced *Mannering*.

English often insists on variable spellings for homophones, as with *meat: meet, there: their, pair: pare: pear*. Yet one spelling and one sound can also stand for different meanings depending on the context, as when *right* contrasts with *wrong*, or with *left*, or with *duty* (though the same sound can also be spelt *rite, write, wright*). Thus in one case variability rules, while in another case it does not! Logic is not the strong point of the English — logic is for the unfortunates beyond the English channel, a body of water known to be susceptible to fogs which “isolate the continent”.

## The needs of non-native speakers

Assuming everyone needs English, clearly English speakers need learn only one language. Others such as the French or the Hindus have to learn two languages (English and their own), while non-Hindi speakers in India, about 60% of the population, have to learn three. In Pakistan no amount of prominence given to Urdu can suppress the regional languages spoken by about 80% of the people, who therefore need to learn three languages.

## The call for reform

It appears unlikely that the English will reform their spelling in the near future. But the rest of the world cannot wait, and it is time to rebel. Not riot, but rebel! I say, therefore, to all users of English whose mother tongue it is not, “Let us leave the English-speaking world to enjoy the illogicality, imprecision and flexibility of English spelling. Let us use a logical and reasonably precise system at least for the consonants, in such a way that no English speaker will have any difficulty in reading and understanding what we mean.” Adventurous Anglo-Americans are welcome to join the rebellion.

Vowel sounds are imprecise by their very nature, probably more so in English than in other languages. Though I have lived in England for over 40 years, I would not

dare to try to pin down the English vowel sounds. The task of introducing logic to the spelling of vowels may have to be left to a high-powered commission which would include American and Australasian experts. In the meanwhile, the use of the proposed *LOJIKON* system would act as a spur to the English language establishment, which accepts alternative spellings for a few words such as *gaol/jail*, *gray/grey*, *phantasy/fantasy*. The use of *LOJIKON* implies a vastly increased number of such alternative spellings, but they would cause no problem in reading or comprehension.

## THE *LOJIKON* SYSTEM OF ENGLISH SPELLING

*LOJIKON* is an alternative, optional writing system for international use, employing logical and reasonably consistent symbols for consonant sounds. *LOJIKON* spellings are given in brackets below. Vowels are adjusted occasionally where necessary.

### Standard sound-symbol correspondences for consonants

**CH** will stand for the one sound as in *church*, and will not be used for the sounds in *chemist*, *machine*.

**F** will replace **PH**, which usually denotes Greek origin, knowledge of which fact may be interesting but is not essential. Hence *telephone* (*telefone*), *philosophy* (*filosofy*).

**G** will stand for the initial sound in *get*, but not as in *gem*, for which **J** will be used; hence *gem* (*jem*).

**J** will stand for its normal English sound, replacing **G**, **DG**; hence *gem* (*jem*), *judge* (*juh*).

**K** will replace **C**, **CK**, **CH** where these have the sound of **K**; hence *car* (*kar*), *rock* (*rok*), *chemist* (*kemist*); also *loch* (*lokh*).

**QU** will be replaced by **KW** where so pronounced, hence *acquit* (*akwit*), *quarter* (*kwarter*), *queen* (*kween*), *quick* (*kwik*), but by just **K** elsewhere, hence *queue* (*kue*), *mosquito* (*moskito*).

**SH** replaces many confusingly different spellings for the initial sound in *ship*, hence *machine* (*mashine*), *sugar* (*shugar*), *nation* (*nashon*), *special* (*speshal*), *ocean* (*oshan*), *schedule* (*shedule*, or *skedule* for Americans), *conscious* (*konshous*), *pension* (*penshon*), *passion* (*pashon*), *negotiate* (*negoshiate*), *Russia* (*Rushia*), *Asia* (*Ashia*), *luxury* (*lukshury*).

**S** will supersede **C** when that has the sound of **S**; hence *ceiling* (*seiling*).

**s or z?** The frequent use of **s** for the sound of **z** can cause confusion. The use of **z** where so pronounced is suggested, even though it may produce some unexpected results, such as *result* (*rezult*), *raise* (*raize*), *advice* (*advise*), *advise* (*advize*), *his* (*hiz*). Plurals and possessive forms of nouns, and present tense third person singulars of verbs mostly have a **z** sound, as in *dogs*, *says*, but sometimes they have an **s** sound, as in *cats*, *talks*. In these cases *LOJIKON* gives simplicity and

consistency priority over phonetic spelling, and recommends that all such derived words, including possessives, keep s, rather than changing to z.

**TH & DH** The digraph TH will be kept for the sound in *thick* or *thin*, but DH will be used for the sound in *this* or *then*; hence *the* (*dhe*), *this* (*dhis*), *that* (*dhat*). This change will affect many frequently used words. If used, it should be used consistently.

**TU** can be replaced by CH where clearly so pronounced. Hence: *feature* (*feachure*), *picture* (*pikchure*), but *tune* (*tune*).

**X** can be replaced usually by KS, but sometimes by GZ where so pronounced; hence *box* (*boks*), *excess* (*eksess*), *exist* (*egzist*), *examine* (*egzamine*).

**ZH** will be used for the middle sound in *pleasure* (*pleazhure*).

**The GH problem** This digraph at present occurs intrusively and illogically, and is usually silent. It can be dropped, sometimes along with a vowel in the cluster. Sometimes, however, it will be necessary to substitute a vowel or the consonant F. The following examples illustrate the patterns: *sight* (*siet*), *night* (*niet*), *plough* (*plou*), *though* (*dho*), *through* (*thru*), *thorough* (*thoro*), *cough* (*kof*), *rough* (*ruf*).

**Doubled consonants** In the absence of enough vowel signs, consonants are often doubled to show that a preceding vowel is short. Thus we have short and long vowels distinguished in *canning*: *caning*, *tinny*: *tiny*, *comma*: *coma*, *supper*: *super*. The context would normally distinguish the meaning of such pairs, but to prevent any ambiguity it is reluctantly recommended that doubling be retained where it serves this function. Elsewhere doubled consonants are simplified, hence *accommodation* (*akomodashon*).

**Silent consonant letters** Like Victorian children, only to be seen but not heard, silent letters abound in the present spelling of English. They need to be dropped, though this may sometimes entail substituting a vowel or doubling another consonant.

**B** is dropped from *debt* (*det*), *doubt* (*dout*). It is too late to teach millions in South Asia that *plumber* rhymes with *summer* and not with *number* — they will continue to pronounce the B, so it is best to leave such -MB endings intact.

**D** is dropped when DG becomes J, hence *judge* (*juj*), *pledge* (*plej*); also *Wednesday* (*Wenzday*).

**G** is dropped from *sign* (*sien*), but not when sounded, as in *signature*.

**H** is dropped from *honest* (*onest*), *honour* (*onour*); *heir* (*eir*), *ghost* (*gost*), *ghastly* (*gastly*).

**RH** has silent H in English speech, but it can be kept by speakers in South Asia who pronounce it in *rhyme*, *rhythm* (*rhydhm*).

**WH** has silent H in most English speech, but not in South Asia, and it is therefore kept in *when*, *where*, *why*.

**K** can be dropped from *knave*, *knee*, *knife*. The word *know* is used very frequently and would be ambiguous if spelt *now* or *no*; the spelling is therefore

adjusted to *noe*; hence also *known* (*noen*), *knew* (*nue*). The ambiguity of *knot* (*not*) is thought to be acceptable, as it is a rarer word.

**L** is dropped from *calm*, *palm*, *talk*, *walk* and the vowel adjusted (*caam*, *paam*, *tauk*, *wauk*).

**N** is dropped from words like *solemn* (*solem*), but kept in *solemnity*.

**P** is dropped from words like *psalm* (*saam*), *psychology* (*sykolojy*).

**R** is kept, even when it is not pronounced (as frequently in southern English speech). Speakers whose mother tongue is not English are firmly advised to follow those accents such as Scots in both pronouncing and writing the R in words such as *far*, *farm*, *more*, *cork*.(*kork*), etc.

**S** is dropped from *isle* (*ile*), *island* (*iland*).

**T** is dropped from *often* (*ofen*) and from TCH, hence *catch* (*kach*).

**W** is dropped from initial WR, hence *write* (*rite*), *wrong* (*rong*), and when silent in initial WH, hence *who* (*hoo*).

*Note* The word *rite* meaning 'ritual' is unchanged in *LOJIKON*, but it also has the meaning of present *write*, whose silent w is dropped. Since *right* appears as *riet* in *LOJIKON*, we find the same vowel written in two ways. This is unavoidable, as *LOJIKON* does not tackle the vowel system except for minimum adjustments.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE *LOJIKON* SYSTEM

Clearly, the system will not be acceptable immediately to education authorities and governments in non-English-speaking countries. It therefore needs to be used and popularized, partially or fully, step by step, in personal letters, then in commercial letters, then by journalists and writers of ephemera. Perhaps a legend should appear above texts using *LOJIKON*, saying *Dhis komunikashon uzes dhe LOJIKON system of English spelling*. Pressure will build up on education authorities and governments in non-English-speaking countries to take a serious interest in the reform of English spelling as an aid to learning the language. If this happens, the Anglo-American establishment will have to bestir itself — it would not be able to sit tight for another century. Since change and reform are inevitable, the time to start acting is *now*. The logic of *LOJIKON* is simple enough for anyone to follow.

Is *LOJIKON* compatible with present spellings?

*LOJIKON* and the present spelling of English are mutually comprehensible. Readers used to the present spelling will have no difficulty in reading *LOJIKON* forms, because the letters have their familiar values; thus *kash mashine* is obviously *cash machine*. Readers familiar only with *LOJIKON* will require a little more effort, since the sounds of k and sh have a variety of spellings in the present spelling system. Nevertheless, the difference in appearance between *kash mashine/cash machine* and *telephone/telefone* is slight. The great gain for the *LOJIKON* user will be liberation from the tyranny of having to learn several illogical ways of spelling the same consonant sound in hundreds of different words.