

# English • Spelling • Society

## Personal View 10

The self-expression medium  
for Society members

The views expressed here are the  
author's and are not necessarily shared by  
the Society, or a majority of its members.

### The Author

Valerie Yule thinks that English spelling reform is essential for international literacy. This is essential for knowledge and inspiration, bases for imagination and essential for survival of the living planet and quality of life. She has worked on all these fronts as a clinical child psychologist teacher, academic, researcher and writer. Publications include contributions to professional books and journals, literacy videos and collected stories by disadvantaged children.

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### The Simplified Spelling Society

The aim of the Simplified Spelling Society is to bring about a reform of the spelling of English in the interests of ease of learning and economy in writing.

## Spelling for beyond 2000 (1999) Human engineering and spelling reform

*by Valerie Yule*

Spelling is as basic as air and water to our society. All have been taken so much for granted that we are shocked to discover that we may not still be able to breathe fresh air and drink pure water. Even science fiction usually assumes that English spelling stays the same although worlds and universes change.

Yet few of us can read well and most of us cannot spell well, and all are directly or indirectly disadvantaged by traditional English spelling 90). Methods of teaching literacy are seriously handicapped. Other countries successfully improve their writing systems, and English spelling is not a sacred totem. Human engineering applied to all other communications technology fits tasks to their users. It can be applied to English spelling.

The criteria for improving English spelling must go beyond the aims of the Simplified Spelling Society to promote easier learning and more economical spelling. Our spelling system should be a best fit to match the needs and abilities of the wide variety of users and learners, native speakers and English learners, the bright, the dull, the present literates, Web-users and computers, and fit the nature of the English language. It must be an International English Spelling, since most users of English print today are not native speakers. A neat system of one-sound/one-symbol will not 'fit all'. All spelling assumptions must be tested and choices designed and tested by research, not just by logical arguments.

This Personal View seeks to set out what, on present evidence, some of these choices might be.

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## Five major features for International English Spelling

- Omit superfluous letters in words -
- Use consistent spellings for consonants
- Reduce the 240+ spellings for English vowel sounds to 48, with flexible operation according to reason, not obsolete custom
- Facilitate faster reading for meaning with sound-symbol relationships modified by grammatical, morphemic and problem-solving principles that children can understand
- Open the way to future fuller reforms

## 1 Rationale

### All the usual objections to spelling improvement are answered by Interspel

- **Access to our present heritage of print** is not lost. Close visual resemblance is maintained, with up to 95% of letters in text unchanged. Interspel is backward compatible with TO.
- **Retraining for present readers** is not needed. Interspel can be read on first sight. Like Italian or German spelling, its consistent principles are quickly understood. Familiarity with print then builds up facility.
- **Interspel is not ‘Spelling as you speak’ that would lead to confusion through idiosyncratic spellings and dialects.** Interspel transcends this threat through standardised broad-band ‘diaphonic’ representation of speech. This is because spelling conventions are like conventionalised drawings which are universally recognised, such as the drawn sign for a man which is unlike a photograph of a specific man. One broad sound category can *‘embrace all those different phonemes (speech sounds) from which a listener is able to identify and comprehend a word, in however many regional and individual pronunciations it may be spoken.’* (Pitman & St. John 1969.) For example, anyone, regardless of dialect, can read or spell **BANANA**, although one spelling is used for three speech sounds. Respellings of English words in pidgin languages illustrate how uncluttered, broad-band spelling can facilitate fast learning and easy communication.
- **‘Chomsky principles’** are extended, not disregarded. Interspel facilitates fast reading for meaning and clues to understanding unfamiliar vocabulary because visual relationships of word families (morphemes) and grammatical markers are retained.
- **The nature of the English language.** Interspel is designed to suit the English language with its variety of linguistic origins, standard inflections, only 26 roman letters to spell 40+ fonemes, compound word-structure, and many homophones. Etymology that gives clues to meaning is retained; dictionaries cater for linguistic interest in word-origins as in other languages.
- **‘Isn’t our antiquated spelling lovely!’** The urgent need for mass literacy is more important than the private delights of mulling over ‘quaint’ spellings like COUGH/ DOUGH/ HOUGH/ LOUGH/ ROUGH/ SLOUGH/ THROUGH/ THOUGHT/ THOROUGH. What becomes familiar is more loved than what is obsolete and unused. We no longer want our cars to look like horseless carriages, or our stereos to look like old phonograms, or to read the history of computers every time we turn one on.
- **‘I worked hard to spell so everyone else should.’** Difficult English spelling was once valued as a social screening test, but today the greater needs are for efficiency, mass literacy and cutting waste. English spelling snobbery was rightly taken to exemplify ‘Conspicuous Consumption’ by the Swedish sociologist Veblen.
- **‘Not in my time, O Lord’.** Surplus-Cut and Interspel can co-exist and interlace with TO. TO-lovers can continue to read and write TO. They can read Interspel, but need never write it.

- **Trivial teasers** of how to re-spell words with strange TO spellings like WHAT or LAUGH. These do not justify mothballing reform. Some posers can be solved by Spelling Pronunciation (qv) and a few minor 'exception' spellings can remain temporarily in TO as concessions for current TO readers until reform is finalised.
- **The interests of readers, writers and learners are so conflicting, that any reforms that help one group must hurt another.** These arguments are based on challengeable assumptions and evidence. Interspel can serve the interests of all groups as a 'best fit' to these various needs and abilities.
- **Costs of change.**
  - a) Cost-benefits include shorter learning time for beginners, reduced failure rates, skill-improvement for the already literate, and the advantages of a literate people.
  - b) Interspel's economy saves materials, effort and time. Text is 10-15% shorter than TO. Even the first step, omitting surplus letters, saves 3-10% of text.
  - c) Printing costs. Print is now electronically updated at the touch of a button. Almost all that is read today was printed or reprinted within in the past ten years, and so introduction of improved spelling does not require re-publishing except for dictionaries and school materials. TO print would remain easily accessible for many years even after the final steps.

## 2. A user-friendly spelling to match needs and abilities of readers, writers and learners

**1. Readers.** Most readers of TO English today read poorly, read little and do not enjoy it. This dislike is acquired through the troublesome business of learning TO. They guess and misread - hence the popular literacy theory that all readers reconstruct what they read, rather than try to understand the writer. New vocabulary learnt from reading TO often cannot be used in speaking because pronunciation is uncertain. Interspel promotes better reading strategies and more enjoyment.

- **Visual distinctiveness of words** in text facilitates fast recognition. Streamlining spelling makes text more compact, easier to skim accurately and to recollect visually. Interspel's Consonant-Vowel-Consonant sequences are more visually distinctive than strings of vowels or consonants, particularly as morphemes are clarified by positional vowel spelling. Shorter syllables are easier to decode/encode than long ones, especially with Interspel's positional spelling. and simplified spelling of vowel sequences, eg. HIWAY is easier than HEIOUAE and PÔET than POEET. Uniformly short words are not necessarily read faster, because variety in the length of words increases visual distinctiveness. and promotes immediate automatic visual recognition of words and the structure of sentences.
- **Unobtrusive diacritics.** Frequent interruptions of print by apostrophes and similar diacritics disrupt reading. The least intrusive are grave accents and cedillas. Readers can use them or ignore them according to need for aid in pronunciation or word recognition.
- **Readers of TO benefit.** SurplusCut and Interspel are 'TO cleaned up', and require no special learning or retraining. Anyone already literate can read Interspel texts with little difficulty, and with growing familiarity, speed and efficiency are likely to improve, particularly for poor readers, as indicated by Yule & MacKay's pilot experiment with 20 hours' reading practice.

**2. Writers.** Notoriously writers have problems trying to spell correctly in TO, in trying to remember the unpredictable spelling patterns, what the surplus letters are and where they go, and how to spell unclear vowels. The great number of 'bad spellings' really show that TO is 'bad', and the task needs changing. The common trends of their mistakes show how people would prefer to spell. 'Bad spellings' tend to spell phonetically, and to shorten rather than lengthen spellings, although one cause of poor spelling is trying to imitate the fcklessness of TO, in a vain hope of hitting the mark.

i. 'Bad spellers' would benefit by easier spelling, so that they could spell by rational rules rather than ransack their desperate memories or time-consuming dictionaries. 'When in doubt leave it out' is a principle to prevent them throwing in extra letters 'just in case'.

ii. 'Good spellers' in TO who have taken great trouble to become so, can continue to use TO. As they acclimatise to more consistent spellings they can switch over gradually.

iii. A 5-15% reduction of letters in words is a significant saving in effort and time, as well as in costs and trees. It is an efficient streamlining for writers.

**3. Users of International English** as a second language now outnumber native speakers and this majority is increasing. Interspel would benefit them in many ways:

- The spoken language can then be learnt from the written language and vice versa, rather than having to learn almost two languages as now. The written language is consistent, predictable, streamlined and its principles require only a double page. Interspel is therefore a practicable medium for communication and education in multilingual areas to make possible mass literacy for participation in the commercial, scientific, technological, communications, cultural and educational world of global English.
- Interspel contains visual links with the international vocabulary that has been spread globally by English and incorporated into every modern language, e.g. TAXI/ TACSI/ TAKSI/ TAKOSHI, TELEFON/ TELEFON/ TELEFON, INTERNATIONAL/ INTERNAZIONALE/ INTERNACIONAL/ INTERNACIONAL. Many proposed reforms of English spelling would obscure those links.
- A standardised set of spelling conventions is essential to avoid the 'many Englishes' that are now developing, which are encouraged because written TO is inadequate to hold the spoken language to a broad global standard.
- TO remains accessible world-wide for those who still need it.

A global standard in English spelling such as Interspel, with its broadband pronunciation, will promote international communication in English. People can continue to celebrate their local linguistic differences through their written style, specific vocabulary, spoken accents and intonation, while able to reach an international readership - c/f Lewis Grassie Gibbon, a writer in Scots dialect who is widely read beyond Scotland, because he did not spell in 'braided-Scots' spelling.

**English-speakers learning a second language** transfer easily to consistent differences in spelling systems in learning languages with regular spelling like German and Italian, because it is consistency that counts. A consistent English spelling therefore need not change to the Continental vowel system to be internationally readable and pronounceable.

**4. Needs and abilities of learners.** The '20,000 contradictory facts of English spellings', so labelled by Sir James Murray, the great compiler of the Oxford English Dictionary, have always been difficult for learners. One sound/one symbol is still an impracticable ideal but learners' literacy problems can be significantly cut without it. A consistent spelling system that introduces consistent rules and has a few sight words is not beyond beginners' capacity. They can start with the basic sound/spelling correspondences, then progress to full Interspel, which retains access to TO in the world around them. The consistency of Interspel makes it possible for all learners to use the phonetic and visual strategies for future good reading at present open only to the verbally gifted, and to be assisted but not directed by guessing from context. Novel printed words are at first decoded, then, as they become familiar, they are read by fast and automatic visual recognition processes, while phonetic decoding strategies remain available for further new words. The early use of phonetic decoding also sets in place auditory processes in short-term memory which assist in reading long sentences and passages, by helping to prevent forgetting their beginnings by the time the end is reached. The spelling exceptions of Interspel are few enough to remember, including foreign words which are mostly encountered at a more advanced level.

Lerning to read can nevr be effortless except for the giftd few. Writing is a cultural lerning, not instinctivly drivn like speech. Most societies never had writing systems. Interspel reduces th effort required. Lernrs apply their minds and reason for a short time to understand the simpl principls of the writing system and its sound-symbol relationships, and then practice to peak efficiency by 'real reading', rathr than first rote-memorising words or spelling drill for three years. Beginrs can work out the spoken version of almost every word in Interspel; morfemic and gramaticl indicators help to work out the meanings of new vocabulary met in context. Fast lerning makes reading enjoyabl.

**Interspel used as an initial lerning spelling** includes gides to pronunciation and irregular stress that need not be always represented in adult text, since 'one-trial lerning' or lttl mor is sufficient, eg, the initial spellings LONGGR FINGGR can therafrtr be representd as LONGR FINGR. In contrast to the Initial Teaching Alphabet, ita, beginrs start to move directly into reading mor stream-lined 'adult' text while stil lerning with the initial aids, and are also facilitated in entry to TO.

### **Fonic representation for lerners.**

a) Consistent sound-spelling relationships make fonic decoding reliable not booby-trapd as with TO. Howevr, unlike most spelling reform proposals, Interspel is not lockd into a rigid aplication of the alfabetic principl alone, but integrates visual, fonemic and cognitiv strategies for word and text reading. Regular spelling does not solv all lerning problems - they stil ocur for social reasons as in Germany, socio-educationl reasons as in Indonesia, and in Finland due to features of the language.

Spelling reformrs often assume that perfect sound/symbol correspondence would make reading and writing very easy, thinking that hearing sounds in words and blending them into words in print would come naturally, since children must automaticly analyse and synthesise speech when they listn and talk. Howevr, for litracy, this automatic analysis of speech must be made conscius and abstract. The speech sounds identified in a writn languaj are a cultural abstraction, only aproximating the speech sounds that foneticians find we realy make. Failure to be taught or to discovr how to hear fonemes in words and how to relate them to letrs is a major reason for reading failure and 'dyslexia'. 'Phonic awareness' must and can be taught, as it is not now, and a consistent spelling system solves many of the problems, without claims as a panacea.

b) Beginrs oftn aply letr-name pronunciations in writing and reading, so that concise spellings like LITL, APL and ANSR with syllabic consonants are easier for them than, say, LITTLE or LITUL.

c) Long words and strings of consonants or vowels are not easy for lernrs. Interspel assists segmentation into syllabls by retaining patrn of Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) for significant semi-vowels. Accents for long vowels and distinctiv spellings for vowels in final position help to identify morfemes, which facilitate reading for meaning and identifying unfamiliar vocabulary, as in PARLAMENTRI and HIWAYMAN, rathr than PARLMNTRI or PAARLUMENTARIE or HIWAMN or HIEWAEMAN.

**Methods of lerning to read.** Poor fonics teaching methods plus the dificulties of teaching English spelling explain why teachrs welcomd the promises of 'Look and Say' (constant visual repetition) and 'Whole Language', (suposed 'natural' absorption of litracy from the environment without specific teaching). A logicl, consistent spelling system makes posibl vastly improved and innovativ teaching methods. It is then esier to show lernrs how to hear sounds in words, how to encode them from speech, and how to decode words in print to achiev reading for meaning. Hence the promotion of a half-hour cartoon take-home video to set out the writing system and demonstrate how to read and spell. This undrstanding of 'how to' is a crucial key to litracy. Teachrs say 'the penny has dropd' and textbooks say 'the child intuitivly . . .'

Interspel does not require lerning abstract rules. A dubl page chart makes an encourajing and handy summary, showing the limitd size and nature of the task. Each element can be tickd off as it is mastrd thru generalising and undrstanding from exampls - eg. text with contrasting words with stress on the first or second syllabl can generate the rules for pronouncing stress in words.

***Lerning to speak English, reading aloud, and relating speech and print.*** Interspel shows the formal pronunciation of English words, as used in a public speech, as the base for spelling and decoding words. Natural slurring in everyday articulation produces informal speech. Overseas learners of course still require audio learning for intonation patterns and accents.

***Lerning to write.*** Small children's writing shows natural trends in transcribing the spoken language before they are affected by the irregularities of TO. They spell economically, condensing rather than expanding long vowels, eg. "TH PLAN MAD A FOSD LADIG AT TH EPOT". They prefer single vowel letters to digraphs. Children, like adults, have no problems with reading or spelling BANANA, whether they pronounce it as /bannannuh/, /baanaanah/, /bnaner/, or whatever. The simplest spelling is usually the easiest. Interspel is close to children's 'natural spelling' and its consistent rules and alternative acceptable spellings allow some leeway, while setting limits.

### ***Interspel and individual differences in learning***

**1. Bright learners** need not be held back by having to sit through sequential class teaching, and becoming confused, bored or rebellious, as can happen now. They could 'teach themselves to read' as soon as they were ready, with a pre-school video, Interspel's consistent sound-spelling relationships with their few exceptions and rules set out on two pages, and great books to read.

**2. Slow learners** can learn at their own pace in the classroom, without being irretrievably left behind, because as their abilities/motivation developed, the 'instructions how to' and the literacy video would always be available to them. They do not then have to rely entirely on rote memory or on auditory distinctions many find difficult, such as -S or -Z for verb endings or two /th/ sounds. They can use the same wider range of strategies of future good readers, without being booby-trapped.

**3. Dyslexia and specific learning difficulties.** Gaps and confusions in learning TO compound any problems of developmental delay or early deficiencies in verbal or perceptual abilities. These are often resolved too late to prevent the emotional learning blocks that are a major cause for continuing dyslexia. This early demoralisation can be prevented by the clarity of Interspel's spelling system, and the multiple strategies it makes more accessible for learners.

## **3. The first step - 'SurplusCut' spelling**

### ***Drop the surplus letters in words***

The most acceptable introduction to spelling reform, as clearly shown by research, is to clear clutter from TO by omitting useless letters from words (Yule 1991). 'Surplus' letters are defined as serving no purpose in showing pronunciation or meaning of words. They mislead learners and increase spelling mistakes in writing. Modern technological and business trends towards streamlining are already shown in 'advertising spellings' and trends in spelling change such as DEVELOP and PROGRAM replacing DEVELOPE and PROGRAMME.

### ***Surplus letters that can be cut out include:-***

- **Duplicate consonants** that have no useful function in words. For example surveys show that over 56% of writers omit one or both surplus letters in ACCOMMODATE, so that ACOMODATE is what dictionaries should accept as how people spell the word today.
- **Silent letters** can distort pronunciation, as in HEAD, DEBT, VIGOUR, FOREIGN, PEOPLE, GUARD, QUEUE, DISCIPLINE (HED, DET, VIGR, FORIN, PEPE, GARD, Q, DISIPLIN).
- Silent final 'e' is common and confusing in TO. In SurplusCut, MINUT is different from MINUTE, INFINIT is pronounced differently from FINITE, and SIV replaces the spelling demon SIEVE.

## Advantages of cutting surplus letters from words

- Up to 10% of writing in TO wastes time, energy, paper, money and worry.
- Omitting letters barely disrupts the appearance of text unlike changing words by substituting or adding more letters, and so deletion of surplus letters is a sensible place to start reform.
- Letters are not omitted where that is disturbing and may cause new readers to reject the whole idea. Cutting is applied according to what 'the market will bear' in each situation. Absolute logical consistency is not required where it might confuse learners and users who are familiar with TO. Unstressed (schwa) vowels are not omitted where this may confuse readers, and so, ERROR not ERR, NATURALLY not NATRLY, PSALM not SAM, CALF not CAF, WHO not HO, pending the further reforms of Interspel that change the spelling of words to clarify pronunciation and meaning. In this SC differs from the rigorous and logical development of its principles in Christopher Upward's Cut Spelling (1996).
- Empirical research backing. SurplusCut spelling is based on experimental research (1972, 1980, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1991) that shows that changing letters in text can slow down normal reading at first, but omission of surplus letters may be barely noticed or not at all. Surplus letters are least missed when cut from near the end of words and sentences and from less frequent words, so they are the best sites to initiate cuts to introduce readers to spelling reform.
- SurplusCut Spelling takes account of cognitive and educational research into children's 'natural' spelling, how beginners learn to read and write (which is not necessarily how they are taught), adult reading processes and spelling preferences, and popular trends (1986, 1991).
- SC spelling to introduce spelling reform. The first steps in any reform are the most difficult. Public awareness of the benefits of spelling change is an essential step. Once useful changes start rolling, they accelerate and snowball, and conventional members of the public start conforming to the new fashion. The wedge for reform is that once change begins in anything formerly monolithic, and is successful, further changes can be rapid.

Letter-deletions are an easy start that can be followed later by letter-changes. During transition, pragmatism as well as writers' personal imperfections make temporary inconsistencies unavoidable. But once writers discover the benefits of improved spelling, they will want to go further themselves to reduce TO's inconsistencies. SurplusCut users can apply SurplusCut to the degree they wish according to the situation.

Consonant changes that are already becoming popular can be taken up, and brought into mainstream spelling now. F can replace PH to spell /f/ and J replace G and DG to spell /dj/. These changes are also familiar through international as well as alternative spellings, as in TELEPON, JAIL, JELL.

Much of this Personal View has been written in moderate SurplusCut, with moderate dropping of surplus letters and F replacing PH. The author's unintentional inconsistencies frustrate the fact that at first most writers will be inconsistent. Other apparent inconsistencies illustrate the definition of 'surplus' as 'surplus to identification of meaning' by present TO readers as well as surplus to representation of pronunciation.

## Sampl SurplusCut Text to compare with other reform proposals THE STAR

### Examl with moderat cutting of surplus letrs.

Sound /f/ speld F and soft g with J. Text is 3.3% shortr than TO. 94% of words unchanged.

It was on the first day of the new year that the anouncement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatries, that the motion of the planet Neptune, the outrmost of all the planets that wheel about the Sun, had becom very eratic. A retardation in its velocity had been suspectd in Decembr. Then a faint, remote spek of light was discovrd in the rejion of the perturbd planet. At first this did not cause any very great exitement. Sientific peple, howevr, found the intelijence remarkabl enuf, even befor it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larjr and brightr, and that its motion was quite difrent from the ordrlly progress of the planets.

### Text with mor drastic cutng of surplus letrs.

64% of words unchanged. 6.3% shortr. Market reserch shows that the least popular lettr deletion is to cut THE to TH. THE is the most comn word in text, so cutng it by a third makes a visual jolr. TH is therefor one of th later 'mor drastic' cut spelngs to be made.

It ws on th first day of th new year that th anounmment ws made, almost simultaneously from three observatries, that th motion of th planet Neptune. th outrmost of all th planets that wheel about th Sun, had becom very eratic. A retardation in its velocity had been suspectd In Decembr. Then a faint, remote spek of light ws discovrd in th rejion of th perturbd planet. At first this did not cause any very great exitement. Sientific peple, howevr, found th intelijence rernarkabl enuf, even befor it became known that th new body ws rapidly growing larjr and brightr, and that its motion ws quite difrent from th ordrlly progress of th planets.

## 4. Internationl English Spelling - Interspel Gidelines

Fonemes are the sounds that distinguish words in a language. Some are simpl, some are diphthongs - combinations of two fonetic sounds - or may even be pronounced as triphthongs. Interspel's categories of fonemes are for pragmatic everyday use, not theoretical linguistics.

**1. Consonants as in** - BAB DAD FLUF GAG HA JUJ KIK LUL MUM NAN PUP QUIK ROR SIS  
TAT VALV WOW AX YAY ZIZ  
SING SINK CHURCH SHUSH THIS/THIN WHICH /ZH/ as in VIZION

**2. Vowels.** 48 spellings represent 19+ vowel fonemes. The unclear schwa is the 20th (qv).  
TABL 1 shows words exemplifying vowel spellings for eleven vowel sounds that in Interspel have only one spelling each in initial/medial and final positions.

Foneme	Spelling	Finl position
a	bat	-
e	bet	-
i	bit	pitti
o	dot	-
u	but	-
air	cairn	hair
r	stork	for
aw	faun	saw
ow	bout	cow
oy	boil	boy
'oo'	? put ? pwt	-

TÀBL 2 shows words exemplifying vowel spellings & spelling when the vowel in final position, for



eight vowel fonemes with 3-4 options for their spelling. (Contrast up to 12 options in TO.)

Foneme	Spellings				Finl pozision	
A	bàt	ba:t	basis	bait	bay	balà
E	bèt	be:t	thesis	beet	be	bee
I	bìt	bi:t	bind	byt	by	-
O	gòld	go:ld	gold	boat	no	-
U	mùt	mu:t	educating	miut	emù	diu
ar	cart	-	banana	bazaar	spa	-
er	perturb	-	urbn	perhaps	her	fur
OO	bùt	bu:t	inscrutabl	boot	tabu	-

Notes on TÀBL 2 spellings.

The first spelling for each foneme shows grav accents.

The second shows how grav accents can be representd by colons where desired or when grav is not posibl, eg in emails.

The third shows singl vowel letrs for optionl use in adult text where confusion wil not ocur.

The 4th spelling shows digrafs as an option when the first three are not suitable.

The final 'positionl' spellings show the spelling of vowels in final place in words. These spellings are economicl, reduce waste, and simplify words for readrs and spelrs. In the exampls for the foneme 'ER', stress is shown by 'UR' 'ER' is not stressed and fully unstressd schwa is omitd, as in URBN. Spellings as in BALA rathr than BALAY ar optionl for French-origin words where 'AY' looks crude.

The spelling as in BEE is used for nouns, to make these words longr and visibly distinct in comparison with shortr, pronouns, verbs and function words.

TÀBL 3. Spellings for sequences of vowel fonems within words

Spellings that represent fonèmns alrady shown in tàbls 1and 2 are in brakets.

<i>Vowel sequences</i>	<i>End in -a</i>	<i>End in -e</i>	<i>End in -i</i>	<i>End in -o</i>	<i>End in -u</i>
<i>Begin with a</i> aa ae ai ao au	(bazaar)	paella	dais	caos	(taut)
<i>Begin with e</i> ea ee ei eo eu	idea creàt clear	(bee)	being	eon/creòl	hideus
<i>Begin with i</i> ia ie ii io iu	dial spesial	diet	fliing	iota milion	(miut) pius
<i>Begin with o</i> oa oe oi oo ou	boa oftsis	poet	gòing (boil)	(boot)	(bout)
<i>Begin with u</i> ua ue ui uo uu	dual uzual quak	suet quest	fluid quit	duo quote	inocuus

Notes on TÀBL 3 spellings. No clumsy 3-lettr vowel sequences are needed to show sequences of vowel sounds, as in many reform proposals. (It would assist evaluation of all spelling reform proposals if their proposers always included a table to show how they would spell these 25 sequences of vowel fonemes that occur in English words.)

Grav accents are optionl to clarify pronunciations, and may usualy be omitd.

CLEAR pronounsd as cle-ar. IDEA shows vowels in final position.

Grav accents can distinguish the vowels in EON / CREÒL and BOIL/ GÒING if necessary.

SPESIAL, MILION, VIZION and UZUAL ilustrate prinsipls for comn sufices for words of clasicl orijin.

QUAK QUEST QUIT QUOTE: pronunciations with Qu, not chanjed at this stajje of reform.

**Dictionary pronunciation keys** can use Interspel principls for acurat pronunciation of words.

These will usually be identical with standard Interspell except when vowel sounds have more than one possible spelling, and a minimal number of 'exception words'. TO resemblance will remain strong, since Interspell is basically 'TO cleaned up'.

### Grammatical and morphemic conventions:

**1. Verbs and plurals** end in S regardless of sound /s/ or /z/. as in CATS, DOGS

Words ending in /s/ can be distinguished by SS as needed, eg. PRINCESS/PRINSES

**2. Participial endings** as in JUMPED/ LEARNED/ NOTED regardless of /d/ or /t/ articulation

**3. Apostrophes** are optional in possessives, but can be used to avoid confusion as in BILL'S BILLS.

No apostrophe for common abbreviations, as in DON'T, CAN'T, ISN'T.

Apostrophes can be used for abbreviations such as IT'S (it is) GOV'T. PARL'T.

**4. Affixes.** Words do not change with affixes if pronunciation does not change, eg. DAZI/ DAZIS, FLY/ FLYS/ FLYING/ FLYT, VAIRI/ VAIRIUS/ VAIRID/ VAIRIING/ VAIRIATION.

### Pronunciation

Just as speakers pronounce words from TO dictionaries with their own local accents, so local variation continues in pronouncing Interspell. But since its spellings are standard, there is not the international unintelligibility that would result from 'spelling as you speak.'

**1. Long vowels** in initial and medial place, and final ù as in MENU can be spelled with grave accents, mainly as aids for learners, and not to be made into a burden for them. Most accents can be omitted in adult text. Spelling patterns as in HOPING/HOPNG can distinguish long and short vowels.

**2. Consistent conventions** for spelling classical stems and suffixes result naturally in slurred pronunciations through the effects of articulation - /sh/ spelled as in PASHION SPECIAL ISRI SUFFICIENT, /tch/ as in QUESTION PICTURE NATURAL, /zh/ as in VIZION TREASURE -ION can be condensed to -n as in COMPETITION, SUGGESTION, VISION, when preferred.

### 3. Unclear vowels

- i. TO vowels that are not spoken are omitted, as in TECHNICALLY, DIFFERENT.
- ii. Syllabic consonants are spelled as in PAT, SYLLABLE, ANSWER, but a vowel can be inserted to avoid long consonant strings, e.g. PRESENTED or PRESENTED are both acceptable
- iii. Unstressed schwa ER as in HER CONSENT.
- iv. Stressed schwa spelled UR as in OCCUR DISTURB URBAN, GURL.
- v. Unclear vowel in classical affixes. Consistent spelling 'A' used as in -APPLY, -ANT, -AN, -ANS, -ARI, -AT, -ALY, -IAL. eg. EDIBLE, DEPENDANT, DEPENDANTS, LIRARI, SEPARATE (contrast SEPERATE), FINALLY, SPECIAL
- vii. Unclear vowel in final position is always R or A as in SINGER, MORTAR, BANANA
- viii. Vowels can be inserted when the sound changes e.g. METAL/ METALLIC, CREATOR/ CREATED.

**4. Irregular stress in words.** Irregular stress on the second syllable can be shown by:

- i. double consonants when needed, mainly for learners, e.g. UMBRELLA, CANNAL, REJECT/ REJECT, CONTENT/ CONTENT or learner's books can use bold letters to show stress, as in REJECT.)
- ii. UR as in FRATURNITI contrasts with FRATURNIZ, and PERFECT with PERFECT.

**5. 'Pronunciation Spellings'** - Some words could be pronounced according to their TO spelling, as they already are in some dialects: e.g. HERB HOUR HEIR HONEST WHOLE MOTHER BROTHER OTHER LOVE SON.

ONE (TO) might be spelled WON, in the word family ONLY WON WONCE etc?

6. **Dubld consonants** are used in only three ways, as needed:

- i. Final /ss/. DENSS can be distinguishd from DENS, and PASS from PAS.
- ii. To show irregular stress. COMITTI is distinguishd from COMITI.
- iii. RR to distinguish vowels /a/ar/or/, mainly for lernrs, as in CARROT CORRAL.

7. **Words that sound the same (homofones)** are speld the same, except for 5 sets where context may not automatically direct meaning: TU/TOO/TUW, NO/KNO, FOR/FAUR, HOL/WHOL and THAY'R PUTTING THAIR HATS OVER THER. Pronunciation Spelling might also solv some potential confusions.

8. **Forin words may** be re-speld when they are suficiently adoptd into English, eg. CADETT, DEPO, DEBRI, BUTI, MERANG, PASTILL, SARJNT. Some words may remain obdurat special cases, eg. BURJOISI, LINJERIE, BOQUET, MILIEU.

### Interim rules while TO is phased out:

- i. **C** and **K** remain in TO. In initial position: c as in CAT, COT, CUT (A O U), K as in KEG, KIT (E I). Medial position: Use C as in ACT, CARACTR. Final position: Use K as in COK, MÀK, MÀKING. MÀKR.
- ii. **Qu** can be gradually replaced with KW and **X** with KS if this proves desirable.
- iii. A few very common '**sight words**' can be temporarily retaind, eg. ALL HAI.F, ONE, ONCE, PUT, WAS (ws?) WHAT, WHO, WHOSE, OF = /ov/, OFF = /of/. These spellings may be changed slowly to preserv the apearance of text, and help to prevent popular rejection of reform on sight. Thousands of 'sight words' are a burdn for lernrs today, but a dozen ar no problem. COULD/ WOULD/ SHOULD are problematic - CD, CUD, COUD. CWD, CUUD, COOD, COULD?
- iv. **Internationl scientific vocabulary** from Greek roots such as PNEUMA, PSEUDES, PSI and PTERIS may retain initial silent letrs to avoid problems of recognition and how to find in dictionry serches e.g. PNUMOMIA, PNUMONIA, PSYCOLOJI, PTERDIFITE.
- v. **Proper names**. It is up to their ownrs to decide how dificult they want their spellings to be.

## Sampl Texts in Interspel -Internasionl English Spelling

to compare with other spelling reform proposals

### 1. TH STAR

a) *In text for adults. Interspel for adults resemls braud-band pijin spellings. Ritters can opt for alternativ vowel spellings such as MAID, WEEL, LYT, BRYTR or colons as in EXI:TMENT, LI:T, if acsents are unwanted or not posibl, as in emails, or when using singl vowel letrs mit alow confuzions, as with MAD, WEL, LIT. Running text is 13.5% shortr. 95% of letters and 36% of words are unchanged. Apart from deletions, 79% of words are unchanged or changed by one letter.*

It ws on th furst day of th nu year that th anounsment ws mad almost simultaniusli from thre obsurvtris, that th mosion of th planet Neptun, th outrmost of al th planets that wel about th Sun. had becom veri erattik. A retardasion in its velositi had ben suspectd in Desembr. Then a fant remot spek of lit ws discovrd in th rejion of th perturbd planet. At ferst this did not cauz eni veri grat exitment. Sientifik pepl howevr found th intelijens remarkabl enuf, evn befor it becam knon that th nu bodi ws rapidli groing larjr and britr and that its mosion ws quit difrent from th ordrlj progres of th planets.

b) *Interspel for beginrs and English language lernrs can use acsents for all long vowels. Iregular stress on second sylabl is shown as in OBSURVATRIS, PERTURBD, REMÒT, ERATTIK. Gravmarks apply here to around 4% of caractrs one word in five.*

It ws on th furst day of th nù year that th anounsment ws màd almòst simultàniusli from thre obsurvtris that th mòsion of th planet Neptùn, th outrmòst of aul th planets that wèl about th Sun, had becom veri erattik. A retardàsion in its velositi had bèn suspectd in Desembr. Then a fànt remòt spek of lit ws discovrd in th rèjion of th perturbd planet. At ferst this did not cauz eni veri gràt exitment. Sientifik pèpl howevr found th intelijens remarkabl enuf, èvn befor it becàm knòn that th nù bodi ws rapidli gròing larjr and britr and that its mòsion ws quit difrent from th ordrlì prògres of th planets.

## **2. TH BUTFL PRINSESS in Interspel for lernrs**

*Delibratly composed to demonstrate maximum text changes required to reform TO. Half the TO spelngs ar irregular. Th SurplusCut version is 8.3% shortr. Interspel is 15.4% short, and changes 8% of letrs, apart from added gravmarks.*

Wons upon a tìm th bùtifl dautr of a gràt majjsn wontd mor perls tu pwt amung her trezùrs. “Lwk thru th sentr of th moon when it is blu,” sed her muthr in ansr to her question. “U mìt find yr hart’s dezìr.” Th prinsess lafd, becauz she doutd thèz wurd. Insted, she ùzd her imajinàsion, and moovd intu th fotografi bisnis, and twk pictùrs of th moon in culr. “I persèv mòst sertnli that it is almòst whòli wit.’ she thaut. She aulso found that she cwd màk enuf muni in àt munths tu by herself tuw lovli hùj nù jùels too.

**3. Dictionry pronunciation gide.** 95% of th spellings in this 104 word story cd be used as a dictionary pronunciation gide for beginrs. Only TRESURS, QUESTION, LAFD, IMAJINATION, and LOVLI require rules beyond th basic sound-relationships. OF is a ‘sight word’.

## **5. Notes on Interspel gide-lines**

**1. A standard spelling** is needed, rathr than ‘spelling as you speak’ for three reasons:

- for computer translation of English into other languages
- as a check on the runaway development of new ‘English languages’
- to ensure comprehension across accents, dialects and individual difrences.

Howevr, spelling inexactitude in personal comunications should not be regarded as if it were a moral lapse. Optionl alternativ spellings are acceptabl during transition; they allow temporary flexibility in public experimentation to arrive at the most useful spelling forms.

‘**Regularity**’ is defined as ‘consistent use of the most logicl/useful grafeme - not as often defined, as ‘th TO grafeme that most frequently represents a foneme’, a usage which helps nobody.

### **2. Vowels.**

**i. Over 240 TO spelling patrn reduced to 48.** The interim alterniv spellings for eight vowels help to smoothe transition to a future system of one-sound/one-spelling. This transition period servs as a testing time to ensure that the best solutions are found.

**ii. Positional Spelling.** In TO vowels tend to be speld mor economicly in word endings than in medial positions. Interspel systematises this. An advantage of distinctiv spelling patrn for final vowels is clarifying word-structure and compound words, as in ‘BOYISH PLAYRS PLOWING’ rathr than ‘BOIISH PLAIIERS PLOUING’. Spellings of long vowels in word endings need no diacritics except to distinguish words such as DÙ (DIU) and DU.

iii. **Long vowels** are a great bugbear in English spelling. TO's hatchpotch of expedients hav resultd in major boobytraps, and reformrs' sensibl respelngs oftn look so difrent from stupid TO spelngs that they are rejectd as uncouth and stranje by TO readrs. Interspel's solution of singl vowel letrs with optionl grav accents as needed has five avantajes:-

- **Visibl relationship of short and long vowels** in word families is a neat answer to the 'Chomskian' objection to spelling reform. This helps lernrs to identify meanings of related words, such as PROSESSION/ PROSÈD). Whethr such linkage helps skild readrs to comprehend text fastr can be testd. Grav marks drop off long vowels when they shortn as in NÀSN/NASNL. PROSÈD/PROSESSION.
- **Aiding learners.** J H Martin's macron diacritics above long vowels help beginrs to read, optionl in riting. This also facilitates in reading TO, as with Interspel e.g EDUCÀSION. This suits lernrs' 'natural spelling' tendency to spel long vowels like short ones. eg. SUZI MIT LIK AN ISCREM.
- **Accents can be omitd** in adult text when confusion is unlikely, eg. EDUCASION. Diacritics need not pepr th print when context givs suficient clues.
- **Miniml visibility** of grav accents does not disrupt reading. They go with the flow of the eye and the flow of hand-writing and are required for less than one word in five. Colons (:) can be substituted when email, typewriters or hasty writers cannot handl grav accents.

Accents are availabl for most fonts in word-processors, and customisation and Internet and email formatng capacities ar continually improving. Single-stroke grav-accents are alrely used on Continental keybords, and future keybords would routinely contain them. This diacritic can be dropd acording to house styl, personl prefrence or limitations of keybord / electronic transmission. Experience wil show what is realy needed prior to eventual ofical recognition.

- **Greatr economy.** Singl letrs suffice for 21 of the 48 vowel grafemes and only two letrs are needed for multipl vowel sequences such as PÒET. See TABL 3.

### 3 Minor spelling issues: Some uncertainties and posibl solutions

- Shortr function words.** Is fast reading for meaning assistd by the TO practice of shortr spellings for function words and longr spelngs for greatr meaning-bearers to make th structure of sentences mor visibl? eg. EE/ BEE, NO/ KNOW, THE/ THEE.
- IU as in MIUT** is a familiar pijin spelling patrnr and TO readrs can recognize it.
- The vowel that has no distinctiv spelling**, schwa, as in PUT, GOOD, WOULD, WOLF. A Welsh solution might be to use 'w' as a vowel also perhaps only in lernrs' spelling as halfway to UU which is unpopular at present. 'w' is visually and fonemicly close to 'uu', especialy in handwriting. A betr solution would be welcome. WWD A SAKFWL OF WWL BE HARD TO PWL?  
Or omit representation of this vowel altogethr? WD A SAKFL OF WL BE HARD TU PL?

- Interspel shows spoken English** as in forml public speaking. Suffixes as in TREZÙR PICTUR SPESIAL MILION are slurrd naturaly by articulation processes even in forml speech and there is no need to reduce their spellings down to TREZHA, PICHA, SPESH. The classicl-origin '-ION' formation is so common internationly that this is one reason not to respel it with 'SHUN', but insted to allow natural articulation to slur it into the evryday pronunciation of this word element.

- No additional auditory distinctions.

i. **'th/ th'**. Pijin spellings facilitate popular litracy as they do not need many audirty discriminations

that others beside dyslexics can find difficult. No new spelling distinction between voiced/ unvoiced /th/ sounds is needed. Silent readers need none and spellers need to be spared new hassles. Learners of English can have bold or underlined print for voiced /th/ ; their greater problem is usually in trying to say /th/ at all. Listeners notice learners' 'dis ting' or 'zis sing' but the 'wrong' /th/ is rarely noticed.

ii. **/s /z/** sound differences in plural and verb endings. Articulation governs whether a final S will be pronounced /s/ or /z/ as in saying CATS AND DOGS. Learners generalise the single plural and verb '-S' spelling early and easily, and are then helped by this visual grammar in reading for meaning, and saved from the need to make unnecessary auditory and spelling discriminations in new vocabulary.

**4.3. The unclear vowel.** Interspel's SurplusCut rules give learners more clues than Cut Spelling, and help to segment words to get meaning eg. NĒDED ERRER not NEDD ERR.

**4.4. Location of stress in words** - shown when weak schwa vowels are cut, eg. MELNCOLI, PRAMBÛLÂTR  
or clarified by UR /ER, eg. IMPERCEPTABL, IMPURTINENT.

**4.5. 'Spelling Pronunciation'**. A 200-year-old trend is to pronounce many words as they are spelled, eg. the initial /h / is now usually pronounced in HOSPITAL. HOTEL and HERB, and HONEST, HOUR, HEIR could follow suit. Following this trend can cut some Gordian knots when the English language itself sets problems for rational spelling; that is, rather than change the spelling, the pronunciation of some words could be changed to match the spelling, as suggested by Professor Collinge of Manchester University. Some spellings of words according with regional pronunciations could become accepted as the standard, eg. to distinguish current homophones such as SON/SUN WON/ONE.

**4.6. Backward compatibility with TO.** Future readers of Interspel need to know to decipher text in obsolete TO - with 1S only that TO has many surplus and misleading letters, 'gh' patterns, C & G as in CIRCUS/ GARAGE, Y as final /i/, 40 commonest irregular words, a chart of vowel spellings, how to 'fudge' spellings to guess words in context - and a dictionary for obsolete vocabulary.

**5. Words that sound the same (Homophones).** The homophone argument against spelling reform is not valid. The English language is rich in homophones that TO already spells the same. Readers of text rarely notice these homographs. because context automatically directs their meaning, even for LETTER/ LETTER - eg. 17% of the previous 100 words are TO homographs with more than one meaning - COMMON, IRREGULAR, FUDGE, USE, FAST, BOUND, ISSUE, RICH, REFORM, SETS, SOUND, READERS, TEXT, RARELY, DIRECTS, EVEN. Spelling need not distinguish homophones except for possibly five sets of common words (qv). This will take a burden from spellers. and spelcheckers will be less unreliable.

**6. Spellings of imported words.** Most imported words can be respelled in Interspel. but some, especially French, are so problematic that they may be best left as visibly imports. Learners can be given a page to demonstrate Continental sounds and how to pronounce remaining foreign spelling patterns as in BUCLĒ, BUFFANT, BUTIQUE. BUDOIR, BUFFE, BOUILLON, BOQUET, BURJEOISIE, rather than attempting complete respelling, as some do (eg BUURZHWAAZEE, BOEKAI, - until such words have become everyday English, as in BEEF, MUTTON, DEPO, AMATR and CADETT.

**7. Further reforms** must be based on research and public experience with Interspel and on finding solutions for the remaining problem points.

## 6. Some references relevant to Interspel

A longer list is obtainable from the author. The SSS Spelling Scheme Review Subcommittee holds a bibliography of V Yule's spelling publications, which include most of the relevant articles published in *Spelling Progress Bulletin* and the *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* that are not listed here.

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## 7. The future - The millennium starts now

The present time of unfettered public experiment on the Internet is the greatest chance for international testing and introduction of a more consistent and simple spelling system.

**No drastic initial transition.** Transition is a bridging period of adding alternative spellings to the several thousand already accepted in dictionaries. Interspel can be used as an initial learning spelling for TO. All solutions to problems can be tested and improved in the popular arena. Bad spelling on the Net shows the trends and problems that spelling improvers can take into account. Because it is a clean-up of TO, features of Interspel can be picked up at different rates for various uses - personal, Internet, email, film and TV subtitling, publishing and business. Features can be taken up a few at a time according to judgment and ability. At first there will be inevitable inconsistencies and lapses - as spelling in this article shows. 'There will be times when 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.' (Emerson).

*SurplusCut* Spelling can be taken up first for popular use before it is accepted in schools. This is the common sequence for innovations in education.

An *International English Organisation* must monitor and evaluate developments and supervise official implementation of outcomes, along with extensive trialing and testing of improvements.

Spelling reforms who seek only an ideal sound-symbol correspondence may hope for drastic changes to be imposed by fiat and in schools, but in other countries sweeping changes have required dictatorships and/or an illiterate majority. Most successful Western spelling reforms have been updates and have been used immediately in the marketplace.

**What the market will bear.** Deciding this is more art than science. Most people will read print that they want to read or must read, taking little or no notice of *SurplusCut* changes that are not disruptive. Acclimatisation comes easiest through exposure to text that people want to read, e.g. TV subtitles. When there is no motivation to induce people to want to read something, decisions about whether to read on are made from sampling the text; obtrusive spelling changes can decide them against reading further. This Personal View has used a minimal *Surplus-Cut* spelling, because research so far indicates this can be tolerated or not noticed by most readers apart from specialists. If the idea of spelling in this way interests readers, they can explore it themselves and take it as far as they like in personal writing such as letters and where conciseness is an advantage, as in headings and labels (headings and labels).

**Transfer to Interspel in print and electronic communication.** It is now simple to customise spellings for house-styles, spell-checkers and computer-printing for publishing and reprinting. Much *SurplusCut* and *Interspel* can be produced from TO by algorithms.

### Methods, gimmicks and gadgets to popularise reform

Reformed spelling trialed in *film and TV subtitles*

Reformed spelling as *pronunciation keys* in dictionaries, and as cribs on facing pages in TO books.

The author's 1971 *Pocket Guide to Instant Spelling*, to carry in the pocket, aimed to help and encourage poor spellers and others to use 'sensible spelling'. Now the Internet can dispense its own *Pocket Guide* with revised editions. At first there might be as many guides put up as there are spelling reformers, but the test of public approval and use would sort them out. A readily updatable *Guide to Principles of Spelling* could become the preferred dictionary for the Web.

*International Spelling Day* on October 9 to match Korea's Hangul Great Letters Day.

*Spelling Games* for media puzzle pages and schools; *Spelling Calendars* and greetings cards, Scrabble as a way to play Scrabble; a Design-your-own-spelling computer game.

*Design your own English spelling systems* is a useful school and puzzle-page exercise to understand the English spelling system. All opponents of spelling reform can try this.

The *100 worst Spelling Demons listed* with alternative Interspells as a popular introduction.



**Further developments may include:**

- i. *Alphanumeric improvements* in designs for letters and numbers, to prevent confusions.
- ii. *Replacing keyboard characters Q, X* with new symbols. C might become /tʃ/ as in Indonesian. But re-using obsolete characters would confuse internationally and disturb TO backwards compatibility.
- iii. *Grammar and language reforms* could also help to promote English as the world's international language, and reduce the heavy burden on children to learn irregularities of grammar. Irregular verbs could be rationalised, eg. BRING/ BRINGD TEACH/ TEACHD.

**The future.** Communications technology includes spelling as a basic element - invented earlier than the printing press, electronics and the Net. In communications technology most developments are improvements rather than revolutions, and so must retain backwards compatibility for a period. Until there is a revolutionary future breakthrough to a writing system that can cross languages, like Chinese without its difficulties, spelling reform still requires backwards compatibility with international TO and its heritage of print. The prime criteria for English spelling improvement are immediate usefulness and future potential both at home and abroad.

Interspel - International English Spelling - deserves research attention and investigation on all these grounds.