

Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962

Dedicated to finding the causes of difficulties in learning reading and spelling,
"A closed mind gathers no knowledge; an open mind is the key to wisdom".

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p1 in the printed version]

1. Sir James Pitman & John Downing Tour America

At the requests of a number of heads of departments of education in American universities and also of the U.S. Dept. of Education, Sir James Pitman and John Downing, the Research Director of the University of London Institute of Education, and Director of the Augmented Roman Project, made a tour of the United States from Nov. 1st to Dec. 6th, 1962. Sir James had to cut short his part of the tour in order to attend an urgent session of Parliament to vote on Britains entry into the Common European Market. John Downing completed the tour in which he gave talks in 17 cities to educational audiences, some as large as 1000 persons. In most cases, these talks were sponsored by the Reading Specialist in the University in which the talk was given.

The audiences, which were at first curious and skeptical, all were convinced before the end of the question period that here indeed, was some worthwhile progress, with a new method of learning to read. Probably more impact as to the audiences' reaction can be gleaned from listener's observations.

Dr. John P. Shepard, of Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York, writes:

How often does one see a lush red ballroom full of assorted educators sit for over two hours to listen to a new idea? That is what happened at the New York meeting sponsored by the Educational Records Bureau and the International Reading Association in sophisticated New York City last November. Toward the end of his talk, John Downing seemed to inspire less "last quarter" or eighth inning leaving than the football Giants or baseball Yankees. Behind me, I saw "big names" in reading and language arts, from observing the tags on the guests. Next to me by a lucky chance, was Dr. Godfrey Dewey, of the Simpler Spelling Association, eagerly following each point of Mr. Downing's presentation in the printed pamphlet, "Experiments with an Augmented Roman Alphabet for Beginning Readers in British Schools". Sir James Pitman later set down next to Dr. Dewey, and it was fascinating to watch their delight at the effects of Downing's reports on this huge, diverse gathering. One could see some evidence of people more involved in some of the traditional American school patterns of reading instruction looking for all the flaws possible in the carefully report, while others were obviously delighted with the glimmerings of promise that only time can properly reveal. A young woman involved in speech correction in Atlantic City, was the only person I spoke to who had been using Augmented Roman in this country in a practical way, and her admittedly subjective reactions were extremely positive. The numbers of people searching for additional data and materials, to have questions answered after the long session, indicated in another way the impact of this meeting.

An interesting sidelight of Downing's report was his apparent attempt to emphasize the instrumental function of the alphabet so that no one would feel that behind the method was an effort to promote spelling reform. To this observer at any rate, his notion is sound in terms of getting educators to open-mindedly examine the augmented alphabet reading method on its own merits. (Now called Pitman Initial Teaching Method)

Now turning from that meeting just a month ago to the stir in both general and professional periodicals, it seems as if both Pitman and Downing will be front and center for some time to come. Let me hope the ornate, elegant setting of another century will not mislead any of Downing's New York listeners about the potentially revolutionary aspects of this new approach to beginning reading instruction and its tantalizing implications for readiness and mental age generalizations involved in current reading methods.

Dr. Ben D. Wood, Director of Collegiate Educational Research, Columbia, College, New York, writes:

The meeting in Cleveland was not open to the public but was restricted by invitation to important public officials and top ranking educators. The afternoon meetings in Cleveland, which were open to teachers and principals, had 450 and 250 in attendance for Downing's talks.

In New York City, beginning with the evening of Oct. 31, there were five dinner meetings attended by distinguished leaders in business and education. A listing of their names would sound like a page from Who's Who in Education, The principle meeting, and the one for which Downing was specifically brought over, was the Educational Records Bureau meeting on the morning of Nov. 2. One of the two speakers originally scheduled could not be with us, but Mr. Downing used the full 2½ hours and I did not see one person of the more than 1,000 in attendance who left the auditorium before he finished speaking. This is the only time in my long life in school work that I have seen an audience of any size sit spellbound for an unbroken period of 150 minutes. There was still a half hour left of the morning-session, and Sir James Pitman spoke with illustrated slides to the 900 who remained for that last half hour. He also held his audience spellbound to the last minute.

In Los Angeles, your Editor attended meetings at Loyola Univ, and Univ. of Calif. at West Los Angeles where in both cases the audiences kept asking questions long after the talks were concluded. The spirit of enthusiasm for Pitman's Initial Teaching Medium seemed to be contagious whenever either of them talked. At the dinner meeting at Univ. of Southern Calif., there were 180 persons which filled the hall. In Amherst the southern New England I.R.A, sponsored the meeting, and about 200 attended. Information was not available on the meetings held at Syracuse, Bethlehem, Westchester, Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Urbana, Berkeley, Palo Alto and Washington, D.C.

As a result of the enthusiasm generated, we hear rumors that similar experimental teaching projects will be started in at least six universities in the U.S.A. While very few details are available at this time, our next Bulletin will be likely have some more news about them. Two projects have been announced in the New York' Times for Dec. 17(?). Dr. King, Superintendent of the New York City Schools Elementary Division announced that they would begin a pilot of experimental teaching for beginning readers in kindergarten and first grade. Dr. Loretan announced that a similar program would be started for research in remedial reading.

The first hurdle has been successfully overcome. Now watch them scramble to catch up with the leaders. It will be most interesting to see.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 pp2,3,16 in the printed version]

2. Mary Johnson's One–Woman War, by Stephen Franklin, Weekend Magazine Staff Writer.

Why Can't Our Children Spell? she asked. The experts were indignant!

The tide is turning in Mary Johnson's six–year war against the experts; a war which has transformed her from an unknown suburban housewife into one of the most controversial women in Manitoba.

Mrs. Johnson is a reading–reform crusader, an unpaid amateur crusader who has single–mindedly plugged away at her contention that children are not being taught to read or spell effectively in Manitoba's primary schools. She has been opposed, ignored and ridiculed and has lost one battle after another. Now, after 10,000 hours of voluntary research and propaganda, of world–wide surveys and home–made tests she is at last gaining increasingly strong support for her assertion that the "look–and–say" method of teaching children to read is guilty of contributing to juvenile illiteracy.

At their last convention, 400 Manitoba school trustees unanimously resolved that the present system of "look–say" sight reading leaves much to be desired and recommended a re–emphasis on sounded reading (phonics). Former Premier Douglas Campbell championed her cause at the last session of the Manitoba Legislature and called for establishment of a non–partisan legislative committee to examine the problem during the recess.

A government amendment turned the problem over to the Education Advisory Board of the Department of Education for study.

In May this year the Winnipeg School Board, whose inspectors had persistently opposed Mary Johnson's assertions, announced they would launch an experiment in sight reading vs. phonics in three schools this fall. A later announcement said the phonetic system would be tried in at least 12 other schools on a less formal basis.

When she began her crusade quite by accident six years ago, Mary Johnson was simply a Winnipeg lawyer's wife, with three children, who gave music lessons at her home in the suburban city of St. James. She was – and still is – a shy, soft spoken woman. An English war bride, she met and married Winnipegger Ernest Johnson over–seas in 1943 when she was with the Woman's Auxiliary Air Force and he an officer in the R.C.A.F. As the daughter of a church organist and choirmaster and a music teacher herself, she was very interested in sound and had a penchant for painstakingly devising dial charts like the Johnson's Harmony Guide and Johnson Chord Selector as musical ready–reckoners.

Apart from this, she was just "a mere parent." And this she remained as far as most educators were concerned long after the spring day in 1957 when an 11–year–old pupil of hers, an intelligent girl arrived for her lesson, sat down at the piano and proudly announced she was going to play a new piece entitled Minuet. "Called what, dear?" asked Mrs. Johnson looking over her shoulder, for the music was plainly entitled Mimic. No amount of effort, however, could get the fifth–grader to sound out the word "Mimic". She knew what a mimic was, it transpired, but was incapable of reading the word.

Mrs. Johnson was both, disturbed and curious. After six months tuition the girl could sight-read music, but she could not read the title of it after 4½ years in school. "Unfortunately, she had never been taught how to sound out a strange word which she couldn't recognize by its shape" Mary explains.

She decided to check to children on her block to find out if they had trouble reading aloud. She was appalled to discover that not only were they guessing wildly at the pronunciation of words they did not recognize but her own son Grant, then age nine and in Grade 4, was as bad as the rest. And this despite good school reports in reading.

The Royal Commission on Education was due to sit that November of 1957 in Manitoba. With her husband's help, Mary Johnson determined to submit a brief urging the introduction of articulated phonics at the start of a child's school career.

First she needed evidence. She sat down at the dining-room table which has been her office ever since, and composed her own spelling test. It was a list of 25 simple one-syllable words – words like joy, nod, bog, wax and lent – most of which the children had not learned to sight-read in the Dick and Jane readers (the Curriculum Foundations Series which has been the authorized text for Manitoba schools since 1946).

She then persuaded nine school principals to give the test to 600 students in Grades 3 and 4. Only 10 of the 600 children spelled all 25 words correctly, and the average incidence of errors was 30%. By contrast a group of Grade 1 children taking the same test at a school in Argo, Ill., where the phonic system is used, averaged only 7% of errors. The results from Greater Winnipeg schools revealed not only misspelled words but the most bizarre of guesses. Students managed to misspell the word "jot" 95 different ways from "joket" to "cohawe" and from "kote" to "jinned."

It was two years before the Royal Commission on Education published its final report, but when it did it supported Mrs. Johnson's plea. The report noted that the author of the Curriculum Foundation Series "insists that consonants should never be sounded in isolation. (He) asks pupils to deduce the sound of a consonant from his ability to pronounce several sight words in his vocabulary. Thus, (he) reasons, if a child knows 'now', 'not' and 'never', he will deduce the beginning sound of the word 'name'." The advocates of the phonic method would say, rather, "Teach the child the sound of the letter 'n'."

The Commission recommends "that after an initial stock of sight words has been taught, the teacher should teach the sounds of the letters, even the consonants, and thus give the child, almost from the outset, two methods of attacking new words."

The Royal Commission made a further point which Mary Johnson had raised: "If beginners in reading are taught letters in isolation, the Commission believes that parents will find it possible to help their children to learn to read at home, if they have need of help. Since parents generally do not understand the sight method of teaching reading, they seem unable to help youngsters who are experiencing reading difficulties."

They added that this change could be made without abandoning the Dick and Jane readers but that the use of the recommended phonetic attack would have to be taught at the Teachers' Training

College. Mrs. Johnson did not wait for the Royal Commission report. With a team of 11 Winnipeg mothers with a total of 34 children, she first canvassed the English-speaking world through a letter sent to 200 newspapers in the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom & the United States. The 301 replies from parents, teachers and organizations convinced them the problem was widespread.

Mary sat down and worked out a second and more elaborate test, this time a comparative phonic sight-word one. It consisted of 13 words from "look-say" readers and 13 unfamiliar words which rhymed with them. The test was given to 1,934 schoolchildren from Albuquerque N.M., to Edmonton, and from Nottingham, England, to Toronto, a total of 62 classes in three nations.

The results were interesting, Mrs. Johnson discovered. They not only indicated a similar state of affairs elsewhere in the world, but showed that English and U.S. school children taught by the sight method were by and large even worse spellers than the Canadians. 96 out of every 100 children had been able to spell "sun", but the word "spun" stumped as many as 96% of the children in one Omaha, Nebr. school; 72% in Leeds, England, and 67% in one Winnipeg classroom. Also, quite a number of the attempts to spell "spun" were not just near-misses, but meaningless collections of letters like "cping", "xouyeis", "duodp", "foeal" and "sishsha".

The 12 mothers issued a detailed 16-page report a month before the Royal Commission report appeared and sent copies to every school trustee, every legislator and many educators in the area.

Educators did not take kindly to Johnson's intrusion into the methods of teaching reading. Nor did all the parents. Wrote one woman in a letter to the editor of the suburban St. James Leader signed Mrs. X – "It seems ridiculous to me that a non-professional should be allowed to have her self-styled reading tests even considered, let alone digested by those intelligent men who make up our school board. I would rather take my child to a good veterinary surgeon to have his tonsils removed than to have his reading difficulties diagnosed by Mrs. Johnson's tests.

Counters Mary Johnson: "I am not trying to tell the educators what to do. If only they themselves would take a good look at the present series of readers and investigate them objectively, I should be satisfied," As it is, she explains, the publishers of the authorized texts not only supply the readers and the voluminous guidebooks for teachers, but also sponsor the lectures, reading experts and consultants who give regular seminars to student teachers. The publishers also supply the tests the children take. "All the tests do is camouflage the weaknesses of the system," she claims.

To round out her own experiments, she charted the Johnson Oral Reading test, a series of 15 sentences using words not found in the Dick and Jane readers, plus a control group of three sentences using sight words familiar to her subjects. Armed with the test, a portable tape recorder and a supply of candy suckers, Mrs. Johnson headed for four widely separated playgrounds accompanied by her daughters, Anna, then 13, and 6 year old Susan. She found plenty of volunteers to take the tests but not many who failed to stumble over the reading of the sentences. Later she played the tapes on television panel shows and at Parent-Teacher Association meetings, as dramatic rebuttal of suggestions that children now read better than they ever did.

For all her industry and effort, she seemed to be getting nowhere. The bookshelves in the Johnson home by now were filled with technical books, texts, surveys and reports on the vital subject of reading. She was spending five or six hours a day on this self-appointed labor of persuasion. More often than not when she was baking a chocolate layer cake in the kitchen or cooking supper for her

family, at the same time she was busy on her conveniently long-chorded telephone giving what help she could to mothers worried about their own children's reading difficulties.

"I got lots of sympathy and agreement," she says, but support, which suggests doing something actively, was forthcoming from only a small number of people. There were times when I would decide to drop the whole thing. Then my family would look at me and say: 'Mother, you just can't!'"

"I couldn't have stopped even if I had wanted to. If I had I would have been throwing away all that had been done. I knew it would take dynamite to have any effect on this problem, because it is a big problem and an old one. I knew that parents would have to keep on hooting and hollering to get it done. And they have. It is really quite remarkable, because I don't think an uprising of parents like this has ever happened before. Our activities here are very meek and wild really compared with what is happening in the United States. But for once we are able to help the Americans instead of them helping us, which is good."

As a leader of the "phonics underground" and now a member of the national advisory council of the Reading Reform Foundation in New York, Mary Johnson has been running a clearing house and information centre from her dining-room table in the past two years. Few developments on the subject anywhere in the English-speaking world have escaped her eye. She has eight bulging scrapbooks of clippings and reports. "Each month," she says, "I write a confidential letter to 11 girls who are leaders of parent groups across the U.S.A. One is in Phoenix, Ariz., another in Menominee, Mich., a third in Salt Lake City, Utah, a fourth in North Carolina, and so on."

In their long war against the established" look-sayers Mrs. Johnson and her supporters found two particularly hard obstacles to overcome. The first was educators' assertions that present methods do already incorporate a blend of sight reading and phonics, a claim advanced by, among others, Manitoba's Minister of Education, Hon. Stewart E. McLean.

The claim is true. What is equally true is that the two sides are talking about different forms of phonics, the degree to which sight reading should be supplemented by phonics and the timing of its introduction. The Curriculum Foundation Series guide book prescribes that teachers use abstract phonics in which the sounds are sensed. The reading reformers want the introduction of articulated phonics in which the sounds are sounded out. They claim abstract phonics are hard for any but the brightest children, and lead to wild guessing.

Mary Johnson's other big obstacle was that, in the main, educational authorities in Manitoba refrained from coming out and answering her; for to answer her would have been to recognize her. And to recognize her would have been to admit that parents might know what they were talking about.

An interview with Manitoba's Deputy Minister of Education, H Scott Bateman, and his director of curricula, G. M. Davies, reveals that the department has not been unmindful of trends in the teaching of reading. "We don't think the Curriculum Foundation Series is perfect," Bateman explained. "And we do have experiments already under way with other readers in selected classrooms. But we would much sooner defer a decision for at least another year until we've had a chance to fully test the new readers. For quite apart from any other considerations, extremely high costs are involved in switching to new readers for all Grade 1 to 6 classrooms in the province.

"There are six different texts under experiment now. Two are quite new series and there are other and newer series coming on the market. There is also an upsurge of interest to turn out new series which would be Canadian rather than American."

Successive editions of the teachers' guide book to the Curriculum Foundation Series have themselves recognized the trend and there has, the two officials agreed, been a trend in them to an earlier introduction of phonic elements on a permissive basis. Manitoba teachers still use the 1948 edition. "But to shift to the 1952 edition would be to introduce a book that is already 10 years old," Bateman explained.

"Some of these classroom tests take three years to complete. One has already been under test for two full years. We have to turn to the practising teachers for their reports on the readers unless we want to be a bunch of ivory tower jackasses. And so it takes time to reach a sound decision."

Mary Johnson's six years of "pecking away at one single problem" may have had more effect than she yet realizes. (end of quotes),

The Weekend Magazine is a beautifully printed, feature supplement of Canada Wide Feature Service, Ltd. which is supplied to the major newspapers in 27 cities.

Comments by Helen Bowyer

The S.P.B. has its own special reasons for congratulating the Weekend Magazine of the Winnipeg Tribune on its eulogy of Mrs. Mary Johnson. She was an early contributor to our fledgling publication and has since been an arresting source of information on the state of reading both in our northern neighbor and in other countries of the English-speaking world.

Moreover, anyone actively crusading against *look-and-say* is to that extent, a colleague of ours. Like us, the *back-to-phonics* advocate realizes that English is an alphabetic language, not an ideographic one. He recognizes that its print is made up of sequences of letters and letter combinations, each one of which is *intended* to visualize one of the forty basic sounds, of which our spoken tongue is composed. Thus the printed word *dog* is a sequence of the letters d,o,g, and quite correctly visualizes the sequence of basic speech sounds we utter in the second member of the sentence, "The dog is an immemorial friend of man." If this correspondence of symbol and sound held for: *one, child, his, mother, know, gnat, phlegm*, and thousands of other such everyday words, "*back-to-phonics*" would be all that is needed to solve our reading problem, and the Bulletin's campaign for spelling reform would be as superfluous as gilding a ten dollar gold piece.

But it is precisely because this symbol-sound correspondence doesn't hold often enough, that *look-and-say* drove phonics from our schools. Instead of the merely forty symbols (letters and letter combinations) required to give each basic sound the single, consistent, and wholly predictable visualization which truly efficient spelling demands, there are some seventy such phonograms, not one of which can be depended on "*to do its job, its whole job, and nothing but its job*" by itself. For instance, j permits g to oust it from *gem*, and dge to take its place in such words as *pledge, ridge, budge*, which obviously should transmute themselves as *plej, rij, buj*. Ea serves with equal aplomb in *mead, bread, heard*, and ou in *four, tour, sour*. T thinks nothing of letting d pinch-hit for it in the past tense of whole categories of verbs – vide: *dropped, talked, puffed* – and s takes over for z in

thousands of words and their inflections – *girls, rose, Nan's, raises, noises, teaches, and use* (which is it, *use* or *uze*?).

It all works out that we have 251 common spellings (and more than 200 less common ones) for our 40 basic speech sounds and not one of them does the *back-to-phonics* movement propose to drop!

The American school had been struggling with this monstrous superfluity for almost three centuries when new compulsory attendance laws triggered what its leadership hoped would be a way out of it. Until then, the kid who couldn't learn to read could usually drop out of school at the age of 12, but now the school had to keep him till 16. Away, then, with all this futile sounding out of *who, do, you, through, grew, blue, evil, devil, weevil, bevel*, they said, let's teach the word as one piece and be done with it,

Why desperation should have taken this turn is something for the psychologist of our phonemic future to diagnose. For not only did our education archives have on record a number of highly successful experiments here and in England in the "teeching ov reeding and rieting bie meenz ov wun-too-wun alfabets", but the mere crossing of a bridge at El Paso or Brownsville landed one on the northern edge of some 3,500,000 square miles of Spanish-speaking territory where all education from first grade through medicine, law, engineering was carried on through a notation which closely approximated that ideal. There is no use pleading that a comparable regularizing of our spelling couldn't have been brought about because the public wouldn't stand for it. When have our schools ever sought the acquiescence of the public? When has the reform which would transfigure the lives of millions of their children ever been presented to them as other than a thing to ridicule or to be brushed off as wholly impracticable?

Well, now the time of a second great discard may be approaching – the discard of this 30 year reign of *look-and-say*. Is it really thinkable that the best we can do is to return to "*phonics*" applied to the same old 251 shifting spellings of our 40 basic speech sounds? And this in the face of the big English project now half way through its second year, in which 2500 moppets from 4 to 6 years old are careering through phonemic primers, readers and story books with an ease, speed and enjoyment which one headmaster describes as "fantastic" and a headmistress as "simply out of this world!"

There is just one condition under which "back-to-phonics" is worth the gallant struggle our friend is waging for it. And that is when the print to which this method is applied shall be itself one-to-one-phonemic, that every new word the child meets from the first primer on, shall smile up at him with "Just sound me out. If you know my symbols, you can't go wrong."

(Miss Bowyer is a retired teacher, with experience in teaching "South of the border.")

3. Wy Jonni Cant Spel

Now that the experts have slugged it out over why Johnny can't read, I hope they'll turn next to spelling. Something's got to be done if we're to save what's left of the English language.

Concerned about my young son's imaginative spelling, I told him the other day he'd never get into college unless he learned to spell the way other people spell. "Look around you," I suggested. "That's the way to learn."

Full of enthusiasm, he began by studying labels of grocery and house-hold items on the kitchen shelves, items such as Cheez Whiz and Reddi Wip, Klear, Hi Lite, Sunkist, and Renuzit.

"I thought cheese was spelled 'c-h-e-s-e'," he said.

Deciding that maybe household items weren't such a good idea, I took him downtown (passing a "Slo" sign and a nite club on the way) to the 5-and-10. There, we found Glotone pencils and Ezerase pads of typing paper. Over a counter full of ribbons was the notice "Qualiti-Packt."

"Is that how you spell "packed"?" he asked, puzzled.

I told him no, that generally past participles ended in "ed."

"Then why do they spell it with a 't'?" he wanted to know.

The same question occurred to me. At first I thought maybe they were economizing on letters and thereby saving space or money or both. "Qualiti" has the same number of letters as "Quality." There must be some other reason.

Continuing on to the drug store, we found Vu-Lighter, Pana-Vue, Heet, Thum, and Numzit. By this time it was becoming evident to me that my son could pick up more mistakes in spelling if he followed product signs than even his fertile mind could conjure. This thought ended the spelling lesson.

What worries me is that these corruptions are constantly in view, not only in stores but at home, along the highway, on television. What chance has a poor spelling teacher got when Klear and Chex and Chooz come pouring out of 55 million TV sets?

Certain spelling changes, it seems, are virtually mandatory. C must become K wherever possible, and if two C words or a C and a K word come together, they both become K. Thus we have "Krispy Kreme," "King Korn," "Kuntry Kitchen," etc.

Not content with changing spelling, the merchandisers have taken to legitimizing lazy pronunciation. Munching on breakfast cereal recently, I was jolted wide awake when I glanced at the only reading matter nearby, on the back of the cereal box. "Boys! Girls!" the blurb shouted. "It's just like havin' Huck and Yogi join you for breakfast. Makes eatin' more fun for everyone, mornin, noon, or night." This folksy ad was so revoltin' to me I made a mental note to buy a different brand

of cereal next time.

The question I keep asking myself is "Why?" I suppose we can blame Madison Avenue. (They've been blamed for everything else.) Maybe the practical businessman says to his agency, "I want to sell this product. Think up ways to get the customers to notice it, like it, and buy it." And Madison Avenue has evidently become convinced that names in their natural state are never as appealing as those altered, added to, or otherwise contorted.

It appears that wherever another letter can be substituted for the correct one and the word still left reasonably intelligible, they'll do it. Perhaps the aim is simply to attract the customer's attention amid a jungle of bright packages, extravagant claims, and persuasive exhortations. Or maybe it goes beyond this. Maybe the thinking is that departing from orthodox spelling, cuteness-wise, makes the product seem homier, more intimate; somehow transforms the manufacturer from a big wealthy, remote corporation into a simple, friendly little firm. ("Why, they also misspell, even as you and I.") and anyway, the public mistrusts too perfect English and subconsciously approves of a mistake here and there. Witness the success of country "stoars" with their "bargin daze," and other contrived mistakes. Here, people feel, you will find honesty, simplicity, trustworthiness. Or so, perhaps, runs the thinking of the agencies.

Well, I wish the experts luck, and I'm sure a lot of discouraged school teachers do, too. But I'm not very optimistic. I think we're fighting something bigger than ourselves.

(From Minutes, Magazine of Nationwide Insurance)
Reprinted from the Alabama School Journal.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p4 in the printed version]

The International Language Review

is now in its eighth year of publication. Its readers comprise professional linguists, inventors of interlanguage systems, and interested students in some fifty lands abroad. The Review is an open forum, issued without prejudice for or against any international language system and is primarily devoted to research. Many public libraries have complete files of the Review, the only publication of its kind in the world. English is the editorial language used but articles also appear in Interlingua, Esperanto, Ido and other constructed idioms, together with articles in the ethnic tongues. The publication appears quarterly and the yearly subscription is \$2.50, payable in advance. Back issues and specimen copies are available at 65 cents each. Advertising rates will be sent on request. Address: Floyd Hardin, Editor, Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 pp5,6 in the printed version]

4. An English Language School in the U.S.S.R., by Nikolai Anastasiev.

Reprinted from U.S.S.R., Soviet Life Today, Nov. 1962

(Ed. note: It is a large (10½ x 14 inch) magazine, beautifully printed with many color pictures, published by reciprocal agreement between the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union, which allows circulation of the magazine AMERIKA in the Soviet Union.)

The article is accompanied by six large photographs, which we wish we could afford to print. One of them shows a close-up of a young teacher with her lips pursed in pronouncing "th" and her 7 year-old pupil imitating the sound. The picture is captioned "After a year of study these second graders will have a basic vocabulary of 300 to 400 English words." Another picture shows a group of pupils. It is entitled "Sokolniki School follows the standard course of study except for the English language emphasis." Another picture shows pupils making a layout for a newspaper. The caption – "Making up the class newspaper – in English, of course. This one is published fortnightly." A fourth picture taken over the shoulder of the teacher, shows a classroom of students with earphones. The teacher has a multiple switchboard in front of her by which she can answer through the microphone any student who asks a question. The caption – "The Linguaphone room. The Sokolniki School has 674 students and 15 English language teachers." The other two pictures show students getting manual training.

The usual sights and sounds in this school during recess are those found in any one of a hundred schools in Moscow – the high pitched chatter of seven and eight-year olds and the deeper voices of their 17-year-old fellows; shy first-graders, self-confident upperclassmen and bustling teachers.

Algebra is taught here as in any other school, and the youngsters do the same exercises in the gym. And yet this school is different.

What first strikes the eye are the many wall newspapers written in English and the somewhat unexpected portraits of Hemingway, Dickens and Oscar Wilde on the walls. Listen to the chatter more closely and you can hear English mixed with Russian.

This is English School No. 1 in Sokolniki, an old section of Moscow. The first of the foreign language schools it was opened in 1949. Since then a hundred others like it, in which the teaching is done in English, French or German, have been set up in the capital and other cities. The experimental project has been so successful that in the next three years the number of foreign language schools in the Soviet Union will be increased to 700.

When the Sokolniki school first opened, only those with at least a minimal knowledge of English were accepted. But that entrance requirement has since been dropped, and now dozens of seven-year-olds, ordinary Soviet school children, begin an intensive study of English in the second grade. In the conventional school English is taught beginning with either the third or the fifth grade for two

hours a week as against the four hours devoted to it in the second grade of the special school.

The lesson is beginning. We somehow manage to get our knees under the school desk and look around the room. The class is small – eight or nine instead of the customary 30. The reason is obvious. The teacher is able to call on each of the children several times during the hour. They are kept busy and their interest does not lag.

Teacher Alexandra Lapushkina uses an ABC chart, attractively illustrated children's books and the pictures hanging on the wall to teach the new words for the day. She leads the class in a recitation of a simple English rhyme. For phonetics drill, she improvises contests for the best pronunciation of difficult sounds like "th" and "w." These and a variety of other teaching devices give the children a vocabulary of 300 to 400 words by the end of the school year.

In the lower grades learning is motivated by games, as it should be for young children; later on the method of teaching is more direct. Beginning with the sixth grade, English is given daily. The material is more difficult and more diversified, of course, and includes grammar, reading and translation from original literary texts and oral reports on' articles taken from British and American newspapers.

Upper-grade teacher Lyubov Shaverneva tells us that she frequently opens the lesson with a ten-minute conversational exercise. The students speak extemporaneously on anything that comes to mind – from home chores to cosmic flights. This creates a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

By this time the youngsters have acquired a vocabulary of 3,500 to 4,000 words and can speak without pondering every word and even with, some degree of fluency. For more drill in pronunciation and intonation the teachers this year added special material in phonetics. The school has a large linguaphone room in which there is a microphone on each desk and a good library of tape recordings in English. Also this year the course of study was rearranged to give two hours a week to technical translations, helpful for the many graduates who go on to the sciences or technical fields.

Home reading from Mark Twain, Somerset Maugham and other British and American writers, classic and contemporary, gets heavy emphasis. This is the bridge between the language lessons and the classes in English and American literature, taught in English, in the eighth through eleventh grades. The senior has a large enough vocabulary by then – some 5,000 words – to manage the reading, which ranges from the stories of Beowulf to the "angry young men," from Benjamin Franklin to Arthur Miller and Jack Kerouac. Leafing through the course assignments you will find excerpts from Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens, O. Henry, Galsworthy and Hemingway.

This is how the study chain is linked: The children progress from the language to the literature to an understanding of the country and its people. Where else but in its literature is the talent, strength, weakness of a people – its very soul – more intimately revealed?

And here is another link in the chain. The classes in the economic geography of foreign countries, a

required course in all schools, are given in English. Thus a knowledge of the spiritual life of a people is enriched by a knowledge of their economy.

The chain has many more links. The Sokolniki school works closely with the USSR – Great Britain Society, of which it is a collective member. The students and teachers are frequent guests at the get-togethers with foreign delegations that the society arranges. They speak at Friendship House forums and take part in radio broadcasts to England and the United States. Some of them make trips abroad as representatives of the society.

Sokolniki students have regular transoceanic contact – via the postman – with students of the George School in Pennsylvania. They exchange not only news but confidences. Film director Niark Donskoy must have been aware that the Sokolniki students acquire real insight into the thoughts and feelings of their English and American pen pals; he chose a Sokolniki girl to play the English heroine in his *Hello Children*.

You hear English spoken not only in the classrooms but in the auditorium, where the seniors put on such plays as Shaw's *Pygmalion* and Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in very creditable English and with dramatic verve. Dreiser's *The Trap*, recently staged by the indefatigable Alexandra Lapushkin, made a big hit.

When the Sokolniki school bell rings for the last time for the seniors and they leave with school diplomas, some enter the Foreign Languages Institute, others enroll in the philology faculty of Moscow University or teacher training schools, and still others move along into the sciences. Most of them specialize in teaching English or English literature.

But no matter what field a Sokolniki graduate enters – law or mathematics, philology or chemistry – he finds his language training useful. After all, communication between peoples without recourse to interpreters makes it infinitely easier for them to learn about each other's way of life. The USSR Council of Ministers had just that in mind when it called for improvement in foreign language teaching in its decision last year. And Richard H. McFeely, principal of the George School, must have had much the same thing in mind when he wrote in the Sokolniki Visitor's Book: "I am glad George School is affiliating with this school. I hope that the bonds of friendship, trust and understanding will grow stronger through this affiliation."

5. The G. B. Shaw Contest Alphabet, by Dr. Peter MacCarthy,

Interest in the reform of written English continues to grow. In contradistinction to schemes for rearranging the existing roman letters (such as that of the Simplified Spelling Society of Great Britain) and schemes for adding new letters to the existing ones (such as the Fonetik Alfabet of the Simpler Spelling Assoc. of America), the latest development is the recent publication of the Shaw Alphabet Edition of Bernard Shaw's play *Androcles and the Lion* (Penguin Books, 50 cents), and with it, the appearance of a system of writing involving an entirely new (non-roman) design, having a total of 48 symbols (including 8 compounds or ligatures).

The main theoretical and practical advantages of this new alphabet are:—

1. Learning how to spell English becomes quite a simple process, and takes a fraction of the time now required.
2. Written English occupies one third less space (for the same size letter), leading to a saving of paper, ink, wages (for e.g. printers and typists), transport and storage costs (for e. g. all books and newspapers), that must amount to billions of dollars annually. (Compared to this saving, any transitional costs on, for example, new printing type fonts and typewriters, would be insignificant.)
3. If the new design were adopted – as it could easily be – to other languages (some of which have imperfect or involved systems of writing), world literacy would be furthered.
4. One intrinsic defect of the roman alphabet *per se* cannot be overcome by *rearranging* the roman letters, namely that there are too few letters, 26, for writing most languages on a "one sound= one symbol" basis. Shavian has over 40 to start with, and several more would undoubtedly be added for other languages as the need arose.
5. Another defect which would not be eradicated even by *adding* to the number of 'roman' letters is the traditional use of 'capitals', practically all of which have shapes different from the corresponding 'small' letters, and the use of different forms again in handwriting, as opposed to print or type. Shavian uses unchanged shapes throughout.
6. Objections are often raised to interfering or 'tampering' with our ordinary spelling on the grounds that 'phonetic' spellings (e. g. enuf, luv, wot) look illiterate, dialectal, comic, or obscene (because of various associations) or that our traditional orthography is somehow 'sacred', or that the derivation of words is revealed or can somehow be studied by looking at their current spellings. We all know what a half-truth is involved in this last statement, but the point is that *none* of the above objections can be made to an alphabet which starts with no associations of any kind, quite apart from its own positive merits. Our traditional roman spellings remain intact, for all to study who wish, and for people to use as long as they are not convinced of the pointlessness of so doing. This might take several generations (roman numerals linger on even now, for special purposes, but are no longer used for doing sums!); on the other hand, it might not.

Useful action at the present time is limited to learning to read and write in Shavian. Let interested readers have a try at using it among themselves!

Dr. Peter MacCarthy is Chairman of Dept. of Phonetics, Univ. of Leeds, Eng,

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**6. A University of London Institute of Education Report
by John Downing, Research Officer.
Headteachers' Opinions on the First Year [\[1\]](#) of the Augmented Roman
Alphabet Experiment in Their Infants' Classes.**

Summary

The headteachers of the 19 schools where the current A.R. alphabet experimental project is being conducted in the Infants' classes were asked to give a careful judgment of its effects up to June 1st, 1962, two and a half terms after its first introduction (9 months).

This document sets out the headteachers' general findings, which may be summed up as follows:

1. Reading standards have improved in ALL schools where A.R. is being used for Infant teaching.
2. Learning to read has been more rapid in ALL A.R. Infants' schools throughout the range of ability.
3. Slow learners have made better progress with A.R. 17 out of 19 schools report fewer non-starters in the A.R. Infants' classes.
4. Learning to read A.R. raises the young beginners' level of self-confidence. (Reported by 17 out of 19 schools.)
5. Children in the A.R. classes show greater enthusiasm for reading and more interest in and love of books. (Reported by 18 out of 19 schools.)
6. A.R. permits the child to learn more independently. (Reported by 16 out of 19 schools.)
7. A.R. stimulates creative writing at an earlier age. (Reported by 17 out of 19 schools.)
8. Nearly half of the schools (9 out of 19) suggest that children in the A.R. classes have a more positive attitude toward school "work".
9. Indications from the first children to approach or complete the transition from A.R. to Traditional Orthography (T.O.) are that it often occurs incidentally and so far has caused no confusion or difficulty. This confirms the findings of previous experiments with transitional spellings.

It is concluded that there has been a timely introduction of A.R. into the schools and that new experiments with A.R. can be undertaken with confidence.

Objective data from reading tests and progress records will become available for a sub-sample of experimental and control classes by October.

Sincere thanks are offered to teachers and others for their great efforts in launching and carrying on this pioneering research project.

If financial aid and collaboration from other University centres becomes available, this line of research may be expanded rapidly, for supplies of A.R. books are available for new experiments and Sir James Pitman has made A.R. freely available to anyone, anywhere in the world to apply it in the teaching of reading.

The Infants' Schools Experiment

In September, 1961, twenty-one Infants' schools began to use the new Augmented Roman alphabet (A.R.) for the first stage in teaching beginners to read. These 21 schools represent the first phase of the London University Institute of Education's research into the effectiveness of this new medium for preventing failure in learning to read.

A.R has been designed specifically for the purpose of helping beginners to learn to read more successfully than they do at present. It is a more simple and more consistent printed code for the English language which the child uses until he has developed skill in deciphering the meaning of printed words and sentences. When the child is reading A.R. with fluency and confidence, he transfers this skill to reading the traditional orthography of English.

A full description of the A.R. alphabet and its use in teaching reading may be found in the following publications:

Sir James Pitman, "*Learning to Read*", reprinted from the February, 1961 issue of the Journal of the Royal Society of Arts.

John A. Downing, "*to bee or not to be*", published in England by Cassell & Co, London, June, 1962, and in America by Pitmans Publishing Co, New York.

John A. Downing, "*A New Two-Stage Method to Help Children to Learn to Read*," Pitman Press, Bath, Eng.

The children using the new A.R. alphabet are being tested on objective tests of reading and other related subjects of the curriculum and the results are being compared with appropriate control groups of children learning to read with the same basic set of primers printed in the traditional orthography. Those children who entered school last September have been tested and the results are currently being analysed, but it is not expected that these data can be reported until after October, 1962. Even then, these first objective data will represent the results from only that small sub-sample of the total sample to be studied in the A.R. Infants' School experimental programme which has completed one year in the experimental classes.

It was felt that, in the interim period before objective data can be published, a valuable first assessment of A.R. could be obtained by calling upon the headteachers who have been using AR. in the past year to give their judgements of the effects of the new medium on the children as compared with normal conditions in the previous years.

Headteachers' Assessments of A.R's Effectiveness

At the end of May, 1962, these headteachers were asked to give their "considered judgement" as to what changes (if any) had been brought about by the introduction of the new medium.

This guide on the points to consider in making their report was provided. These questions were worded neutrally in order to be fair and objective.

Guide provided to headteachers making this report

It is realized that the scientific data cannot be available as yet, but what Dr. Wall and the other members of the A.R. Steering Committee would like to have is the considered judgment of the headteachers at present undertaking the research in their schools. They would particularly like to have your opinion on the following points:

1. How do the *reading standards* compare with previous years?
2. Is there any change in the proportion of real *non-starters* at reading (i.e. that bottom group)?
3. Now does the *rate of progress* compare with previous years?
4. How does the A.R. children's level of *confidence* compare with previous years?
5. How does their level of *enthusiasm for reading* compare with past years?
6. How do standards of *creative writing* compare with previous years?

7. Are there any noticeable differences in the A.R. children's *general behaviour* in school this year? (e.g. their attitude to school work in general).
8. Has A.R. made any difference to the class teacher's work in teaching reading? (e.g. do the children need more individual attention or can *they get on by themselves* with A.R.?)
9. Has there been any change in the children's general attitude to books and reading?
10. Any other important changes you believe A.R. has brought about in your school.

It should also be noted that the headteachers in the County Borough of Oldham were considering a different educational situation to the one existing in the other schools in the sample. In Oldham, children begin school in the September of the *school year* in which they attain their fifth birthday, whereas in the other areas pupils are generally admitted at the beginning of the term in which they reach their fifth birthday. Thus, in considering the first year of A.R., the headteachers at Oldham were concerned with a teaching situation which differed in some important respects from the one existing in the other schools; thus

- (a) At Oldham, the children started their schooling *at a younger age*. Many were only *four years old* at the start of the experiment.
- (b) In Staffordshire, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Wolverhampton, Burton-upon-Trent, and Harrow the children were often *five years of age* at the start.
- (c) At Oldham, *all* of the pupils at the time of making the report had been in school two and a half terms. In the other areas, one third of the children had been in school for two and a half terms, one third for one and a half terms, and one third for only a few weeks.

The Oldham headteachers were thus considering A.R.'s effect with younger children, but after a clear run of two and a half terms. The other headteachers on the other hand were dealing with older children, who at the time were at three different stages of teaching. They had to take this into account when reporting the overall effect of A.R.

Of the 21 schools who began the A.R. experiment with infants' classes last September, only 19 are covered in this report (Oldham-4, others-15). The two small schools not included were lost to the experiment when one of them was closed and the children sent to other schools, and the other lost its qualified teacher.

RESULTS

1. Reading Standards Improved in All Schools.

Every one of the headteachers of the experimental group of schools reports a rise in reading attainments. The majority of heads confine themselves simply to stating that standards are better, preferring to leave the degree of success to be shown by the objective test data which will be available in the coming months. 11 of the 19 schools in the experiment made comments of this kind.

- a "Reading standards are higher than in previous years." (North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. school) [\[2\]](#)
 - b. "Standards are better than in previous years." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of I. School) [\[3\]](#)
 - c. "There is a higher reading standard all through the class." (Oldham headmistress of I. School.)
- Six heads expressed their satisfaction with A.R. in more emphatic language, such as:
- d. "Reading standards this year are far higher than previously." (Oldham headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
 - e. "Reading standards are definitely better." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of I. School.)

Two heads preferred to qualify their opinion that standards had improved, by giving a more cautious and detailed description of the results of A.R., teaching, for example:

- f. "The brighter children have advanced further and more quickly. The middle group have advanced more quickly. Some of the lower group have made more progress, but the others still have found difficulties." (Stoke-on-Trent headmaster of J.M., & I. School.)

2. Learning is More Rapid in All Schools

All the headteachers reported that progress in learning to read has been more rapid in the A.R. classes, the majority making such statements as, for example:

- a. "The rate of progress has been more rapid." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- b. "The children have begun to read at an earlier age" (Newcastle-under-Lyme headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- c. "Children seem to progress at a quicker rate and are eager to find out words for themselves." (Oldham headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)

Seven of the 19 heads used more emphatic phrases, as:

- d. "Much higher rate of progress." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- e. "Much faster than usual." (Harrow headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

A number of heads remind us of the need to take account of individual differences in learning ability, for example:

- f. "The rate of progress is quicker, varying with the ability of the children." North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
- g. "The rate of progress is much quicker for the above average child and very considerably quicker for the below average child." (North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

The picture of the differential effect of A.R. at varying levels of general ability in the children seems well described by one headmaster, who says:

- h. "Rate of progress is faster. The slower children are showing a small gain in this field, the average child is showing considerable gain, whilst the top 25% are showing phenomenal gains not only in the fact that they have read more basic readers but that they have also read, and read for pleasure, some 50 to 100 other little books." (Oldham headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

This same headmaster later in his report estimates that, taking into account these individual differences in ability, *there is an overall saving of about one year's schooling*. He says:

- i. "Our bright children are almost equal to children 12 months ahead, allowing for the transition process, but they have read more books and in general are reading more difficult books except that they are in A.R. The written work compares favourably with that of the *third year* except that it is in A.R. The slower children are equally as good as the children *at the lower end of Infant 2*, they have more confidence and show more interest. I would therefore say that *the overall gain taking into consideration bright and slow children is approximately one year's schooling.*"

3. The Slower Learners Make Better Progress With A.R.

Only 2 out of the 19 headteachers feel that it is too early to assess the effectiveness of A.R. in cutting down the proportion of children who fail to make even a start in learning to read. Clearly the rate of intellectual development in the individual child is an *important factor here*. It seems likely that there will be cases where the level of mental ability needed to solve the problems involved in learning to read even the simpler and more consistent system of A.R. will not have been reached *yet* in the more slowly developing child. Thus our knowledge of the extent to which A.R. helps these slower children is unlikely to be completed until much later when they have been given the longer opportunity the need to complete any learning task.

Nevertheless, 17 out of the 19 schools report that they have fewer non-starters in the A.R. infant's classes. In Oldham where the headteachers are looking at the clearer picture of all the children starting at the beginning of the school year, there is unanimous agreement that A.R. has cut down the proportion of non-starters.

One headmaster of a rural school in Staffordshire feels that one of the most significant features of the use of A.R. is "the excellent progress made by those who, under the old scheme, would have been regarded as slow starters.... There are no non-starters this year compared with about 50% in previous years."

It is important to take account of the extent to which any educational method under investigation may serve to break through barriers which the school normally has great difficulties in overcoming.

Retarded mental development is one such factor which we have already discussed. Another is the vicious circle of and home environment; and A.R. appears to be helping here too, for several of the schools reporting reduction in the number of non-starters, draw their children from under-privileged areas.

One headmaster in an area of heavy industry in Staffordshire is particularly impressed by A.R.'s effect in encouraging children to express themselves orally and in writing. He feels that this is "of vital importance when considered against the background of the housing area from which most of the children are drawn. It is therefore very heartening to find that the children who are doing really well include many for whom the home is simply a night's board and lodgings."

4. Learning to Read A.R. Raises the Young Beginner's Level of Self-Confidence

All but 2 of the schools report that children appear to be more confident in their approach to reading. The following comments are typical of this majority view:

- a. "Augmented Roman is responsible for a great increase in confidence." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- b. "Children are more confident in dealing with words outside the reading scheme." (South Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
- c. "Much greater confidence shown in tackling new work." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. school)
- d. "This is one of the remarkable outcomes of the experiment. The children at a very early age become confident of their ability to learn to read." (Harrow headmaster of J.M. & I., School.)

The Oldham headmistress of a J.M. & I. School writes of ". . . the consistency of rules having simplified the beginner's task, giving confidence ... that is to say, a rational approach to deciphering a consistent alphabet is rewarded by success and the successful rational approach is therefore confidently pursued. The comment is particularly interesting since the Oldham School from which this finding comes is one in which a predominantly look-and-say approach is followed in the early stages. It seems therefore that these children may have developed insight into the alphabetic nature of A.R. printed English *through discovering for themselves* the consistent relationship between the A.R. letters and the phonemes they represent.

If these findings are confirmed, the whole question of reading readiness and mental age will have to be reopened, for it seems that the established principle that a mental age of six and a half years is essential before phonic word building can be accomplished may apply to phonic word building only in *traditionally printed English*. A lower level of intellectual development may suffice where the

language is coded consistently by the alphabet and spelling – as it is in A.R. If this is so, all children – bright, average, and dull – should be ready for reading at an earlier age for A.R. than for traditional orthography.

5. Greater Enthusiasm for Reading and More Interest in Books in the A.R. Classes

The majority of headteachers are emphatic on this point, 18 out of the 19 have found this increase in enthusiasm for reading, but one of the 18 believes that the improvement applies only to his brighter infants so far. The following quotations are representative:

- a. "There is far more enthusiasm for reading. The book corner is used much more than previously, and the children really read these books, not just look at the pictures." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of I. School.)
- b. "Their enthusiasm for reading has to be seen to be believed . . . Some children have had to be urged to do something else for a change," (Oldham headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
- c. All have been concerned because these children preferred to sit with their nose in books rather than play with the many and varied toys in the class-room." (Oldham headmistress of I. School.)
- d. "Children are much more enthusiastic to read books in the book corner, for these are now within their capability." (South Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. and I. School)

It is important to note that this increased enthusiasm is not just for "reading" as an official activity of the school curriculum, but it applies especially to the books in the library corner which children can go to in free-choice periods of the school day. The majority of headteachers report this increased interest in books in the library corner.

- e. "Books are read at any odd moment and greatly loved by the children." (Oldham headmaster of J.M. and I. School.)
- f. "They have acquired a healthy attitude to reading and this is particularly noticeable during undirected activity periods, when so many choose to read books rather than work with materials." (Newcastle-under-Lyme headmistress of J.M. & I. School.) Several headteachers report that the A.R., children enjoy reading *to each other* more when they go to the book corner,
- g. "They read for meaning more now and often read stories to each other instead of by themselves." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of I. School.)
- h. "Interest in books is greater and the majority are not satisfied with just reading pictures but want to find out the reading content for themselves, Often they can be found happily engaged not only reading to themselves but reading to other children in small groups." (Oldham headmistress of J.M. & I. School)

No matter how efficient a method may be in training children in the skill of reading it can never be accounted successful unless it results in pupils developing a positive attitude toward books. It is, therefore, particularly encouraging that four fifths of the headteachers report that children in the A.R. classes love their books more than their previous pupils have done, while the remaining heads feel that the A.R. children love their books just as well as ever their pupils have in the past.

6. The Effect of A.R. on the Infants' Teacher's Work

Headteachers were asked to consider if the use of A.R. had made any difference to the class teacher's work in teaching reading, and 16 out of 19 reported a shift in the direction of the teacher's activities during these first two and a half terms.

This change appears to have resulted from the fact that the greater simplicity and consistency of A.R. *permits the child* to learn more independently.

- a. "Children can get on better by themselves, for in both reading and free writing they are able to build words instead of coming to ask the teacher. Their concentration is less interrupted." (South Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
- b. "More children are able to get on by themselves with A.R. and they enjoy reading and working alone." (Newcastle-under-Lyme headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- c. "Children are better able to progress on their own." (Burton-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)

This greater independence is, of course, not present from the start. It comes only when the pupil has gained real insight into the *phonemic* nature of A.R., as several headteachers point out in their reports:

- d. "No change in the initial stages – once the children are past the stage of written expression work, they are able to get on better by themselves with A.R." (North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School)
- e. "It has helped with the children who can build up words for themselves, but the children who are still using 'look-and-say' and the early stages of 'phonics' need as much help." (Stoke-on-Trent headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

However, the greater independence of the pupils once past the word-building stage, does not mean less work for the class teacher. It rather brings a shift in her teaching activities.

- f. "The children get on much better by themselves in A.R. Once they have learned to build for themselves they are able to read at a much greater speed than previously, but this of itself makes more work for the teacher who, until she is sure of the child's competence, needs to give more time to hearing the children read than previously." (Harrow headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
- g. "Children get on better by themselves but demand individual attention to show work done." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)

Once the faster learners are safely on their own, the infants' teacher may give more of her time to helping the slower pupils. .

- h. "The top group children can work alone and leave the class teacher free to work with the bottom group." (Oldham headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

In summary, the headteachers' reports indicate that children become independent in their reading at an earlier stage than is usual in the infants' school. Since this independence has been brought forward to the first year classes, it may have resulted in the slower pupils having rather more individual attention than is normally possible where all or nearly all members of the class need it.

This finding should be carefully followed up since a vital test of any teaching method today is the extent to which it makes the most economic use of valuable teaching skill, the present scarcity of which probably produces its most harmful effects in the beginning classes of our infants' schools.

7. Creative Writing Stimulated by A.R.

17 of the 19 schools using A.R. for the beginning stage of reading instruction report improvements in creative writing in the first year infants' classes.

Some headteachers say that in the past, infants in the first year at school had made little or no attempt at creative writing, but that this year with A.R. had produced a marked change. 4 and 5 year-old children for the first time were putting their thoughts on paper.

- a. "Very little was attempted previously but now it keeps pace with reading." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of I. School)
- b. "The standards of creative writing are much better – very little expression work had been done previously by the Reception class children." (North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

Several heads report important improvements in children's creative writing this year as compared with previous years:

- c. "Greatest improvement of all found in this field, of writing." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- d. "Children have become more *independent in creative writing* as well as reading." (Burton-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. school.)
- e. "The standard of creative writing is much higher this year. More children are writing individual stories and these are considerably longer and easier to read." (Newcastle-under-Lyme headmistress of J.M. & I. School)
- f. "Furthermore, and I am not sure whether this in fact is not the most important result of the year's work, is the fact that the child's willingness to express himself both orally and in writing is vastly superior to that of the T.O. child of the same age (Wolverhampton headmaster of J.M. & I. School)

Some idea of the nature of this improvement in creative writing at this early stage is provided by the following report on *four year-old authors* at one Oldham school.

- g. "Creative writing in the first class of the Infants' School usually consists of 2 or 3 short sentences at best. These children (in the A.R. experimental class) write freely. The better ones write stories like "Cinderella", "Brer Fox" retold in their own words, or inventions of their own, or reports of topical events, which may vary from 30 to 100 words, with an excellent degree of continuity and relatively few mistakes. In my experience, this is unheard of in 'Reception' class." (Oldham headmaster of J. M. & I. School.)

Emphasis is placed on the freedom which these 4 and year-olds have felt in putting their own ideas into written words,

- h. "The standard of creative writing has improved *almost beyond comparison*. Children in the reception class (in previous years) could write only the simplest sentences, relying on words in the reading scheme, but now any and every word is attempted, and attempted with amazing success. Children really are able to express themselves freely and flowingly. Here Augmented Roman has proved itself to be very successful." (South Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)
- i. "Children write more freely than in previous years." (North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School)

The source of this greater freedom and fluency in creative writing is indicated by a final quotation:

- j. "Creative writing: This now shows outstanding improvement with the September, 1961 intake. The children no longer have to play safe and restrict what they write to the words they know they can spell. They feel free to put their thoughts on paper just as they come to them. There is less repetition and the matter is more interesting." (Harrow headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

Perhaps the important difference is indicated by the Harrow headmaster's use of the words "feel free" Many infants' schools give beginners absolute freedom in their first efforts at creative writing. Certainly infants' teachers try to avoid discouraging beginners by emphasising spelling errors. Perhaps A.R. succeeds because it does not have that aura of difficulty about it which our traditional spelling has. Perhaps success in analysing words in A.R. when reading breeds confidence in being able to build words in A.R. with pencil and paper.

8. A.R. and Attitudes to School Work

Headteachers were asked to report if the pupils in the A.R. classes displayed attitudes to school work in general which differed in any way from those of pupils in previous years. Nearly a half of the schools say that they have noticed no real differences in the children's general behaviour, nine find no change up to May 31st and one makes no comment at this stage.

However, 9 out of 19 heads do report changes and there seems to be a common thread to these findings. There appears to be a feeling that the children learning to read with A.R. are more mature than usual, and have a greater liking for school work:

- a. "They seem slightly more mature in outlook and more settled in behaviour. This is possibly due to the increased interest in books, writing and drawing, all quiet occupations." (Oldham headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- b. "Their behaviour would appear to be a little more mature in consequence of their command over reading and writing. They want to do things more and play less. I think that they all really like to come to school." (Oldham headmaster of J.M. & I. school)
- c. "A greater enthusiasm for work." (Stoke-on-Trent headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)
- d. "Probably to a headmaster visiting the classroom from time to time, the change in the general attitude of the children is the most striking aspect of the experiment. It is not that they are better behaved as the word behaviour is generally used. They appear to have an *uninhibited proficiency* about them. They set about things with *more purposefulness*. To me they appear to manifest in their play and general attitude, a new competence which can, perhaps, be attributable to *the self-sufficiency* they have found in *so easily mastering their reading*." (Harrow headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

Although this finding is based on a minority of the headteachers' reports, it is an indication which should be followed up in future experimental classes, for clearly it would be of significance for mental hygiene, if A.R. were found to provide a system for learning to read which brought greater harmony between the aims of young beginners at school and the aims of their parents and of their teachers.

9. First Indications of Success at the Transition Stage From A.R. to Traditional Print

It was not anticipated that there would be much to report on the transition stage, because, when the headteachers were asked to give these considered judgments, no child would have been in the experimental classes for more than two and a half terms (9 months).

The first infant to make the transition from A.R. to traditional print was a five year-old girl in Stoke-on-Trent. She did so after only one term – which included a period of absence through illness. Since then a number of other children in various schools have actually passed from the A.R. reading programme to reading books in the conventional alphabet and spelling.

Clearly it is too early to judge how easy this transfer of reading skill from one system to another will be for all the children in the experiment, but the indications from the spontaneous comments of the headteachers in their reports of the situation up to June 1, 1962, are that it is likely to be achieved without difficulty. This would not be surprising since in all previous experiments where a simplified spelling system has been used for the early stages, the transfer to conventional spelling has also not created difficulty,

Nevertheless, we should not prejudge the issue of transition. We should withhold judgment until all the children have reached that stage in the reading program. As one of the headmasters puts it:

- a. "This is an interim report and one can only state facts as to the present situation. It would be wrong for example to presume that because one boy, when he has read all the available material in A.R. has easily and naturally effected his own transition to T.O. without any formal teaching and very little help from the teacher, that all the others will do the same." (Oldham headmaster of J.M. & I. school)

This same headmaster also says of the transition stage,

- b. "The brightest child has of his own accord transferred himself to T.O. and is reading the same reader as one bright child of the second year class. Four other children are almost ready for transition. It is interesting that this boy, like the first girl at Stoke-on-Trent, made the transition of his own accord, for this self-transfer is occurring frequently.
- c. "These six children have already began to transfer themselves to T.O. of a comparable standard to the last books of the A.R. scheme. Three of the children are now fluent readers in both A.R. and T.O." (Oldham headmistress of J.M. & I. School.)

Of children in the A.R. class at this same school, Mr. Maurice Harrison, Director of Education for Oldham, writes: "The teacher found some of them clustered around her desk reading two books which she had brought to school in order that she might read stories to them. One book was "The Talkative Sparrow" and the other was "Lives of the Saints". The class mistress was so surprised at the ease with which the children were reading that she asked the teacher in charge of the third year group of eight year-olds to bring copies of the most difficult book in Traditional Orthography which the best eight year-olds were expected to read. The better readers among the five year-olds read these books with ease in traditional orthography."

At a third school in Oldham, two children transferred their reading skill from A.R. books to traditionally printed ones when the supply of A.R. books in the local library ran out,

- d. "Two of the children (both still only four years old) have taken to reading T.O. because there were no books in the town's library in A.R. which they had not read." (Oldham headmistress of I. School.)

The remaining one of the four infants' schools at Oldham which have been experimenting with A.R. this year, has also commented on the ease of transition experienced by the first children to reach this stage.

- e. "Two of my children have now changed over to the T.O. reading.... the change-over causing no confusion at all. In fact, I said to them at one point, 'Oh, you have done enough reading now, wouldn't you like to go and make your seaside pictures like the other children?' The reply, "Oh, please, can we finish this book first?" (Oldham classteacher in (J.M. and I. School.)

After the transition, the results have been good in the one school to report on this point.

- f. "The most noticeable difference between the children who have transferred to T.O. as compared with previous groups of children taught in T.O. is that the A.R. groups are ALL reading fluently, i.e. without frequent hesitation and are reading with understanding, even in T.O." (North Staffordshire headmaster of J.M. & I. School.)

CONCLUSIONS

These headteachers' reports indicate that the decision to initiate the A.R. research in September, 1961, was timely and that further extensions of the A.R. experiment may be undertaken with confidence, for the general picture emerging from these reports is one of success for A.R. in cutting the time needed for learning to read and in raising children's attainment in reading.

Objective evidence on speed of learning and attainment in reading will become available by October when the analysis of test data on children who entered the control and the experimental classes in September, 1961, and of the progress records of all children who entered is expected to be completed. Data relating achievements in learning to read A.R., to mental ability will be available at a later date.

These headteachers' reports indicate that more attention should be given in future experimentation to examining the following hypotheses in addition to the basic ones already under test.

- a. That children learning to read in A.R. have greater *enthusiasm* for reading and interest in books than do children using the traditional medium.
- b. That A.R. permits children to learn to read more independently.
- c. That children using A.R. begin to write earlier, and with greater fluency.
- d. That children learning to read A.R. mature more rapidly and have a more positive *attitude towards school* learning tasks.
- e. That transition from A.R. to T.O. occurs incidentally in the majority of cases.

In addition, research methods for examining the following particularly important propositions arising immediately from this present report should be sought:

- f. Traditional conceptions of "*reading readiness*" have been determined to an important degree by failure to take account of the nature of the medium used in beginning reading.
- g. Judgements of the relative efficiency of alternate *methods of teaching* reading have been biased by failure to take account of the nature of the medium used in beginning reading.

One further important finding of the present experiment should be added at this point. This is the great interest shown by the headteachers and staff of the experimental and control schools in scientific educational research. It is perhaps this interest which has sustained them in carrying out so much of the research program themselves over and above their proper teaching duties. Without their tremendous effort in getting the experiment started and then carrying out "extraneous" duties for the research, we should never have been able to complete this first year's investigation. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all teachers and other members of the staffs of the local educational authorities for the opportunity they have given to all who are interested in improving standards of reading in English-speaking communities to find out about the value of *this new* medium for helping young beginners.

John Downing, Director, Reading Research Unit, University of London Institute of Education, London, Eng.

Notes

[1] Not a complete year.

[2] Denotes a Junior, Mixed & Infants' school taking children from age four up to eleven years.

[3] Denotes an Infants' school taking children from age four or five to seven years,

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Comments by Norman Childress.

This article shows more pointedly than any other the need for a transition step in learning to read. The whole word advocates have long held that simply because the ultimate objective is to learn to read whole words, that children should be taught only to recognize the whole words, and not have their attention called to individual parts of them. This is just as fallacious as trying to force a baby to learn to run (because that is the ultimate objective of the human being) before it learns to walk or crawl. It was at one time similar to the hard-headed method of teaching a person how to swim. Just throw the person into a pool surrounded by persons who ate swimming and tell him: "Now learn to swim or sink". Some did learn by this method, but others drowned. But even those who did learn, had such a fear and repulsion of the water that they avoided it whenever possible. The same is true of many children who learned to read by the whole word method.

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7. Africa Needs Phonemic English, by Helen Bowyer.

Of the more than 2000 languages still spoken on this planet, some 800 are found in negro Africa. This vast expanse of plain and plateau, grassland, rain forest and desert, is as large as all the United States, Alaska and Canada combined. But here, except for some five million citizens of the historically French-speaking province of Quebec, English is the tongue to which almost the whole population is born, goes to school, brings up its young and conducts its personal, communal and national life. We cannot even imagine it split into regional and tribal groups, each with its own lingo, to the total of 800 different ones. But there are urgent reasons why we must try to see most of Africa as still in this stage,

For one thing, we need Africa and are going to need her more and more. We are using up our own indigenous materials at a pace which would be frightening were it not for our access to those of the still underdeveloped continents of South America, Asia and Africa. Already we are importing more than half of our industrial requirements. By 1970, our present consumption will have doubled, our native resources will have further diminished, and we will be competing with other nations now in the process of rapid industrial growth. If we should be denied access to the raw materials of Asia, we should be seriously handicapped, but we could still maintain economic growth. But if we were also cut off from the apparently limitless mineral reservoir of Africa, we would face formidable difficulties within a decade, even though the resources of Canada and South America remained available to us.

Unless we come to a realistic understanding of what was happening – and not happening – on that vast continent, is entirely possible that this is what will come to pass. Until the last few years most of Africa was still carved up into colonies of England, France, Belgium and Portugal, and the natives themselves had little to say about the leaching of the riches beneath their soil for the benefit of America and their European overlords. Nor did any but the tiniest minority protest, for in many ways this exploitation brought with it great good to the Africans themselves. In his *Africa's Challenge to America*, Chester Bowles reports these claims of the officialdom of the Belgium Congo. "In less than fifty years we have brought peace where there was formerly continuous tribal warfare. We have stamped out cannibalism, We have established French as 'a common language and created one of the two most literate colonies in Africa. We have built hospitals and public health clinics."

"Above all, we have revealed the unlimited future of the Congo to the Congolese. Today there are steadily expanding opportunities for many of the twelve million Congolese to earn high wages and to enjoy the highest standard of living in African History. Already (1955) the average Congolese textile worker gets \$2 a day in addition to a house, food allowance, and medical care. Congolese school teachers receive wages only slightly less than your negro teachers in Mississippi."

"Political rights will come more slowly. We have our own evolution system... Our first job is to train the African to earn his own living in the modern industrial world. This means basic education and technical training. To give illiterate and backward Africans the right to vote is madness. Nor does it make sense to send hundreds of Africans to study abroad, as the British do, with the predictable result that they will come home restless, unhappy, and full of radical ideas."

Here was a view shared not only by the Portuguese government of Angola but by thousands of tribal chiefs and subchiefs. This comment by a chief even in the relatively advanced Gold Coast expresses a deeply held view which, says Chester Bowles, you will hear in most parts of Africa (1956). "The tribal way of life is still the only stable foundation of African society. My people are like children. They really understand only our own customs. Without them they would be lost.

Many Europeans have been wise enough to respect and preserve these tribal ways and we are grateful to them. Yet more and more we see young Africans spend a few years at Oxford or Harvard and return full of half digested ideas about freedom and democracy, to stir up our people against the proven ways of our forefathers. That's why many of us older Africans are in no hurry to see the Europeans abandon their authority here."

The British reaction to this attitude is reflected, more or less, in a story Mr. Bowles tells of Sir Andrew Cohen, able governor of Uganda on the northeastern border of the Belgian Congo. His Executive Council had been asked to ratify the application for a Cambridge University scholarship from a young African Congress leader who had publicly denounced the governor's policies as "facist". Sir Andrew, arguing vigorously for the approval of the scholarship, said: "If we are to have political opponents – and I welcome them – let's at least take the pains to see that they are properly educated,"

Well, it looks as if the scholarships won out. Enough young Africans came back from Harvard and Cambridge and other foreign universities to agitate most of the colonies into independence, or promised independence, within the next few years. The immediate showing has been none too good – vide the war-torn Congo. But who with any realism or knowledge of human history, expected Utopia to dawn at once? Certainly not the wiser of the returning young natives. They knew there would be a price to pay for independence – they knew that their inexperienced administrations could not for some time, achieve the competency of the seasoned European ones from which they took over. But that was the price they were willing to pay for that thing their hearts and minds had so long and so passionately demanded – the acknowledgement that the African was a man – as much a man as the European – and just as much entitled to steer his own personal and national life. But a *sine qua non* of this was that the African must be educated. Educated to live in the world of the Briton, the Frenchman, the Belgian, the United Nations, as well as in his own. And how are you going to do that in 800 different tongues and some thousands of dialects thereof?

The S.P.B. regrettably, has no correspondents in the former French or Belgian colonies, but the letters which follow give a "grass-roots" picture of present socio-educational conditions in two of the more advanced British colonies.

7.6.62 Dear Mr. Tune,

In response to your letter inviting my support, I am sending you a little more than the price of a subscription to the Spelling Progress Bulletin, and you may accept the balance as a donation.

I also enclose an article on the need to simplify English spelling if English is to survive as the *Lingua Franca* of Africa, and I have tried to stress the importance of this aspect in the struggle between Russia and the West. Only people who come in daily contact with black Africans can realize how primitive they still are, and what a big handicap the chaotic spelling of English is to them. When we have finally settled our constitutional problems, I intend to approach African members of parliament and get them to present a petition to the Federal Government to take the initiative in requesting the British Government to establish an Academy of Language and Literature with the object of simplifying English spelling, so as to assist Africans to acquire a knowledge of our language. It will probably be two years before I can make this move, but I hope that you will do what you can to promote the establishment of such an Academy in the U.S.A. I think there are far too many spelling reform societies working on their own, and the time has come to co-ordinate their efforts. I have written to some of them pointing this out.

If there is any other information you require on conditions here, or any other way I can assist you, please let me know.

Yours truly, C. R. Moore, Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia

8. English as the Lingua Franca of Africa by C.R. Moore.

Franklin D. Roosevelt called this the "age of the common man", the age in which enlightened capitalism is willing to share its wealth with the worker. It is also the age of enlightened colonialism, in which the privileged Whites have come to realize that a policy which ensures a rising standard of living for the Black Africans too, will benefit everybody in the end. This requires a higher standard of education for everyone, and it is due to this policy that the standard of literacy of the Black population in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland is the highest in the whole of Africa.

Because of the multiplicity of Bantu languages, the medium of instruction must, of necessity, be English, which is the key to the storehouse of Western knowledge and culture. Unfortunately, the Americans who meet only African intellectuals cannot realize how backward the average African really is, and how very difficult the study of a foreign like English is to such a person.

Yet because of the cold war with Communism, the education of Black Africans is vital to the West, as a means of introducing them to Western knowledge and culture, and to Western ideas and ideals. It is here that we encounter one of our greatest obstacles, the obsolete and chaotic spelling of English. Spelling reform thus becomes an urgent necessity, of such importance that it should be dealt with at governmental level. The first step would be the establishment of an Official Academy of Language and Literature, which could deal directly with the British Government and the U.S.A. to come to a joint agreement as to the amount of change and the method of adoption.

I admire the work done by the various spelling reform societies in educating the public to the need for spelling reform, but there are so many systems advocated by them that the average man is inclined to regard them as cranks. Therefore, in my opinion, only a policy of gradualism will succeed, which a permanent Academy of Language and Literature will be able to implement. No one should object to the immediate omission of silent letters, such as K in KNEE, and the substitution of certain letters for their true sounds, such as: K or S for C, F for PH and J for soft-G. These are changes which would immediately be intelligible to adults, and would enormously simplify the task of foreigners in learning English.

In Norway, Germany, Holland and Finland, spelling is a trustworthy guide to pronunciation, but this is due only to a reform of their spelling to coincide with modern pronunciation. In every case this has been done through an Official Academy. Our spelling reform societies have educated an apathetic public to the need for spelling reform. They should now combine to petition the government to establish an Official Academy to which evidence can be submitted, and which must have the power to implement its decisions. With the expansion of the British Empire, English has spread all over the world, but history teaches that when such an empire withdraws, the use of its language begins to decline. The West cannot afford this in its battle with Communism and it must be a definite policy of the U.S.A. and Britain to maintain English as the *Lingua Franca* of Africa by every possible means, and the first and most important step in this policy is the establishment of an Academy and the second is the simplification of English spelling.

An airmail to Mr. Moore asking for some "grassroots" information brought this very vital reply:

7. 12. 62.

Dear Miss Bowyer:

Your letter arrived just at the beginning of our long summer school holidays, which means that I cannot get some practical information on teaching methods which you asked for, but I have done what I can in other respects. I am sending you a bulletin on '*African Education in Southern Rhodesia*' which will give you a good idea of what is being done for Africans. I will supplement this further by information I have obtained. This is an extract from one bulletin:

"Most children attend primary school at the age of 7, and it is estimated that 85% of all South African children are attending school (compared with about 2% in Ethiopia). Instruction is given in the vernacular for sub-standards A and B, and thereafter in English. African children study the same subjects as European children and have extra-curricular subjects such as art and music as well. After school activities are games – net ball, tennis, hockey, and soccer, and some schools have excellent choirs and tribal dance teams (Africans have a wonderful sense of rhythm). Cricket is not as yet a popular sport. Soccer is played all the year around, so is hockey, which was introduced as recently as 1958.

Further, 'Several special schools exist for blind, deaf and dumb, and physically handicapped children receive special tuition. Although African problem children are rare, there is a 'tsotsi' teenage element which is similar to the 'teddy boys' amongst Europeans. Tsotsis as a whole spend their time in gambling, drinking, and warring with rival factions. (They have been responsible for some of the riots in our African townships). Malnutrition is rare amongst children in the towns. In Salisbury, 3000 children a day receive a well balanced nutritious meal of fresh brown bread, meat and vegetable stew (fish on Fridays) at 1/2d a head. The meal, which costs 5d a head to produce, is subsidised with moneys from the Beer Fund. (The African loves his beer, and no less than £¾ million is spent monthly on drink (more than \$2 million) both in Salisbury and Bulawayo, so that in many cases wives and children suffer). Life for the African child today in Southern Rhodesia holds many advantages which have been brought by European culture.

Regarding the special questions you asked: Of about 3 million Africans (of So. Rhodesia), a quarter live in the towns, and are more civilised than the rural natives therefore urban marriages are usually monogamous (the women are waking up to the fact the status of a monogamous wife is higher). Polygamy still is the rule in rural areas with families of from 15 to 70 (of course 70 is not common). In urban areas, families average 4. Educated African girls generally marry at about 21; in rural areas at about 16.

In the towns special housing is provided at a low rental, therefore the houses are necessarily small, but built after the style of European houses. In rural areas Africans build their own butts (as in time immemorial), and one room will serve as living room, bedroom, dining room, etc., but they like to put up a separate shelter to serve as a kitchen. Some huts are well built, some very poorly, depending on the tribe. The hut is usually a pole and dagga (mud plaster) affair, with a thatched roof.

Family income varies greatly. In rural areas there is usually subsistence income, that is, the family grows just sufficient for its needs in the way of maize corn), millet, and other small grains, which may be supplemented by pumpkins, and game will be hunted for meat where possible (All over Africa protein deficiency is a problem, causing the disease 'kwashiokor' characterised by an enormously distended stomach in quite young children. This is not common in So. Rhodesia).

Nyasaland is a good example of a purely rural area (there is only one White to 300 Blacks), and the income is £21 per head per annum. In So. Rhodesia, the income per head is £91 (1961) due to the higher wages in urban areas (my African servant, who is totally unskilled and uneducated, earns about £120 per year). In factories higher wages are paid. The lowest wages are paid by farmers, about £100 per year. African wages are rising rapidly, as they become more skilled.

I don't want you to get the idea— that because over 85% of our African children are at school, that the rate of literacy is high. Few go on to secondary school, because few have the mental capacity for it, and because English is so difficult for them. It is largely because of this that I should like to see its spelling reformed. They have hurdles enough to surmount without our archaic spelling. We Rhodesians realize only too well that the White man will have to show real leadership here if he is to survive. Not only that, we want to show South Africa that our system is the best, and does not mean surrendering the reins of government to the Blacks, who are far from ready for it. Also, in spite of riots (there are riots all over Africa! Africans are an excitable race) this is a happy country, and we want to keep it so. Recently I read Griffin's book *Black Like Me*, and was horrified at the intense race hatred in the Deep South of the U.S.A. We want no 'Little Rocks' here, We are proud to say that there has never been one lynching I don't want to criticise your country, but merely to give you a clear picture of conditions here)—

I must tell you how much I enjoy your articles. You know how to put it over. Yours sincerely,
Cecil R. Moore.

Our first contact with our second correspondent came through a clipping from *The Banner*, the official organ of the Christian Reformed Church here in America. It was sent to us by Dr. Helen Bonnema, of the Denver kindergarten experiment in phonemic reading of which we informed our readers in the S.P.B. of March and October, 1961. From correspondence with *The Banner*, we found that the writer, the Reverend Rolf L. Vienstra, was an influential missionary in Northern Nigeria, who has contributed a column in *The Banner* for several years. We reprinted the clipping (entitled 'Relics') in the S.P B. of June, 1962 – more than happy to get something as refreshingly forthright. Those of our readers who have that issue on hand might do well to read it along with his airmail letter which follows:

10.12.62

Dear Miss Bowyer:

I am afraid this will not reach you in time for your December issue, but you may be able to use it later,

When Nigeria became independent in 1960, it was pleasantly surprising that she adopted English as the official language of the new Federation. Despite strong nationalistic feeling, Nigeria did not, like many other nations, spite herself by rejecting the language of the country that once ruled her as a colony. The wisdom that Nigeria has demonstrated ever since self-rule began on Oct. 1, 1960 was shown in this prudent choice of a Lingua Franca. Although 200 different and distinct languages are spoken by the 40 million citizens of this young republic, and there is a trade language already common to many of them, yet they reasoned that if they wanted to play a meaningful role in the United Nations and world affairs generally, they were only doing themselves a service by choosing English as their medium of communication.

But it is one thing to decide by legislative edict that all the schools shall teach English, and quite another to carry out such an ideal. The learning of English is a formidable task for any foreigner within his own land. Many of the languages of Africa are spelled phonemically, having been reduced to writing by far-sighted missionaries who knew from painful personal experience the difficulties of learning a language as irrational as English. When these Africans absorb – as they are doing at a tremendous rate of speed – English words into their own tongue for lack of equivalents in their language, they naturally spell these borrowed words phonemically. "Ajenda, komiti, solje, sekul" are just a few of them. (note Southern British pronunciation which drops the R's) Imagine then the confusion when these same words have to be spelled quite differently in an all-English context, Such a contradiction is enough to create a real psycho- logical block in the laudible language-learning efforts of any young national, and it surely does not create a great respect for the mentality of the people who own and tolerate such an irregular language.

We expatriates are constantly amazed at the success that the young Africans do have in learning English, despite these handicaps. Only about one *child in ten* has any formal schooling whatever, while others pick up a little literacy from a helpful schooled brother. Most of those who have the privilege of schooling, complete only the fourth grade, known here as Junior Primary. Some of these classes are taught by the favored few who have had three additional years of instruction, known as Senior Primary. One can only conjure what strides these eager people would make in English if it were spelled as regularly and reasonably as their own tongue.

We, who are eager that other nations shall use our mother-tongue, ought to do all we can to facilitate the task wherever it is possible, and simplified spelling would mean a great deal in this direction. And if such help is to be given, it must be forthcoming soon. If we wait until a generation has learned English in its present spelling, it will be only so much more difficult to change it at that later date.

The difficulties are far from insurmountable. England, bastion of conservatism, is now in the process of changing years-old systems of weights and measures that will involve enormous cost and temporary inconvenience.

Far simpler and of much greater importance, is the business of simplifying the means by which we carry on our international relationships. If we do not make the adoption of English as a second language easier than it is presently, it is conceivable that our children will perforce have to learn the alien language of a race that was wise enough to realize a cumbersome language is a luxury that no nation can afford in this nuclear age.

Rolf. L. Veenstra.

The Spelling Progress Bulletin is proud to present these overseas colleagues to its readers. We shall certainly avail ourselves of their invitation to write them, for further information on the deeply significant African situations in which they are so understandingly and helpfully involved.

Helen Bowyer.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §8.1 p126 in the printed version]

Section 8

Specific designs for reform, with their critiques.

Since it would be impractical to list and discuss the hundred or more reform schemes known to me, we are including only two articles plus an editor's thoughts on how to overcome resistance to change.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p17 in the printed version]

9. Some Thoughts on How to proceed in Overcoming the Present Resistances to a New Phonetic Alphabet, by George J. Hecht, Publisher of Parents Magazine.

While I know comparatively little about the subject, perhaps these thoughts might be helpful because a complete amateur can occasionally see the forest more clearly and not the trees. I indulge myself in the pleasant thought that I am a public relations expert of sorts. I feel that the public relations aspect of the alphabet problem has not had sufficient consideration.

- (1) The adoption of a new phonetic alphabet is too big a step forward to be practical. Progress can rarely be made by trying for big steps forward. Usually it is more sensible to aim at a series of small steps ahead.
- (2) I urge concentration at present of the testing of what I think should be called "Phonetic Teaching Alphabets" in schools in English speaking countries and in classes in foreign countries in which English is being taught to adults. When the advantages of such phonetic teaching alphabets are generally recognized, then it will become possible to make efforts for the universal use of the best of such alphabets. The present names of the proposed alphabets are a great handicap. The name "Augmented Roman Alphabet" is a name stressing typography. Few people even know that the Roman Alphabet is the one used in the English language. [\[1\]](#) I suggest a change to Pitman's "Phonetic Teaching Alphabet". The name "A Compatible and Consistent Alphabet" and the name "Single-Sound Alphabet", both of which Mr. John Malone is using, should be changed to Malone's Phonetic Teaching Alphabet". The World English Spelling Alphabet might be called "SSA Phonetic Teaching Alphabet" (the SSA relating to the Simpler Spelling Association). Dr. Frank Laubach's "New Spelling" could be changed to "Laubach's Phonetic Teaching Alphabet".
- (3) All tests of the various alphabets in schools will probably be successful because they are all easier and quicker to learn than what is now in use with its many variations and exceptions. I have no fixed ideas as to which of the proposed phonetic alphabets is the best. Digraphs, such as those proposed by the Simpler Spelling Association; augmentations and ligatures, such as are proposed by Sir James Pitman; or original denotations (new letters) such as proposed by

John Malone, each have certain advantages and disadvantages. Perhaps the school tests of these alphabets will indicate which is the most practical. Out of the tests that are now being conducted and the many more that will be conducted, some conclusions should be drawn as to which is the best of the proposed Phonetic Teaching Alphabets.

- (4) An International Commission with representatives from each of the English-speaking nations will hopefully be formed to appraise the advantages and disadvantages of the various Phonetic Teaching Alphabets. Perhaps eventually, when there is general agreement as to which of the proposed teaching alphabets is the best, it might well be called the "New International Alphabet". [\[2\]](#)
- (5) When there is general agreement of the advantages of a Phonetic Teaching Alphabet, then the struggle will start to get it employed not only for teaching purposes but also for universal use. Joint action by Great Britain, the United States and other English-speaking countries will be most helpful. An effective way to get such an alphabet launched is to get Federal legislation passed in each country so that all Government documents will be written in the new alphabet five years after the passage of the act.

Parents Magazine, New York.

[1] Ed. note: Probably all teachers know it – and A. R. was intended to be used primarily by teachers.

[2] Ed. note: The difficulties of selecting a large enough set of symbols to cover the sounds of all languages is tremendous, yet it has been done with scholarly skill by the International Phonetic Association. However, what is necessary for indicating *all* the sounds, is not necessary for the indication of the lesser number of sounds used by individual nations. A discussion of the limitations and disadvantages of the I.P.A. Alphabet for any one nation's use would require a small book. However, as a starting point, many of the I.P.A. symbols could be advantageously used, since they have the advantage of being readily available and well known.

[Spelling Reform Anthology §19.3 p253 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p18 in the printed version]

10. English as a World Language, by Sir David Eccles

From a speech to the Commonwealth and American Clubs of Rome when he was Minister of Education.

Let me come straight to a question which I hope will engage your interest and elicit your help. It is this.

Are those of us who speak English as our native tongue, doing half what we should to spread our language to all continents, till it becomes the common possession of the whole world, with all that that might mean for the replacing of suspicions and threats of war by peace and mutual understandings?

If we fail to make one world, there may be little left of civilization soon. While there is time, we must seize upon those forces which promote interdependence, friendship and unity, and give to all such good impulses all the help of which we are capable. For world disarmament and peace to be more than a dream, men and women everywhere must be able to read, write and speak a common language.

English used to be thought of, like any other language, as a national possession, belonging in our case to the United Kingdom, the Old Commonwealth and the United States. Today we reckon that while some 250 million people speak English as their native tongue, many more than this number use English either within their own country or as the channel of communication with the outside world.

English is much in demand now by ambitious young people who wish to keep in touch with the Anglo-American world. It is increasingly taught as the first foreign language in the secondary schools of all countries. In Soviet Russia a great many children learn English from the age of five or six. Already well over half of all pupils in the Soviet Union are learning English – more than all the children in school in the United Kingdom.

As you would expect and wish, English is being very widely taught throughout the Commonwealth to children who have a native speech of their own. English is one of the strongest bonds holding the Commonwealth together. But it is a bond that needs constant attention. Those who want to see the Commonwealth closer knit and capable of still greater influence, should rate no sacrifice too great to extend the knowledge and maintain the standard of our speech. I warn you, that unless we whose native language is English, exert ourselves far more than we are doing to help others to maintain the standards of good English, we shall have thrown away one of the greatest opportunities in history. The problem is very difficult. Millions of children are this very day, being taught English by teachers who have never had direct contact with any English-speaking country. The danger is very real that English will break down into Oxford English, New York English, Australian, Chinese English, and so on with ever increasing difficulty in understanding one another. This lays on us, who are English speaking by birth, the duty of providing standards, teachers and techniques, to meet as far as we possibly can the explosive demand of mass education throughout the undeveloped countries. We have got to get down to the job of preserving common meanings and standards of purity for the English language. If we fail in this duty, English can never become a truly universal language, and we shall have thrown away a great instrument for the creation of one understanding world. We shall never be forgiven for our foolish negligence and culpable want of clear thinking.

You may say that English has already broken down into too many variants, that meanings, pronunciation, and even the spelling of our words are too different to be reconciled. I refuse to admit defeat before we have even tried. The longer we leave this confusion, the worse it will become. Every day counts. Let us begin a great campaign this very year. We cannot hope to send abroad enough teachers from English speaking countries to meet the demand. We must therefore, look for other ways to achieve the same results.

If a sufficient number of people are interested and are willing to help, then our language can become the World Language within 50 years. But we cannot expect the rest of the world to learn a language that is full of difficulties, irregularities, rules and exceptions. Most of the people we want to learn English – and who are anxious to learn it – have had no experience in learning anything, so the world language must be one from which all difficulties have been removed.

The most obvious obstacle to learning English, is its spelling. For generations children have been taught that there is something sacred about the way words are spelt. Most beginners want to spell words as they sound but by punishment and ridicule they have to some extent, learned to think in a modern language, but write in a dead one – the one that some of their ancestors wrote hundreds of years ago. But foreigners have no interest in our ancestors. So it is surely our duty to offer them a language in which every word is spelt exactly as it sounds.

So we should begin by making the number of sounds in our language as few as possible. With no more than are necessary, each invariably represented in a consistent manner, it is possible to write English so that it can be read with the greatest ease, and understood by everyone who speaks English of any sort. Hence, we shall need no new letters. The English alphabet is, with a few modifications, used by everyone who writes any west European language. It is familiar, therefore, to at least 1000 million people already. Unfortunately modern letters vary in shape according to the whims of writers and printers. So for the sake of those who are not used to our sort of writing, we could very well limit ourselves to Roman CAPITALS or BLOCK letters. Indeed these are widely used for business names and advertisements in every country in the world.

Whilst block letters take longer to write, they are certainly easier for everyone to read. And even block letters could be further simplified so that they could be written more quickly without becoming illegible.

This improved way of writing English is called Simplified Spelling. Because every word is spelt exactly as it sounds in the best broadcast English, every written or printed word will provide a standard of pronunciation which will ensure that our language will never break down into local dialects or mutually unintelligible variants. With the help of Simplified Spelling, it will not be necessary to send abroad so many teachers whose native language is English. Foreigners will be able to learn from one another with ease and certainty, for if there is only one way of pronouncing each letter, it is most unlikely that words will acquire un-english sounds. With the help of broadcasting, English in Simplified Spelling will quickly become the second language for every nation in the world.

But Simplified Spelling fills another and equally important purpose. It makes it possible to teach English speaking children to read and write in a tenth of the time they now take to learn ordinary English. The saving in time should convince you of the value of this change. Time is one of our most precious possessions. We must not waste another generation while deciding to make this necessary and inevitable change.

11. Potential Advantages of Spelling Reform, by Leo G. Davis.

Altho all literate English-speaking peoples are aware of the irregularities of our spelling, few are aware of all the many potential advantages of "orthografik" reform. In fact, few of our leading educators are fully aware of the fact that Russia's astounding progress is due, primarily, to her "fonetik alfabet" enabling little "Ivan" to learn to read more fluently in months, than our "Johnie" does in years.

Classroom experiments conducted during the past century have demonstrated, conclusively, that children who learn to read and write fonetikally, before being confronted with the confusing irregularities of traditional orthography, finish their education as much as two years ahead of those struggling with the old forms from the beginning. Furthermore, it seems quite obvious that IF they were not required to take time out to switch to the irregular, they would finish much sooner.

It is to be noted that finishing school two years, or maybe more, earlier would effect a substantial reduction in cost of a basic education – as well as easement of the growing teacher – classroom shortage. It would also add two years to the individual's earning life, extend his vacation and/or advance his retirement. But a more vital point is that our students would enter the field of science earlier, – to aid in meeting the Russian challenge in the field of progress. Only by expediting our education can we hope to cope with foreign competition – either commercially or militarily.

However, there are rather obscure academic benefits to be gained thru orthografik reform. It is to be noted that a basically fonetik alfabet would probably eliminate the need for "spelling" as a specific subject. It has done this in Italy. There would be so few misspelt words that teachers would seldom need to check written work for such errors. Neither would children be interrupting teachers and/or parents asking how to spell or pronounce, given words. And, with no spelling problem, children would use the dictionary more freely to ascertain the meaning of new words – instead of just guessing at it or interrupting the teacher.

However, the major academic benefit would be the psychological affect upon the student. It is to be noted that, under current conditions, it takes a child at least three years to be able to gain knowledge thru voluntary reading. During that trying period many become discouraged sullen and non-cooperative – subsequently flunking their subjects – just because they cannot read fluently. Rather than to lose face by remaining in a class with those their junior, they drop out at the earliest opportunity. Because of his illiteracy, the drop-out finds it difficult to earn a living – and all too often becomes a delinquent before he is 20. Statistics show a very definite relationship between illiteracy and our shameful crime rate.

Conversely, it is to be noted that children naturally want to learn. That is why they pester us with questions – which, all too often, we cannot answer. We should exploit that natural "yurning-for-lurning". We must minimize the time and effort involved in learning to glen knowledge from the printed page. That can be done best thru orthografik reform.

Fonetik spelling, or even mere regularity in the use of our current letters, would enable the child to read fluently, in his own vocabulary, within a few months. Then, inasmuch as parents, and even teachers, are frequently too busy to answer questions, junior would soon discover that it is more practical, and just about as easy, to learn thru read – than by asking questions.

Altho nursery jingles and fairy-tales are quite suitable reading practice, I think children would naturally turn more-and-more toward the field of factual knowledge. For this reason, it seems that

our text books should follow that inherent trend more closely than they have in the past. Instead of so much enforced study of "readers", why not exploit this natural bent, more in keeping with the pupil's indicated interests? How about "animal" dictionaries, with alfabetikal index by which the beginner may, in keeping with his ability, find a basic description of most any animal? Or a primary encyclopedia from which the beginner may, within his ability, voluntarily acquire basic knowledge of most any subject?

By thus exploiting this inherent yurning–for–lurning, most students would give a basic knowledge in most fields – to aid them in making a proper choice of special courses in the upper grades. Furthermore, by thus opening the books of knowledge right in the beginning, most children would be so engrossed in gratifying their yurning–for–lurning, that they would have no occasion to get into mischief. In fact, we would probably find it more difficult to get them to play, than it is now to get them to study. Thus, spelling reform does have a definite and indisputable bearing on the moral character of our future citizens.

There are other potential benefits. For example, a truly fonetik alfabet would affect at least a 10% reduction in the number of letters per manuscript, thus offering a comparable reduction in wages paid stenographers and type–setters – as well as in paper, ink and ribbons. Then there is the time we all waste searching the dictionary for the tricky spellings we have failed to master – and often cannot spell well enough to find them. All such savings – as well as those in the academic field – would be continuous henceforth. Thus the potential monetary advantages of orthografik reform are incomputable. We have very little to lose and everything to gain, thru reform. Let's have some action.

Logical Procedures in Spelling Reform

All literate English–speaking peoples are aware of the many irregularities of our "orthografy". Most are heartily in favor of reform – waiting only for the proverbial "George" to take the lead. However, apathetic John Public holds the power of veto over anything that George may offer. He will not accept anything which is too radical. If the revolutionary orthografy is too far from the traditional, he will turn "thumbs down" on it.

In order to be generally acceptable, the new orthografy must be reasonably legible "on sight" so that parents may help children with home–work without going back to school themselves. It must be close enough to the traditional for coming generations of "fonetik" spellers to learn to read the obsolescent with minimum effort. Furthermore, keyboards do have their mechanical limitations. Therefore, "familiar pattern" and/or consistency may often be more acceptable than technical perfection. For these reasons we do not have a free choice between perfection and imperfection – but merely between what is mechanically practical and mechanically impractical – between what is acceptable to John Public and what is not. Thus we may have to be content with mere regularity in the use of the given letters, even tho they offer something less than fonetik perfection.

It seems, in this writer's opinion, that the "perfectionist" has always been the stumbling block to progress in this field – by holding out for the proverbial "whole loaf", instead of compromising for a few slices less. Perhaps the major stumbling block has been the impulsive reactionary who, without stopping to reason things out rationally, pictures a transition period of orthografik chaos. But such fears are not justified. He would not be required, or even expected, to change his personal spelling habits in the least. Neither would there be any reason that he should. His literary contacts would continue to be with people who are fluent in the traditional orthografy, and because, as a matter of necessity, youngsters would be taught to read the obsolescent, for several generations, perhaps 75 years, like Latin is now taught.

As a matter of logical procedure, the revolutionary spellings could be introduced at the primary level and subsequently extended to the higher grades only as the initial generation of fonetik spellers advances. Students who are already fluent in current orthograpy could be permitted to continue using current texts as long as they are available. However, publishers could be notified not to publish any more school texts in the old spellings.

The new orthography should be so simple and easy to learn, that all students would soon be reading it fluently without specific instruction, thus preparing themselves for the day when the obsolescent texts are no longer available. Likewise, current adults should be able to learn to read it thru moue "exposure", by helping children with their homework and/or reading letters from fonetik grandchildren, etc. Under such procedure we could have an orderly – rather than chaotic – transition period of "optional" spellings, during which oldsters would adhere to the old and youngsters to the new. And neither group would have any difficulty reading what the other might write.

Even tho the new orthograpy should require additional letters, current printing equipment wouldn't, necessarily, need to be changed at all – because the traditional orthograpy would, naturally, remain dominant long enough to wear out the old machinery "az iz". Thus, only the "unborn" machines would really need the revised keyboards – which shouldn't cost a penny more than they do now – the exact symbols on keyboards having no bearing on the cost thereof. However, inasmuch as it wouldn't cost more than ten to fifteen dollars to convert a typewriter – and perhaps 75 to 100 for a linotype, those who wished to use the fonetik spellings could convert their current machines cheaper than buying new ones. That would be an insignificant price to pay for such progress.

Neither would our libraries need to be re-stocked, because, inasmuch as youngsters would be fluent in reading the obsolescent orthograpy, our current classics and/or reference texts would remain normally usable, indefinitely. However, publishers would not need to print any more books in the old spellings. The next edition of "out-of-print" classics could be printed in the new orthograpy at approximately the same price as if printed in the obsolescent. However, any-and-all expenditures incidental to transition would soon be retrieved thru the savings effected thereby, as outlined herein.

There need be no confusion or financial lose in any field. Nobody would be required to change his spelling habits or his equipment. Everybody would soon be able to read what the other writes. Our children would finish their education a year or so earlier, thereby effecting substantial savings in the cost of a basic education – as well as relieving the current shortage of teachers and classrooms. In short we would be eliminating chaos, rather than creating it. It is to be noted that it would be a bit difficult to create anything any more chaotic than the spelling we now have.

Az demonstrated thruout this paragraf, we cood, while awating ofishal akshon, exploit the time pruvien medium ov "kommon usaj" for promoting spelling reform, We cood, in our personal korrespondens, drop ol silent letterz having no baring on pronuneiashon, make numerus indisputabl substitushonz, and uze the most lojikal spelling in eny grup ov homonimz. Such modifikashonz must be made in eny akseptabl sistem ov spelling reform. Oltho folling far short ov fonetik perfekshon, such chanjez wood be a majer impruvement over whot we hav nou. Thru such kommon usaje ov a rashonal spelling, we cood stimulate interest in this feeld, We wood be kasting our ballots for akademik reform – vurtually ishuing a mandate for the "powerz-that-be" tu get, bizy. Think it over.

Leo G. Davis, Palm Springs, Calif.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p20 in the printed version]

12. Progress during 1962

While the conservative press in America has usually kept a closed door on the subject of spelling reform, during this year the door might be said to have been opened a mite. For example, see the following articles which touch on that subject or on the use of phonetic alphabets:

1. English Needs a Phonetic Alphabet, by George J. Hecht, Editor Parents Magazine, Feb. 1962.
2. Why Ivan Can Read, by Frank & Mary Wesley, Elementary English, March, 1962.
3. The Larger Aspects of Spelling Reform, by John R. Malone, Elementary English, May 1962.
4. A letter to the President of the United States, by Upton Sinclair, Saturday Review of Literature, Aug. 18, 1962.
5. Learning to Read: Its Faster with New Alphabet, U. S. News & World Report, Aug. 20, 1962, page 10.
6. An Experiment in Phonemic Spelling, by Helen Bowyer, Education, Nov. 1962.
7. Tiem for Chaeng?, Newsweek, Nov. 12, 1962, page 58.
8. A letter under Editorially Speaking, by Newell W. Tune, Elementary English, Nov. 1962, pages 721-3.
9. A letter under Editorially Speaking, by Ira B. Collins, Elementary English, Nov. 1962, page 723.
10. Phonemic Readers for First Graders, by Helen Bowyer, Phi Delta Kappan, Dec. 1962.
11. A New Phonetic Alphabet is put to the Test, by John A. Downing, Parents Magazine Jan. 1963, (but in circulation in Dec. 1962)

Other articles have appeared in the British press, of which we do not have record.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p21 in the printed version]

13. I Wish I Knew the Rule, by John P. Shepard, Ph.D.

"I before e except after c
Or when sounded like a,
As in neighbor and weigh."

Chief exceptions: "neither leisured foreigner seized the weirdest heights."

Which orthographic *Siegfrieds* proficient in linguistic *leitmotif*, or which scholarly *nonpareils* surfeited in conceit concerning this ancient mischievous language can claim perfect proficiency in spelling the counterfeit foreign, unwieldy kaleidoscopic super-sufficiency of words their language fell heir to?

Their private view may be that the language is an enemy, a glacier, and impatient they are with its freighted weight: reluctant to give obeisance as scholars to sovereign tongue so deficient in consistency. Better that they inveigle within themselves an attitude of gaiety and friendliness and rein in their fierce mien of a aggrieved condemnation at the language. Learn to linger lightly on lingerie rather than inveigh heatedly with increasing degrees of emotional fahrenheit against caffeine. Let them lie in leisured thought of apple pie and deign not to wield impatient weapons at a surfeit of reigning spelling demons. Relax, oh linguist, and abandon Basic to a vocabulary yielding

its rich *vein* of *e*'s and *i*'s (or is it *i*'s and *e*'s?). Such language *heirlooms* are no mere *transients*. Scholars ought to *heil* proudly culture's achievements – a high *ceilinged* roomful of words at the *height* of their *fiendish* existence.

Ah, but *perceive* the *mischief* done ... they cannot *pierce* their own *grievous* mood. It takes no *seismograph* to detect scholars *aggrieved* (and oft *deceived*) by a hundred and a half and more words with *i* and *e* in *lieu* of *a* or *e*, or even *oo*.

'Would I as *lief*', they *shriek*, "*either* to *preceive* with perfect accuracy these *heinous* vowel combinations or to *seize* them without *sleight* of hand and *cashier* them all in one *efficient bier*."

Without some such *relief*, what new linguistic *Zeitgeist* with its *priests* and *financiers* and *fanciers* may exact *obeisance* from, all word merchants.?

Have you ever sighed over the utter confusion of *receive*, *seize*, *believe*, *neither*, and the inadequacy of that rule? Take a little heart, there do not seem to be many more than 160 with *ei* or *ie* in a single syllable, (that is if medical and scientific terms as well as inflected endings, as in *sky-skied*, *ski-skied*, *vacantcy-vacantcies*, are excluded). Perhaps we can blame the French who gave us *beige*, *bier*, *deign*, and fifty others.

But what about the growling germanic of *heil*, *reich*, *stein*, *wiener*, and *fahrenheit*? Even tiny Iceland contributed *eider*. Of course, the Greeks had a word for it, too – *seine*, *seismic*, *priest*, or *meiosis*. And from the stately Latin come *transient* or *quotient*, *seigneur* or *forfeit*, *conscience*, and fourteen others. Puzzling enough is how we ever translated Japanese brush strokes to *geisha*! However, the most prolific source of these *ei-ie* words is English itself. At least 69 of the 160 owe their spelling to Old, Middle or Modern English.

Such a mixed parentage certainly helps to explain why we have eight different pronunciations for the confusing little digraphs, but offers no excuse for their existence. As spelled *ie*, there are seven sounds (*fie*, *mischief*, *achieve*, *friend*, *lieu*, *view*, *glacier*). And spelled *ei*, five sounds are known (*gneiss*, *caffeine*, *counterfeit*, *heifer*, *feint*).

To end before getting further entangled in these 160-odd(!) words, let it be known that in spite of the approximately (53) exceptions, they do exhibit one substantial consistency. There are twenty-eight spelled *ei* and "sounded as *a* as in *neighbor* and *weigh*." Here is a perfectly consistent group without a single *ie* or *c* to confuse.

Heigh-ho, retrieve that dictionary! Could it be *heifer* and *leisure* – or *liesure* and *hieffer*?? Oh, *hiesure* and *leifer*! Help! Help! Get me a *reprise* from this *seizure*!

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Perhaps you have heard this quip attributed to Dr. Robert Hutchins, "Our schools used to teach three R's – reading, writing, 'rithmetic. Now they teach six – those three, plus remedial reading, remedial 'riting and remedial 'rithmetic."

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14. Homophones. Clifford P. Gehman, in *The National Shorthand Reporter*, Nov. 1946.

Dr. Walter Gassner, of Sydney, Australia, has brought up the subject of homophones being spelt alike in most systems of reformed spelling. He claims that these distinctions between words now spelt differently but pronounced the same, should be maintained, even if some special means, not strictly phonetic, was needed to keep these distinctions. He has a scholarly system, described in detail in his book: "Rational Spelling", which provides in the necessary cases, for as many as three distinctions in cases where there are that many homophones.

However, we contend that as long as such words are not confused in the rapidity of ordinary conversation, they will not be confused in print, where you can go back over the sentence if there is any doubt. For example, here is a bit of prose using many of these homophones incorrectly, yet the intended meaning is quite clear when you read it to yourself:

A write suite little buoy . . . flue up the rode swift as a dear. After a thyme he had stopt at a gnu house and wrung the belle. His tow hurt him and he kneaded wrest. The made who herd the belle was about to pair a pare, but she through it down and ran with awl her mite for fear her guessed wood knot weight. But when she saw the little won, tiers stood in her ayes at the site. "Ewe poor deer! Why dew ewe lye hear? Are ewe dyeing" "Know", he said, "Eye am feint two thee corps. "She boar him in her armes . . . too a rheum where he mite bee quiet, gave him bred and meet and assed him two stay their, til at last he went fourth hail as a young hoarse.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin December 1962 p22 in the printed version]

15. Limericks in Foeneemik English

Clarence Hotson, Ph.D. of Romulus, New York, sent us some limericks which he allowed our editor to transliterate into Foeneemik English. This differs from another well-known system in that the symbols: th, oo, are used for the most frequently occurring sounds attributed to these symbols.

thə vois ov ekspeeriəns
ə bum hwen thhroen out ov ə baar,
raezd himself from bisied ə paarkt kaar
and diklaerd withh ə sneer
Ie'v bin thhroen on mie eer
out ov much betər plaesez bie faar.

just thə thhing!
thaer wuz an oeld feloe ov orm
hoo sed hwot wee need iz a storm.
mie lief iz too kwieət,
Ie'əl stur up a rieət.
soe hee went in for speling riform.

pried goe–ethh
ə mous found sum jin in a vat,
and drank a big sampl ov that;
then with a feers froun
hee glaerd up and down,
and yeld "hwaerlz that beest ov a kat?"

wuud yoo?
thaer wuz an oeld skot naemd mak whistle,
hoo sed hwiel hiz whiskərz wuud brisəl,
"yee kan sit on ə roez,
on ə shamrok ripoez,
but yee'l nae sit doon on ə thhisal."