Personal View

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POLIYGLOT'S STAENDARDSPEL
By Philip Johnson-Smith
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The Author

Philip J. Johnson-Smith, a.k.a. Polyglot in the Saundspel forum, is from Chester, North-West England. He has a Bachelor's degree in Finance and Accounting, an advanced diploma in German and a working knowledge of French and Spanish. He is currently a student dentist at Newcastle University. Philip has had no formal training in linguistics but has a keen interest in languages. From his childhood, he has always questioned why his native English language is perpetuated with so very many irregular spelling absurdities. Up to the writing of this document, Philip has been a spelling reform advocate and a member of Saundspel for the past 2 years.

The System

Poliyglot's Staendardspel (PSS) is a re-Romanization of broadcast English which regularizes spelling, especially of vowels, while keeping reassignment of traditional English consonants to a minimum. It can be typed on all standard keyboards without diacritics or special characters by making use of traditional and new digraphs as well as hyphenation. PSS aims to produce a regular, highly phonemic and predictable English orthography in which simple stress and positional rules mean that any unique sequence of phonemes has only one possible spelling, and any unique sequence of graphemes has only one possible pronunciation.

The English Spelling Society

The object of the Society is to raise awareness of the problems caused by irregularity of English spelling; and to promote remedies to improve literacy, including spelling reform.

Contents

A. Design Principles

The following aims guided the design of PSS:

1. Typability on the standard keyboards of English-speaking countries without any unconventional characters or diacritics should be facilitated by use of traditional and new digraphs, and where necessary, hyphenation.

2. Sound-to-letter and sound-to-digraph reassignments should be made only where necessary to facilitate clarity of unambiguous spelling and brevity, such that some traditional spelling patterns can be maintained where they fall into line with re-Romanization of vowels.

3. Positional rules should help to maintain phonemic clarity while achieving some brevity.

4. Stress rules should be kept simple, making stress-marking virtually unnecessary for the vast majority of words.

5. Any unique sequence of phonemes should have only one possible spelling.

6. Any unique sequence of graphemes should have only one possible pronunciation, given the positional and stress rules.

B. ESS Questionnaire

1. Is this a new original idea or is it adapted from one developed by the writer or someone else?

Poliyglot's Staendardspel is the author's own original scheme, despite sharing similarity to other schemes advocating re-Romanization such as RLS and Spelrait.

2. Is it an initial step to learning literacy, a step to TS, or is it for permanent adult use?

PSS is intended to replace TS in the long term, while in the short to medium term, it is intended to be used alongside TS as a simplified spelling and pronunciation guide for ESOL and dictionary keys.

3. Are there any supplementary rules? If so, please detail.

Schwa, represented by 'a' is exempted from being long before another vowel or in terminal position.
Use of a hyphen is obligatory to separate two consonants when keeping their individual monographic sounds, so that they are distinguished from their usual pronunciation as a digraph.
Rhoticity is distinguished on vowel length between US and UK pronunciations and is specially marked (see PSS Tutorial.)

4. Does your system cater for schwa and stress?

PSS always spells schwa as <a>. The regular stress rule of default stress on the first vowel digraph/diphthong, if present, otherwise on the first non-schwa vowel, makes stress-marking unnecessary for the vast majority of words.

5. If this is a phonemic system, which accent of English is it based on? Would you cater for other accents of English? How?

PSS can represent both UK and US standard broadcast dialects as well as a hybrid of both. PSS uses a broad phonemic roster superset of which the UK and US dialect rosters are subsets.

6. Is the scheme based on assumed knowledge of English/TS or is it independent? That is, could people who had learned the spelling rules pronounce a text correctly even though they had no knowledge of English?

PSS is based partly on TS, where this falls into line with high phonemicity and re-Romanization. Some TS patterns are used in PSS, but the user does not need to know any TS before becoming fully proficient in reading and writing PSS.

7. How does a running text in the scheme compare in length with TS (i.e. how many characters compared to TS)?

It is estimated that PSS will on average be about the same length as TS.

8. How big is the change from TS? To what extent does the scheme defer to the appearance of TS? Give an estimate of the percentage of words that would need to be changed from TS.

PSS keeps similarity to TS patterns where this is possible while keeping in line with re-Romanization and high phonemicity. The author estimates that about 75% of spellings would be different from TS, but many changes would be slight and therefore would not be visually disruptive.

9. Outline how the author envisages the scheme being used. How would it be introduced and existing publications dealt with?

The author envisages PSS being used as a dictionary key, pronunciation guide, and simplified English spelling for ESOL, children, and anyone who struggles with TS. PSS could be used for international English communication between non-native English speakers and could be trialed and adopted by the European Union (E.U.).
For electronic publications, an online converter plug-in could be used to transition between TS and PSS at the click of a mouse.

10. Do you regard homophones as a problem and does your system indicate them in any way?

No. Context and grammar indicate the meaning just as well in PSS's strictly phonological writing as in speech, where there is no distinction in sound.

11. Could the system be used easily on most computers and word processors?

Yes. PSS can be typed on standard keyboards of English-speaking countries without any software or hardware modifications whatsoever.

12. Is the system used in everyday life by yourself or anyone else?

The author uses PSS in the Saundspel forum and regularly exchanges e-mail communications in PSS with another supportive Saundspel member.

C. PSS TUTORIAL (Rules on one page)

12 Vowels: Monographic vowels are short before consonants and long elsewhere (except for 'a').

Monograph	Before Consonant	Elsewhere
i	/ɪ/	/iː/
u	/ʊ/	/uː/
e	/ɛ/	/ɜː/
o	/ɒ/	/ɔː/
a	/ʌ/ or /ə/ depending on stress	

Digraph	Phoneme	
iy	/iː/	used only before consonants (and to split the diphthongs 'ia' and 'ua')
uw	/uː/	
ee	/ɜː/	
oo	/ɔː/	
aa	/ɑː/	
ae	/æ/	

Note: A single 'a' is always short, and positional stress rules help to distinguish /ʌ/ and /ə/.

8 Diphthongs: Before another vowel, diphthongal 'i' and 'u' each change respectively to 'y' and 'w.'

ai/ay = /aɪ/   oi/oy = /ɔɪ/   ia = /ɪə/ *('iya' = /iːə/)
au/aw = /aʊ/   ou/ow = /oʊ/   ua = /ʊə/ *('uwa' = /uːə/)
ei/ey = /eɪ/   ea = /ɛə/

25 Consonants: 19 monographs and 6 digraphs ('q' and 'x' not used)

b = /b/   m = /m/   z = /z/
c = /t͡ʃ/   n = /n/   ng = /ŋ/ (ngg = /ŋg/)
d = /d/   p = /p/   sh = /ʃ/
f = /f/   r = /ɹ/   zh = /ʒ/
g = /g/   s = /s/   th = /θ/
h = /h/   t = /t/   dh = /ð/
j = /d͡ʒ/   v = /v/   kh = /x/
k = /k/   w = /w/
l = /l/   y = /j/

Note: The symbols 'c' and 'dh' are the only consonants not pronounced as in TS.
The briefer 'c' monograph replaces TS 'ch' for /t͡ʃ/ because the 'h' is redundant due to 'k' for /k/.
The 'dh' is used to clearly distinguish the TS voiced 'th' in "then" from the unvoiced 'th' in "thin."

Supplementary Rules:
Consonant Doubling: 1. Compound words; 2. '-ngg' where an /ŋ/ is followed by <g> sound; 3. Prevocalic rhotics.
Rhoticity: 1. Single 'r' between vowels does not result in rhotacization: maeri, wari, feri, sori; 2. Single 'r' before a consonant or at the end of a word does cause rhotacization: staar, feer, stoor, linggar; 3. Rhotacization before another vowel is marked by R-doubling: staarri, feerri, stoorri, linggarring (U.S. rhotic dialect); staari, feeri, stoori, linggaring (U.K. non-rhotic dialect.)
Digraph Separator: Use an obligatory hyphen between letters in words such as "aedult-hud" (TS adulthood) to distinguish them from their usual pronunciation as a single unit digraph.
Regular Past Endings: Add '-id,' '-d,' or '-t' according to the verb's final sound: aedid, leid, laeft.
Regular Plurals and Verb Endings: Add '-iz,' '-z,' or '-s' according to the noun or verb's final sound: hoorsiz, hauziz, ceinjiz, wishiz, miraazhiz, wiciz, webz, weivz, ganz, vauz, buks, jiraefs.
Stress: Regular stress is on the first vowel digraph/diphthong, if present, then on the first non-schwa (non-'a') vowel, if present, then the first 'a' vowel, and is not marked. This regular stress rule means that stress marking is virtually redundant. However, irregular stress marking is optional, and can easily be shown (on a standard UK keyboard) using Alt Gr plus vowel to get acute á é í ó ú. Examples: supersede = *suwparsíyd*, although = *ooldhóu*, numberless = *nambarlas* (first 'a' stress,) our = *awar* (first diphthong stress,) suspect = *saspekt* (verb, as unmarked means stressed 'e') or *sáspekt* (noun, as stress is marked.) An 'á' thus stress-marked cannot be schwa /ə/, but must be /ʌ/.

D. SAMPLE TEXTS

The texts below are transcribed into a "neutral" hybrid PSS accent between US and UK dialects, showing relatively few occurrences of irregular stress which is marked with optional acute diacritics.

THE STAR
By H. G. Wells

It was on the first day of the New Year that the announcement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatories, that the motion of the planet Neptune, the outermost of all the planets that wheel about the sun, had become very erratic. A retardation in its velocity had been suspected in December. Then a faint, remote speck of light was discovered in the region of the perturbed planet. At first this did not cause any great excitement. Scientific people, however, found the intelligence remarkable enough even before it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larger and brighter, and that its motion was quite different from the orderly progress of the planets.

DHA STAAR
Bai H. G. Wells

It woz on dha feerst dei ov dha Nu Yiar dhaet dhi anaunsmant woz meid, oolmoust simalteiniyasli from thri abseervatoorriyz, dhaet dha moushan ov dha plaenit Néptuwn, dhi autarmoust ov ool dha plaenits dhaet wiyl abaut dha san, haed bikam veri iraetik. A riytaardeishan in its valositi haed bin saspektid in Disémbar. Dhen a feint, rimout spek ov lait woz diskávard in dha riyjan ov dha parteerbd plaenit. Aet feerst dhis did not kooz eni greit iksaitmant. Sayantífik piypal, hawevar, faund dhi intélijans rimaarkabal ináf iyvan bifoor it bikeim noun dhaet dha nu bodi woz raepidli growing laarjar aend braitar, aend dhaet its moushan woz kwait difrant from dhi oordarli prougres ov dha plaenits.

BRITTEN WHEN YOUNG
By Frank Kermode

We may nowadays be chary about using the word "genius," but we still have a good idea what is meant by it. For example, there are great numbers of very gifted musicians who are admired but not called geniuses. But there are others, manifestly prodigious, performing often at extraordinary ages, a variety of feats so complex that the layman could hardly imagine, even with the most desperate labour, accomplishing any of them, while even musicians are astonished: and we then reach for the good, handy, vague, Enlightenment word and call them geniuses. The list includes Mozart and Mendelssohn; and despite all limiting judgments, it includes Benjamin Britten.

BRITTEN WEN YANG
Bai Frank Kermode

Wi mei nawadeiz bi cearri abaut yuwzing dha weerd "jiyniyas," bat wi stil haev a gud aidiya wot iz ment bai it. Foor igzaempal, dhear aar greit nambarz ov veri giftid myuwzíshanz hu aar admayard bat not koold jiyniyasiz. Bat dhear aar adharz, maenifestli pradijas, parfoorming ofan aet ikstroordineri eijiz, a varayati ov fiyts sou kompleks dhaet dha leiman kud haardli imaejin, iyvan widh dha moust desparrat leibar, akomplishing eni ov dhem, wail iyvan myuwzíshanz aar astonisht: aend wi dhen riyc foor dha gud, haendi, veig, Inlaitanmant weerd aend kool dhem jiyniyasiz. Dha list inkluwdz Mozart aend Mendelssohn; aend dispait ool limiting jajmants, it inkluwdz Benjamin Britten.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE
Bai John Keats

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being so happy in thine happiness.
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

FUZZY OPAQUE
ORTHOGRAPHIC VISIONS
By Christopher Upward

There was a poor boy who couldn't spell
Half the words in our language too well.
His teachers thought: "Brain-sick!"
Mum and Dad hoped: "Dyslexic?"
Yet the child rashly jeered:
"What the hell!"

OUD TU A NAITINGGEIL
Bai John Keats

'Tiz not thru envi ov dhai haepi lot,
Bat biing so haepi in dhain haepinas.
Dhaet dhau, lait-wingd Drayaed ov dha triyz
In sam meloudiyas plot
Ov biycan griyn, aend shaedouz nambarlas,
Singast ov samar in ful-throutid iyz.

FAZI OUPEIK
OORTHAGRAEFIK VIZHANZ
Bai Christopher Upward

Dhear woz a poor boi hu kudn't spel
Haef dha weerdz in awar laengwij tu wel
Hiz tiycarz thoot: "Brein-sik!"
Mam aend Daed houpt: "Disléksik?"
Yet dha caild raeshli jiard:
"Wot dha hel!"

E. WORD LIST

TS	PSS	TS	PSS
pen, copy, happen	pen, kopi, haepan	lot, odd, wash	lot, od, wosh
back, bubble, job	baek, babal, job	strut, bud, love	strat, bad, lav
tea, tight, button	ti, tait, batan	foot, good, put	fut, gud, put
city, better	siti, betar	fleece, day, streak	fliys, dei, striyk
day, ladder, odd	dei, laedar, od	price, high, try	prais, hai, trai
key, cock, school	ki, kok, skuwl	choice, boy	cois, boi
get, giggle, ghost	get, gigal, goust	goose, two, blue	guws, tu, blu
church, match, nature	ceerc, maec, neicar	goat, show, no, cold	gout, shou, nou, kould
judge, age, soldier	jaj, eij, souljar	mouth, now	mauth, nau
fat, coffee, rough, move	faet, kofi, raf, muwv	near, here, serious	niar, hiar, siarriyas
thing, author, path	thing, oothar, paeth	square, fair, various	skwear, fear, vearriyas
this, other, smooth	dhis, adhar, smuwdh	start, father	staart, faadhar
soon, cease, sister	suwn, siys, sistar	thought, law	thoot, lo
zero, zone, roses	ziarrou, zoun, rouziz	north, war	noorth, woor
ship, sure, station	ship, shuar, steishan	cure, poor, jury	kyuar, poor, juarri
pleasure, vision	plezhar, vizhan	nurse, stir	neers, steer
hot, whole, behind	hot, houl, bihaind	courage	karij
more, hammer, some	moor, haemar, sam	happy, radiation, glorious	haepi, reidiéishan, gloorriyas
nice, know, funny, sun	nais, nou, fani, san	about, comma, common	abaut, koma, koman
ring, long, thanks, sung	ring, long, thaenks, sang	influence, situation, annual	ínfluwans, sicueishan, aenyuwal
light, valley, feel	lait, vaeli, fiyl	intend, basic	inténd, beisik
yet, use, beauty	yet, yuws, byuwti	stimulus, educate	stimyulas, edyukeit
wet, one, when, queen	wet, wan, wen, kwiyn	kit, bid, hymn	kit, bid, him
dress, bed	dres, bed	trap, bad	traep, baed
Total Characters (TS)	635	**Total Words**	135
Total Characters (PSS)	621	**Total Words Changed**	118