

# Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963

Dedicated to finding the causes of difficulties in learning reading and spelling.

Publisht Quarterly  
Mar, June, Oct, Dec.  
Subscription \$3.00 a year.  
Volume III No. 2  
**June, 1963**

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## 1. Summer Session

The Editor recently attended the Reading Workshop at Univ. of Calif. at Los Angeles,(Westwood) conducted under the guidance of Dr. John Bormuth and Dr. Molly Goreliek. Appearing as recognized authorities were Dr. John Moncur, Audiologist, Dr. Leonard Apt, Ophthalmologist, Dr. Arthur R Parmalee, Jr, Pediatrician, Michael J. Goldstein, Psychologist, Mildred Farris, Psychological Social Worker, Dr. Charles Brown, Director, Reading Center, U.S.C., Dr. Edward Fry, Director Reading Clinic, Loyola Univ. Sister Mary Caroline, Immaculate Heart College, Madeline Hunter, Univ. Experimental High School, Frances Berres, Huntington Beach School Dist, and Elsa Neustadt Greger, Immaculate Heart School. Nearly 300 keenly interested teachers, supervisors, student teachers, students, and a few laymen attended. About 907 were teachers.

The first day was devoted to discussions on the physical defects that impede the learning of reading. Several children were brought in during the several days of the workshop to show rates of progress in learning. One spastic child, which many in the audience would have thought uneducable was shown to have made amazing progress in one year after not talking or reading before age 13. The second day was devoted to reading readiness tests and the use of the various machines to determine speed of reading and other kinesthetic tests.

The third day had a discussion of methodology: Phonics by Sister Mary Caroline (author of "Breaking the Sound Barrier"), Sight Method by Dr. Edward Fry, and Kinesthetics by Frances Berres. The fourth day was continued on Methodology with Madeline Hunter giving the Combination Method, Dr. Charles Brown, the Linguistics Method, Elsa Neustadt Greger, the Montessori Method.

The last day had a panel discussion of questions asked of the specialists on Methodology. This was followed by a true and false examination that was a toughie – however, we passed, because they said that anyone taking the exam would deserve a passing grade – a tribute to the confidence the group leaders had in the abilities of those attending and of the caliber of the teachers. Everyone agreed it was a very well presented and worthwhile study program.

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*[Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963 p2,3,5 in the printed version]*

## **2. How Accurate are School Testing Programs?, by William D. Daugherty, M.S.**

In recent years a rash of educational and psychological tests has descended on the modern school. It is important that parents have some knowledge of the effectiveness and meaning of these testing measures if they are to understand and evaluate their local educational program.

A cloak of mysticism covers the field of educational testing which serves only to perpetuate the belief that tests know all, tell all, and are infallible. Nothing could be further from the truth; though the mathematical processes are often complex, the basic concepts for interpreting the results are really quite simple.

A person using the term "statistics prove", in relation to testing, is either not knowledgeable in the field or is attempting to delude his audience. In actuality, statistical results prove nothing but the fallibility of the tests. They *indicate*, they do not prove.

An understanding of the three basic terms used in testing circles will dispel much of the confusion surrounding educational testing today. The three are: validity, reliability, and coefficient.

VALIDITY means: does the test measure what it is supposed to measure. For example: a test designed to measure aptitude for carpentry but actually measuring achievement in mathematics is invalid for the use intended. Similarly, an achievement test in chemistry cannot effectively measure intelligence and would be invalid for such use. An invalid test is as meaningful as measuring a person's head to determine the size of his feet.

Validity is the most important criteria of a test. Great care should be taken in test selection so that they will most closely provide the user with the information desired.

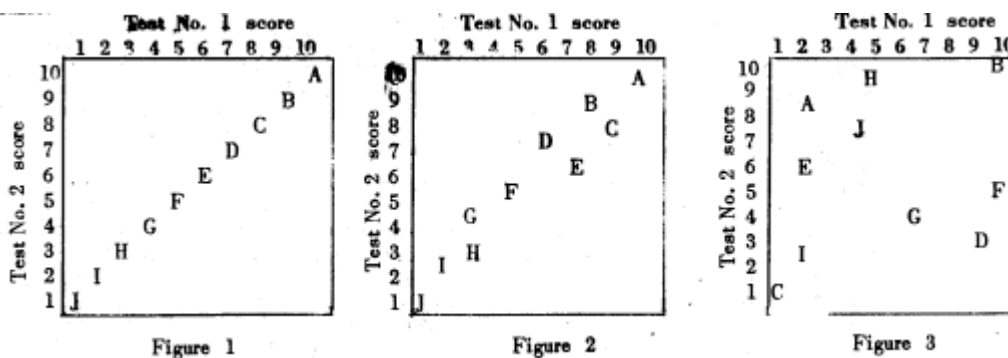
RELIABILITY means: does the test measure, whatever it does measure, in an efficient manner? A test may measure whatever it does test without effectively testing what its user or designer wants it to test. If the carpentry test mentioned above always gives a consistent index of a person's achievement in mathematics, it would be a reliable test for mathematics achievement. The whole concept hinges on the word "consistent". No matter how often the test is taken by the same person, he should always achieve the same score (provided that no change has taken place in his learning). (Of course, this is not possible with some types of tests, but the results should be reproducible on new persons to indicate equal levels of achievement).

These terms – validity and reliability – are often used interchangeably, but this is incorrect. A test may be reliable and not valid, but can never be valid unless it is reliable.

COEFFICIENT is often combined with validity and reliability to mean: degree. It is an index of the degree of accuracy, and consequently the confidence which one can place in the test. The three figures below will serve to illustrate the term "coefficient of validity." In each example, Test No. 1 is being compared or correlated to another test. Each test is given to the same ten students – A thru J.

In Fig. 1, student "A" received the highest score on both Test No. 1 and Test No. 2; all other students maintained the same rank order below him on both tests. Therefore, we could predict, with perfect accuracy, any student grade on Test No. 2 by giving him Test No. 1. The tests are perfectly correlated and have a coefficient of correlation of 1. If Test No. 1 was an aptitude test in chemistry and Test No. 2 were the students final grades in the chemistry course, it would be possible to predict their grades by giving them the aptitude test at the beginning of the year.

Fig. 2 depicts two tests which have some relation to one another. Notice that the individual student positions tend to move away from the straight line to form an elliptical pattern. The more circular such a pattern becomes, the less relation there is between the tests. When the grades become so scattered that no pattern is distinguishable, as in Fig. 3, the tests are said to have zero or no correlation. In this instance, one cannot make any determination from one test as to what a student would make on the other. This is an example of pure chance.



Coefficient of validity or reliability is a measure of how good a test is. The accuracy of any test is determined by how well it correlates to some "standard" such as student grades, expert opinion,

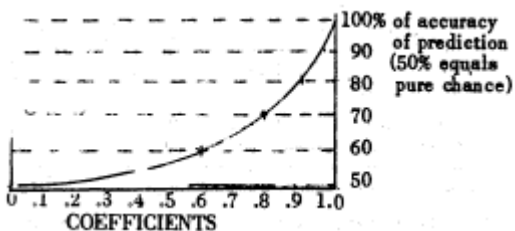
curriculum content or another similar test. The word "standard" is used here in its loosest possible sense, for such standards are usually very subjective in nature. The degree to which a test compares to any of these standards determines the confidence one can place in the test and is given in the form of coefficients.

To illustrate this concept, let us suppose that a new test of algebra achievement has been developed. In order to validate the test, its authors may first compare the test content with an algebra textbook to determine if the test covers the instructional points listed in the book. The test is then taken by a large group of students who have completed the course covered by the test. The pupil scores on the test are compared, by the correlation method, with their final grades in the course, and a validity coefficient results. The author may also have two forms of the same test and would like to determine how much alike or reliable they are. The students would be given the second form of the test and their grades compared. This results in a reliability coefficient.

The "standard" of final grades is not perfect or stable. Most grading systems are pretty unreliable as they are based primarily upon imperfect teacher tests and subjective standards.

Now suppose that this test is to be used in your school. You use a different textbook and the teachers stress some aspects which are not covered by the text. Would the test results have the same meaning? Would the validity coefficient be expected to remain the same? Of course not.

The graph below provides an explanation of the accuracy inferred by coefficients.



Along the base line is marked the values of coefficients from 0 to 1.0, while the vertical line gives the percentage of forecasting efficiency. When a coefficient of 0 is obtained from any correlation, it indicates a pure chance situation (50% accuracy). Half of the time you are right and the other half wrong. As the coefficient becomes larger, the tests are more closely related. However, it is not a straight-line relationship. A test having a validity coefficient of .8 is accurate only 70% of the time; an almost perfect coefficient of .98 still has an inaccuracy of 10%.

Generally, group achievement tests are not accurate more than 65% of the time, as coefficients above .7 are rarely found. Group intelligence tests have about the same validity; however, there are about as many concepts as to what constitutes intelligence as there are learning psychologists.

The most inaccurate tests are those which purport to evaluate or predict aptitude, attitude, personality, or emotional adjustment. Rarely do tests of this nature predict better than 60%, or 10% above chance.

Yet, despite this inaccuracy rate and the irreparable damage that can result from the indiscriminate use of such tests by pseudo-psychologists, much emphasis is being placed on testing materials of this type. In addition to a lack of perfect predictability or validity, all of the types of tests mentioned are less than perfectly reliable. This further reduces the accuracy of the prediction. For instance, a test having validity and reliability coefficients of .7 and .9 respectively would result in an overall coefficient of approximately .63 (.7 x .9).

From this basic explanation, it is evident that educational and psychological testing measures are not, as we are led to believe, perfect instruments. They are, in effect, only guides and indicators to even the most skilled psychometrist.

Parents should be prepared to evaluate the testing program of their local school to determine if it is adequately evaluating the progress of the students or if the school is engaging in some chicanery to placate parents. Though most tests have supposedly established "norms" to which any school population can be compared, we have yet to find a school; or school district, admit (at least for publication) that they rank much below the average.

The most effective source of information for both educators and laymen is the "Mental Measurements Yearbook" by Buros and is usually obtainable through your local library. This reference book contains comprehensive reviews of the psychological and educational tests in most frequent use.

### **Suggested Procedures for Evaluating a Testing Program**

#### *Achievement Tests (General)*

Determine the adequacy of subject matter coverage. Does the test cover all the subjects in the curriculum? If not, then the sampling is not sufficient to determine overall achievement. The California Achievement Tests, for example, measure reading, arithmetic, language and spelling but no evaluation is made in the areas of elementary history, geography, science or literature. This test then has average validity (about .7) for the areas tested, but is not valid for the overall evaluation for which most schools use it.

Next, it should be determined if the test is administered to all students enrolled in each grade. Mentally handicapped students should be eliminated, but all other students should be included if a school rating is to be achieved. All students within a given grade should take the form of the test which applies to their grade level. In no instance, for example, should junior high school students take a general achievement test designed for elementary or senior high school students.

The next step is to determine how the individual scores are interpreted. No *general achievement test can possibly diagnose individual difficulties and their causes*. A follow-up testing program employing exact analytic and diagnostic measures is required if proper remedial action is to be taken. General achievement tests can do no more than indicate the broad concepts of relative academic achievement,

#### *Achievement Tests (Subject-Oriented)*

These tests provide the greatest validity of results, if the subject matter tested closely approximates the course content. The same rules for analysis apply here as were given for general achievement testing.

#### *Intelligence Tests.*

As previously mentioned, there is a decided lack of agreement as to what constitutes intelligence or as to the stability of the I.Q. Too much reliance cannot be placed on the results of such tests, especially on those scores which are below average.

Most group intelligence tests are extremely verbal in their construction; that is, *the ability to read is a predominant factor* affecting the test score. Studies have shown that students with reading deficiencies greatly improve their scores when these difficulties are overcome. A review of the test booklets will readily reveal the effect which reading ability has on individual scores.

#### *Tests of Educational Development.*

Educational development is a nebulous term which almost defies definition. Basically, the tests purport to measure pupil growth in attaining the ultimate goals of education. Whether tests such as these accomplish their purpose is a moot point, for there has been little, if any, work done to establish their validity. In no instance should a test of this type be interpreted to be an achievement test – it is not valid for such use.

#### *Aptitude, Attitude, Personality and Emotional Adjustment Tests.*

In the strictest sense, such tests should be used as guides only.

Every parent owes it to himself and his children to know the limitations of the testing program of local schools. A familiarity with basic educational measurement concepts and the development of a speaking knowledge of the jargon in the field, will place any parent in a better position for intelligent discussion with educators. Parents need not become expert psychometrists; any school using a testing program should employ such experts to interpret test scores. However, parents *should* attain enough knowledge to understand the value and limitations of a testing program. Such a parent is the best antidote for his child's problems. An informed parent forces a school to maintain a good testing program and can dispel the mysticism which otherwise surrounds educational testing today.

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### **3. What a Nine-year-old Russian Knows About his Language, by Victor N. Crassnoff.**

Since attendance at kindergarten is not compulsory, whatever a nine-year-old Russian, entering third grade, knows about his language is the result of study in the first two grades. A glimpse at his textbooks in these grades, therefore, should provide the answer to the question posed by the title.

We may forgo the look at the first year text, for in that year the pupil learns only the mechanics of reading and writing. It is in the second year when the pupil begins the systematic study of the language and a glimpse at what he is being taught that year should give the measure of his knowledge of the subject at the time of completion of the second grade.

His second grade textbook is made up of a series of discussions of various topics of grammar, syntax and spelling arranged so that each topic is amply provided with exercise material. The review that follows is an accurate translation of the topics of these, discussions and some of the exercises, at times followed by remarks of the translator to clarify some points. For the sake of clarity, the Russian alphabetic sounds in the review, whenever possible, are expressed in English equivalents, for some of the Russian alphabetic letters are very much different and, altho there are eleven Roman letters in the Russian alphabet, they do not always represent the sounds for which they are used in Latin or English alphabets. For instance, the letters B, H, P, C, Y of the Russian alphabet represent the sound of the English letters V, N, R, S, U respectively, which, more or less, dispels the myth of the sacrosanct nature of the letter-sound nature of Roman letters.

Topics of Study in textbooks of Russian Language used in the second grade in Russian schools.

1. Our speech is made up of sentences.

In conversation and reading a pause is required at end of each sentence.

In writing the pause is indicated by dot (.).

First word of a sentence begins with a capital letter.

Exercise 4. Read and tell how many sentences are in this story. Think up a title for it. Write the title and under it the story. Place dots wherever necessary.

The sun came up arrived warm summer day the children were on their way to the woods after them ran Zhoochka children were gathering berries from under a bush jumped a rabbit Zhoochka took after him

2. Sound и(ē) forms a syllable. Sound й(½ē) does not form a syllable by itself.

Remarks: In Russian the semi-vowel й(½ē) is used in forming diphthongs, as for instance: ай for (ī), ей for (ā), Ой for oy in boy, and и й for ey in key. English equivalent of й is y in boy, a one syllable word. (бой in Russian means battle, бо́й is a two syllable word, means battles.)

3. Explain for what purpose the sign ь is used in writing.

Remarks: Most of the consonants in Russian have hard and soft sound. One of the uses of the mute sign ь is to indicate that the preceding consonant is pronounced soft.

4. Sounds и(ē) and ы are always written with the letter for sound (ē) after sounds г (soft) and ш.

Remarks: There is no written sign in English for the sound ы. This sound, however, is part of the English speech, being the vowel between the b and l in 'able.'

5. Sounds аh and я are always written with the letter for the sound аh after sounds ч and ш (soft).

Sounds оō and ū are always written with the letter for the sound оō after sounds ч and ш.

6. In carry over of words from one line to the next the division must be made at the syllable juncture.

A single letter cannot be left on the line nor carried over to the next line.

ъ and ѣ cannot be separated from the preceding letter.

7. Names of persons and their surnames, names of cities, towns, villages, streets and rivers are written with capital letters.

8. Words denoting objects are answers to the questions What? and Who. Words denoting human beings are an- Words denoting all other objects are answers to the question What?

9. A word may denote a single object (table, desk, window) or many objects (sheep, fish, desks). This rule as yet has nothing to do with the manner of forming the plural number, which is quite a complicated matter in Russian

10. Words denoting human beings and animals are answers to the questions: Who? Whom? To Whom? By Whom? About Whom?

Words denoting all other objects are answers to the questions: What? Of What? To What? With What? About What?

11. Words denoting action are answers to the questions: What is the object doing? What are the objects doing? The object can be recognized thru its actions. Example: Who swims, dives and quacks? A duck.

12. Objects have distinctive features which are the answers to the question: Is What?

Exercise 74. Honey (Is What?) Pepper (Is What?) Strawberry (Is What?) Radish (Is What?) Apple (Is What?) Select the answers from the words: bitter, sweet. Poppy (Is What?) Corn-flower (Is What?) Daisy (Is What?) Flag (Is What?) Select the answers from words blue, red, white. Write the sentences and underline the words denoting distinctive features,

13. An object can be recognized thru its distinctive features. Example: sweet, juicy, elongated. What is it? A pear.



14. Words: In, On, At, To, For, Over, Under, are called prepositions. Besides these there are other prepositions. Prepositions always are written separately. Between preposition and the name of the object a word can be inserted (on green meadow). Prepositions serve as connectors of words in a sentence.

15. Related words are those which are close in meaning Garden, Gardner, Gardening, Forest, Forester, Forestry.

16. Consonants are divided into voiced and voiceless. Voiced consonants are pronounced with the full use of the voice as: b, v, g(hard), d, g(soft), z. The voiceless consonants are pronounced with the mere breath of the voice as: p, f, k, t, sh, s. Some of the voiced and voiceless consonants form pairs. b-p, v-f, g(hard)-k, d-t, g(soft)-sh, z-s. The others not forming pairs are: voiced, r, l, m, n, and voiceless tz, ch, sh(soft), h.

17. Consonants at end of words must be proved by changing the word in such a way that a vowel follows the terminal consonant. If before the vowel the terminal consonant is voiced it is written as voiced in all related words: gorod (pronounced gorot), goroda (pronounced goroda); deputat (pronounced deputata), deputata pronounced deputata).

Remarks: In a highly inflected Russian language environmental reshuffling of letters in words is quite easy.

18. The same rule applies to voiceless consonants in the middle of words, as, for instance, shubka (pronounced shupka), shuba (pronounced shuba); repka (pronounced repka), repa (pronounced repa).

19. The stress of voice over one of the syllables is called 'accent'. The vowel of the stressed syllable is called an accented vowel; the vowel of the unstressed syllable is called an unaccented vowel. In writing, at times, a special mark (') is placed over the accented vowels.

20. Unaccented vowels o, ah, ye, ē, ya in words must be proved by the accent. To do this it is necessary to change the word so that the vowel in question becomes an accented vowel: koza (pronounced kaza), koz (pronounced koz).

Remarks: In a highly inflected Russian it is quite easy to do this, as, for instance, Koza (goat), is nominative singular and Koz is genitive plural.

21. The mute letter ъ, the soft sign, is also used before ya, ū, ye, yo, ē, as a sign of division to indicate that the preceding consonant is not blended with the following vowel: semya, sem'ya (sem'ya).

22. Some of the words have doubled consonants. In dividing such words for carry over to the next line, the division is made between the doubled letters.

23. In some of the words, letters l, d, t, v are not pronounced. To prove the spelling of such words, the sound of related words should be studied and if the silent letter in question is sounded in any of the

related words, all such related words must be written with this letter; radostno (pronounced radnosno), radost (pronoun. radost).

24. Our speech is divided into sentences. Each sentence represents a complete thought.

Exercise 283. Read and tell how many sentences in the story 'Spring'. Write out the story and put a dot at the end of each sentence.

SPRING. The cold winter is over spring is here brightly shines the spring sun snow is melting rills are running already out are first spring flowers blackbirds have arrived farmers are getting ready for early spring sowing

25. Words in a sentence are put together according to meaning. The relation of words in a sentence can be determined with the aid of questions. This only teaches the child to replace the interrogative words of a question with nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, etc.

Victor N. Crassnoff, Godfrey, Illinois.

Ed. note: Does the above context look as if Russian children were limited to the 600–750 words ours learn in the same length of time?

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#### **4. An interesting letter.**

Dear Dr. Owen: May 24, 1963

On receiving a good letter from Congressman Dent, Chairman of the Select Subcommittee on Education, I felt encouraged and have been preparing to go to Washington to the Committee hearing on the Spelling Reform Bill. The delay since then is noticeable.

It might be that the Subcommittee will not call a hearing until there has been a report on the "office wide program Project English", from the Office of Education.

In a broad view of the situation, it might be that Congressmen will not make a move until they receive strong pressure from leading educators, or the administration, or both.

This might mean that the Commissioner of Education would have to be convinced and he might refuse to make a move unless requested to do so by the President. Back of that the President might prefer that there be a plank favoring spelling reform in the platform of the political party.

There should be leading educators and others in the Eastern states with leadership ability and statesmanship qualities who could and should talk with Dr. Keppel; Likewise the President. At any rate the work for this great cause should be kept up by all concerned.

Respectfully,  
Homer W. Wood, Publisher-Lawyer, Porterville, Calif.

## 5. Can We Catch Up With Russian Education?, by Clarence Hotson, Ph.D.

Perhaps the most disturbing piece of news for Americans has been the report, backed by the strongest evidence, that as judged by results, the education of youth in Soviet Russia is not only as good as our own, but a great deal better. For a recent book, *What Ivan Knows that Johnny Doesn't*, [1] shows that Russian children are far ahead of our own in mastering of reading vocabulary and academic subjects at the same ages. While our children are reading babyish primers, the Russians are handling material of a sort that ours do not reach until years later.

This bad news reinforces an earlier painful discovery of widespread illiteracy in the products of our public-school system, sometimes extending beyond high school and into college age. The problem of how to teach children to read and write English has accordingly received considerable attention. There seems to be a current reaction to "phonics" from the "look-and-say" school of teaching which prevailed for decades. The fact that there is such a thing as "phonics" shows that some method is discoverable even in the madness of English spelling. We may therefore hope that by stabilizing the use of the letters in our alphabet to convey the sounds of English, or by finding the best way we now have of representing any particular sound and making that the rule, we may achieve a rational and consistent orthography in place of the mess we've inherited. For something is certainly rotten, not in the state of Denmark, but in the traditional spelling of English words.

How should one teach a child to read the following simple sentence, in which the letter "o" is sounded in eight quite different ways?:

The poet did nothing to remove from his record the blot of the wrong his tongue had once done  
Woman, that is, all women.

In "poet" the "o" is pronounced like "oa" in "boat". In "nothing, from, record, tongue, done" it sounds like "u" in "mud". In "to remove" it is like "oo" in "fool." In "blot" it is like the "a" in "what". In "wrong" it is like the "a" in "all". In "once" it is like the "wo" in "wonder". In "Woman" it is like the "u" in "full". In "women" it is like the "i" in "is". And just what is the use of the "w" in "wrong", and the "ue" in "tongue"?

It is evident that the letter "o" is used in English in flagrant violation of a primary canon in an alphabetic representation of sounds, namely, that a letter is by definition a character representing one particular elementary sound of a language. No letter should be allowed to stand for eight different sounds, as "o" does in the above sentence.

And how does the teacher explain to the child just why the combination "ou" is used to represent six quite different sounds, as in the following sentence?:

The tourist, poor soul, had recourse to roulette, but found he could double only his troubles.

In tourist the "ou" is like the "u" in pull". In "soul" it is like "ow" in "bowl". In "recourse" it is like the "o" in "horse". In "roulette" it is like the "oo" in "fool". In "found" it is like "ow" in "how". In "double" and "trouble" it is like "u" in "but". One would think that English must be poverty stricken if it has to make one combination of two letters represent so many different vowels. But that is not exactly the trouble. For it seems that we have at least nine ways of spelling the vowel sound of "ai" in "jail".:

Inveighing in the same vein, the great broad-gauged dictator made it plain that during his reign the way to stay out of jail was to obey without feigning and pay without complaining.

Here a, a-e, ai, au, ea, ei, eig, eigh and ey are pronounced identically. It is hard to imagine how any system of spelling could be worse. In the following sample we find eight extra ways of writing the sound normally represented by sh:

Sure enough, after his initial parachute jump, the nation's precious pensioner was sentient and anxiously conscious of pressure on his gunshot wound.

Here the "sh" sound is written: ch, ci, sci, si, ss, ti, xi, and sh; another flagrant violation of the elementary rule that each sound of a language should have one constant means of representation.

The "ough" anomaly is outstanding. A combination of letters that should not exist at all is used, and pronounced in so many different ways as to bewilder most people. In the following sentence there are eight different ways:

The slough, made by the lough, was like dough, but with a laugh and a cough the tough driver got team and wagon through without a hiccough, as he said he ought to do.

In "slough" the "ough" is like "ow" in "cow". In "lough" it is sounded as "lokh". In "dough" it is like "oa" in "boat". In "cough" it is like "off" in "scoff". In "tough" it is like "uff" in "stuff". In "through" it is like "oo" in "shoot". "Hiccough" rhymes with "sit-up". In "ought" it is sounded like "awe".

Everyone who learns to read English must somehow struggle with this among other monstrous irrationalities. While it is true you will usually not find all of such anomalies in one sentence, is it any less disturbing to be plagued piecemeal by them?

Why are Russian children far ahead of our own in academic subjects at the same ages? The reason should be obvious, but it has received little attention. It is just that the Russians learn to read and write with ease, because their language is spelled phonetically and consistently, whereas our spelling is so far from phonetic or consistent as to be something between a joke and a crime. The difficulty of learning to read and write English with our present spelling is the chief reason for the dropping out of a large proportion of our school children during grammar school or before finishing high school. Even English majors in college have trouble with spelling, and candidates for the Ph.D. in English philology can misspell an occasional word. Why should a teacher with a Ph.D. be obliged to waste his time correcting spelling on themes submitted by college students? The rules for spelling in English ought to be simple and clear enough to make this unnecessary. The word "siege," for instance, is frequently misspelled because there is at present more than one way of writing each individual sound of the word. It ought to be "seej" without any other possible spelling.

Many efforts have been made in the past to reform English spelling, but they have never sufficed to overcome the massive inertia that resists all change. Now, however, the evident fact that the young of Russia are being much more efficiently educated than our own should be just what we need to compel this reform. The whip of dire necessity may accomplish what rational argument alone could never do. For, if we want to catch up with Russian education, the first thing we must do is reform our spelling. It is not pleasant to think of what will happen to us if we don't. A foreign conquerer would never tolerate the vagaries of English spelling.

The late George Bernard Shaw saw the problem and felt the need. He asked the specialists who design type fonts to invent an entirely new alphabet of 24 characters for consonants and 18 for vowels. The trustees of his foundation have approved one such suggested alphabet and are introducing it. And an extensive experiment is being conducted in several cities in England under the auspices of the University of London, Institute of Education, to teach children to read by the use of an augmented alphabet. It seems already proved fully that children so taught have a full year's advantage in reading proficiency over those who have to tackle ordinary spelling from the start, even when both sets of children are later taught to use only traditionally spelled textbooks.

Considering the enormous resistance that any effort to introduce a new or augmented alphabet into general use is sure to encounter, would cause us to hesitate. The type in every linotype machine and in every print shop must be changed; every typewriter junked for an entirely new model with a much enlarged keyboard. Every linotype operator, typist, printer, proofreader, editor and journalist must be re-educated and re-trained. Every teacher must learn a new alphabet, and every literate person of whatever age must learn to read all over again. [2] It is not likely that the political leaders capable of enforcing such a program can gain power in our English-speaking countries.

Tho Shaw's radical proposal may be the ideal solution, it is safe to say that any spelling reform possible in the foreseeable future must consist in a better use of the alphabet we now have. For we cannot afford the time that must elapse before Shaw's alphabet can come into general use. This is the conclusion of the Simpler Spelling Association, Lake Placid Club, N.Y., which advises and urges all would-be spelling reformers to make the best use of our present alphabet.

Spelling reformers have usually tried to do either too much, or too little. They either insist on getting a perfectly phonetic system, and, if they attempt anything short of Shaw's extreme measure, inevitably produce something so repulsive as to insure its rejection in advance, or they try to reform only the worst of our present spelling, and by their timidity defeat their purpose. The reform which is needed, and the only one that has a chance, I submit, will find the best way we now have of representing any particular elementary sound or combination of sounds, and will make that the rule for all representation of that elementary sound or combination. This conservative reform, drastic enuf for all practical purposes, may not produce a perfectly phonetic system, but it will vastly improve our spelling, will enable foreigners to learn English much more easily, and will save our children three years' time of schooling now wasted in learning something that should never have been required. The saving in printing cost alone which a rational simplified spelling will permit, will by itself justify whatever effort is needed to achieve it.

There are indications now of increased interest in spelling reform, but much more is needed. Within the past few years the British Parliament came within three votes of setting up a royal commission to reform English Spelling. The argument most effective in defeating the bill even by this narrow margin was that no reform is possible without the cooperation of the United States of America. That puts it right up to us. *Nothing* will be done, we may be sure, until our government sets up a spelling-reform commission, for no reform of any national language's spelling was ever achieved except by government action; and this has always been effective.

Half-century ago, the leading scholars and teachers of English strongly favored spelling reform, and tried in vain to get Congress to act. Now, however, Hon. Harlan Hagen, Member of Congress from California, has introduced bill H.R. 336: A Bill to establish a National Spelling Commission to reform the spelling of English words, to publish the United States Official Dictionary, and for other purpose."

This was in January, 1963. The bill was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor. Hearings on the bill are to be held during the current session of Congress.

It is highly significant that Hon. Harlan Hagen is from California, for California is well ahead of all the rest of the country in realizing the need for spelling reform. The one who started the present reform movement is Homer W. Wood, a publisher and former lawyer of Porterville. He convinced Congressman Hagen of the need for and benefits of spelling reform, and has been active in convincing other legislators and governors. On May 6, 1961, he secured an important resolution from the California Newspaper Publishers Assoc., which has a membership of more than 400 California newspapers. On May 23, 1961, under the leadership of Senator J. Howard Williams, the California State Senate passed a resolution advocating a National Spelling Commission and a U.S. Official Dictionary.

The Hagen bill affords a great opportunity finally to rid the English-speaking world of an enormous handicap. It is at least a motion before the House which should provoke debate. The necessary government action must be prepared for and accompanied by the peculiarly American way of handling a political problem, namely by the initiative of the people at large. As many as possible should become vitally concerned with the problem of spelling reform. Let each one, or as many as can possibly do so, develop his own system, and then compare notes. Let the best ideas be found by such experiment and comparison of notes.

The merits of all suggestions for reform must, of course, be carefully reviewed and evaluated by the Spelling Reform Commission when Congress passes the Hagen bill and one is accordingly appointed.

In view of the efficiency of Russian education, as the result of phonetic spelling, a drastic rationalizing of English spelling is imperative for national welfare and perhaps even for survival. If there ever was a time when we of the English-speaking world could afford to handicap ourselves by our present ghastly spelling, that time is now surely past. Our entire free way of life is at stake. Its continuation may well depend on how soon we can achieve a rational spelling. This job *must be done within a few years at most*. Where do you stand? Will you pitch in and help?

Clarence Hotson, Ph.D. Romulus, N.Y.

[1] By Arthur S. Trace, Jr. Random House, \$3.95.

[2] Ed. note; But it WAS done in England in all the categories mentioned above, and by proper planning, resulted in only a few weeks delay – less than a month! (the A.R. Project)

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### **Shoor Kuer**

If yoo'r kurst with a buetifuul faes  
And th gurlz swarm round yoo apses  
Step into, a baar  
And proklaem, neer and faar  
Ei kan lik eni bum in this plaes.

### **Th Shaek Spaek**

Thaer wuz an Araebian Shaek  
Hoo sed: Heerz a point Ei wuud maek  
Hwen yoo heer sumwun speak  
Hoo pronounsez it 'sheek'  
Yoo mae noe its a stuepid mistaek!

## 6. English is More Than Just English, by Eleonore Boer.

Whether in Capetown or Calcutta, in Hamburg, Tokyo, Rome or Moscow, English will be understood and spoken All over the world, English newspapers, magazines and books are sold, English business letters composed, English texts written into copy books by school children. English, then, is an all-embracing mediator in today's world of ever growing conflicts.

In the light of these facts, let us look at the various efforts in the U.S.A. to bring about a reform of English spelling, preferably to correspond with its pronunciation. As someone who learned English as a foreign language, I believe that such an act would seriously impair its value as an international medium of communication.

First of all, we should remember how the English language has acquired this immense power and attraction which makes it manna from heaven to those who call it their own native tongue. For many centuries, English has borrowed and digested words from practically every existing source: With this in mind, the spelling of English seems quite logical – one just has to consider the various origins of its components. Whatever came from France, will be French, of course, like "tour", while "moor" (the same sound), is of Germanic origin, and words like "telephone", "cycle" and "psychology" were contributed by Greece. The Latin verb "mittere", with its different combinations, has entered the English language practically unchanged; a few examples are: permit, submit, commit, and transmit Latin and Greek are, in fact, the great-grandparents of many other languages which are now cousins of English, This common ancestry and international relationship in which English has become the leader, is the secret of its great success in so many countries.

However, it is English in its *written* form that makes it seem familiar to foreigners. Just take the word "nation", e.g., a German will say "Ah, Nation!" – the pronunciation is different, but the spelling is exactly the same. In French, the word also looks the same. A Spaniard will say "Nación – eh? That's what it is!" An Italian: "It must mean 'Nazione', that's easy to see." Now confront them with a word that spells "naeshn", and they'll be completely blank. In learning such a word, they would have to memorize the spelling as well as the meaning of it, since it has nothing to do with anything they know. What's more, they might have quite a surprise pronunciation for a word that is spelled "naeshn" for the sounds in other languages deviate from English sounds. Therefore, the belief that phonetic spelling of English would automatically reveal its pronunciation to foreigners, is erroneous.

If a change were to be considered at all, most foreigners might shock the English speaking camp with the suggestion that the pronunciation should be adapted to the spelling. To them, this would seem much more logical; for the feature that makes the English language so unique is not its spelling but its pronunciation. Somehow, the English speaking peoples gave it sounds which set it apart from other languages: The bonds of relationship were preserved only by the English orthography. To change this orthography to correspond with such a strange pronunciation would only complete the alienation, cut off all family ties, and isolate the language. English would then become "an island unto itself."

Living on such an "island." with all bridges burned, how would the *American* student fare who would venture to learn someone else's language? The cozy mental featherbed which has been made for him at home, would not help much in the international arena. He would find that he had lost his handy key to other languages at a time when he needs it most (The demand for Americans who speak foreign languages is forever growing; the State Department now has an incentive system with bonuses for

officers who can speak foreign languages.) When I taught German to American adults, I saw them learn fastest those words which looked "exactly" or "almost" like English. The spelling reform would do away with the aiding similarities which English, in its conventional form, offers in such plenitude. The Americans, whose mind would be geared to phonetic spelling, would have a very hard time understanding the makeup of many a language that was not so "foreign" before he became "spelling reformed. For one thing, once he expects an "ee" sound to look like "ee" in writing, French words like "prix, chérie, oui, Paris" might puzzle him or mislead him more than is necessary, for their spelling does not betray that they all end in an "ee" sound.

This may prove that English is not alone with its irregularities; they exist in other languages as well, and so do the modernizing and simplifying efforts. As a result, all living languages have, in the course of time, changed, discarded or added words, thus growing and keeping up with time. While this is a natural and gradual process that keeps a language alive, a sudden and radical change is likely to kill it, especially when it is used by so many different peoples, as this is the case with English. There are many things to be considered before operating on a language; the loss of blood might be too great to justify a deep cut into its flesh.

Strangely, the rest of the world seems to be quite willing to "put up" with English as it is. Peoples in all parts of the globe have accepted this language as a great (if somewhat capricious) lady with an international flair. Therefore, the spelling reformers should think twice before they decide to put Blue Jeans on her!

The way the English language is being treated in its own fatherland makes me think of a certain Bible quotation "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house." While children all over the world learn English with flying colors, here it is accused of being confusing and illogical, and of frustrating an entire, overburdened generation of youngsters. Exposing the millions of Johnnies and Marys now in school to this kind of propaganda is hardly the right way to help them develop a positive attitude toward their language. They should be told, first and foremost, that if they know English well, many other things "shall be added unto them." What they need is someone to push open to them the door that leads to the magic world of words. They will have very little difficulty in learning their language (or any language), if they are made familiar with the "anatomy" of the words, their basic parts, prefixes and suffixes, and – last but not least – their origins. Once it is understood that words have "bodies" and "limbs", both children and adults will cease to grope in the dark about their spelling. Only recently, a quite intelligent young man surprised me by writing the word "president" to read "presedent". "How am I supposed to know that there is an 'i'"; he argued, "it sounds all the same." When I told him that all he had to remember was the basic verb "preside", he brightened: "I never thought of that!"

From learning a language the "organic" way, a person will end up with a very valuable "by-product" before he even knows it; for the more he understands of the nature of words, the broader his education will become. If he is trained to realize that a language has more than just one dimension, he will also be inclined to search beyond the surface of other things. English, as it is, seems especially well suited to act as a built-in agent to make us do what a certain sign demands from us over and over, namely, to THINK. It cannot be a mere coincidence that highly developed languages have always gone hand in hand with flourishing civilizations.

Since language is the mirror of a people's culture, along with the study of its techniques should go a generous portion of good literature. This should be introduced as early as possible, that is, long before



the 4th grade. Such an approach would not only result in the mastery of the language but also in the cultivation of the individual, which must be the ultimate aim of all education.

Our present spelling dilemma, which is beginning to hurt us in the eyes of the world, can only be a symptom of the massive sins of the past. I understand that we are now moving away from the "look-say" method in teaching children to read, and I pray that we may move a lot faster. If children are supposed to recognize a whole word when they see it, and do not know how to join letters together, how can they spell a word when they hear it? Things were so wonderfully simple in the days of the ABC's – who made them this complicated? In areas untouched by the well meant reform of teaching the very basic skills, I have seen peasant grandmothers help young children with their reading and writing assignments.

While there are, undoubtedly, a lot of schools in this country which give English the place it deserves in education, the trouble with so many others seems to stem from a lack of qualified teachers to teach it. According to some reports, approximately 50% of the English teachers in the country are not adequately prepared to teach the subject.

In a situation like this, any language would become hard or impossible to learn. Those who teach *must* know what they are teaching. They must know all the aspects of it and must be able to present it in many different ways until they get the message through. Where are the rigid, *nation wide* requirements for teachers that would give them more professional dignity, more respect from their students, and probably more money for their services? Just as doctors, who watch over our health, must meet such requirements, why should not teachers, who are to train the minds of our children, be made to meet similar requirements? I still find it hard to believe that no general standard of this kind is enforced here. This would not only cure our spelling problems; it would also teach by example that all achievement has to do with living up to something – never with pulling it down! To clamor for a spelling reform as a remedy for our weak English teaching would be the same as to request the lowering of Mt. Everest, so it would become possible for untrained persons to climb it. All we can do is to get some muscles back into us, lest we fall victim to the next avalanche.

Eleonore Boer, Encino, Calif.

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In the opinion of the Editor, this article is typical of the thinking of some professors. They have the theory that if a subject is very difficult to learn, the child will remember it better. It is the same theory by which some psychologists claim that mother love is due to the pain encountered in childbirth. But this is not necessarily true – witness the mothers who resent, neglect and abandon their children, whereas most foster mothers – meaning those who adopt children because they want them – are loving, kind parents. It is the same old story that those who have no trouble in learning cannot see why others *do* have trouble in learning. Is this any reason for denying such unfortunate children the right to make easier their learning of a most illogical, inconsistent, unnecessarily erratic system? Apparently Mrs. Boer is not acquainted with the standards set by the National Association for Accreditation of Teachers of English – a subsidiary of the National Education Association, which have been in use for quite a few years in the U.S.A. And of course, she could not know of the changes made just last month in the California Teacher Credentialing System. Thomas W. Braden, President of the State Board of Education pointed out that while the standards apply only to teachers licensed in California, they will have much wider impact because the state recruits almost half of its teachers from other states and these personnel must meet California requirements.

## 7. But English Is English First of All, by E. E. Arctier.

Dear Mr Tune

After all, I will hazard a few comments on that article of Eleonore Boers. At first it struck me as so all-out wrong-headed that I refused to spend any of my scant leisure time in refuting it. But there's something about her command of our written language which forbids such a summary dismissal. She is clearly a crackerjack at foreign tongues and would have learned to read English if it had come to her in Egyptian hieroglyphs. Perhaps that's what is the matter with her outlook on our orthographic chaos. Crackerjacks sometimes just don't *sense* what there is for others to grouse and wail about. Anyway, for what it is worth, here is my ungallant onslaught on the lady's position. Underlying it are a number of extraordinary assumptions, such as:

1. Our mother tongue exists primarily to serve as a Lingua Franca for the rest of the world
2. The rationalizing of its spelling (i.e. streamlining *go, know, sew, beau, whoa*, into *goe. thoe, noe, soe. boe, hwoe*) would make our print so unintelligible to the French, Spanish, Italians, Germans, it would imperil whatever lingua franca status English has so far acquired.
- 3 It acquired this status *because* of its composite origin and its continued absorption of words from these and other foreign tongues.
4. If our children were properly instructed as to this composite origin and continued absorption, they would find the jumbledom of our spelling so logical, so quite to be expected, they would take it happily in their stride All the first grader would have to do would be to reflect that since *tour* and *cycle* came from the French and the Greek, they inevitably transcribe themselves differently from *moor* and *Michael* which we get from the Germanic and Hebrew. Suppose we discuss this fourth assumption now.

Few (if any) of our first grade children – or our second, fourth, sixth – are versed in French or Greek, in the Germanic tongues or in Hebrew, or would appreciate the fact, if so told. And I may be underestimating the education of our elementary teachers, but I doubt if any considerable minority of them are proficient enough in these lingoies to inure their pupils to a reason-rejoicing acceptance of a privileged status for words derived from them. For so many of such words just don't play fair. *Flour* also comes from the French but pronounces itself differently from *tour*. *Sure* and *ewer* – likewise from le Francais – elect to sound their vowels in line with *tour* but depict them otherwise both from it and from each other. As for our Germanic strain, *door* lines its spelling up with *moor*, but its pronunciation with the Latin-lineaged *core*. All in all, methinks the "road to reading" in the primary grades lies less through the addition of several foreign tongues to its curriculum, than through making it easier for children to learn, by the regularizing of *tour, flour, sure, ewer, moor, floor, core* into *tour, flour, shoor, yoo-er, moor, flor, kor*, and extending comparable regularization to the whole primary vocabulary.

I am happy, of course, that the Spanish student of English should be able to pounce upon its *nation* with the glad cry, "Nation, eh? Thats what it means," and his Italian counterpart with a delighted, "It must mean *nazione*, thats easy to see." But is Mrs. Boer really suggesting that we should refrain from phoneticizing *nation* into *naishn* and otherwise blessing our own young with a wun-sound-wun-sien spelling just to give their Hispanic and Italian fellows this occasional thrill? Why should we? How

much reciprocal delight did the Spanish Academy reserve for our students of Espanol when they changed the Greek-ancestored words which we still dutifully transcribe *pseudo*, *zephyr*, *psychology* into *seudo*, *cefiro*, *sicologia* in strict compliance with the high phoneticism of their own *alfabeto*?

Not that I decry this inconsideration. Indeed, I urge it on every nation, tribe and sub-tribe whose written language still falls short of the wun-sound-wun-sien ideal. Neither Sophocles nor Caesar would give a classic damn if every language which has a simple *f* for the initial sound of *phlox* should junk the *ph* in its favor. Rather, I suspect, both these genuine realists of many a shrug and jibe at the French because this so generally clearheaded nation persists in its *physician* et al.

Which brings us naturally to Mrs. Boer's assumption no. 4. Can she really fear that any Frenchman, Hispanic, Italian or German – or for that matter, Russian, Chinese, Hindu, Arab – already at home in English print, az iz, would gaze blankly at its equivalent transliterated into phonetic spelling with the same Roman letters and digraphs as now? Such as, for instance, this little treasure from Lewis Carroll's *Nonsense Verses*. Read it with *ai*, *ee*, *ie*, *oa*, *oo*, pronounced as in *laid*, *leed*, *lied*, *load*, *loot*, – *aa* and *au* as in *bazaar* and *because* – *oi* and *ou* as in *oil* and *out* – *uu* as in *foot* and *full* – *th* and *tth* as in *then* and *thin* – *zh* as in *vision*, *measure*. Give all other letters and digraphs the sounds they most commonly transcribe in conventional spelling. *Th* by itself is used for *the* before a consonant (th dog) but *thee* is required before a vowel (thee idea)

Hou duth th litl krokodiel improov hiz shiening tail  
And flik th wauturz ov th Niel from evri goaldn skail,  
Hou cheerfuuli hee seemz too grin, hou neetli spredz hiz klauz,  
And welkumz litl fishez in, with jentli smieling jauz.

"Oh, yes," laft th boi, "That's from Alis Throo It Luuking Glas, izn't it? Hur vurzhn ov th mor solemkoli "Hou Duth Th Litl Bizi Bee?"

"Alis In Wundurland, Ie rathur tthink," smield Faathur Hyooz,

All I can say is that if this doesn't register with the forgoing foreigner, something has gone wrong with him since his last page of orthodox English. The blockage may, of course, be more emotional than mental – he may be of that ilk which boycotted the first perambulators, on the ground that the ordained transport of the infant was its mother's sacred arms. His like we can dismiss with an indulgent *Pax Vobiscum*, and leave them to time. *And to their sons and grandsons*. For the studentry of Europe would snatch at such an English with a *Gaudeamus igitur* which would split the heavens. And the studentry of Asia with whatever they roar forth in its stead. While the popularity of our nation through the whole foreign world would skyrocket to a point which would make us wonder why our State Department hadn't long ago made spelling reform the Plank Number One of its foreign policy.

There are several other assumptions of Mrs. Boer's regarding which I have my doubts by the dozen. But I'll skip them and close my comments with a word or two on that Assumption number 3. Can she truly be accepting it herself? Can she be all that ignorant of military, commercial, political history? Or, for that matter, of the history of *language*? More than four centuries ago, in the earlier years of Elizabeth's reign, there was a Court-circle movement to regularize English spelling, [\[1\]](#) which came within an ace of succeeding. Suppose it had – and that a Royal English Academy had been founded to keep it regularized, as the Spanish Academy now does *la lengua castellana*. Would that have kept our language confined to England's shores? Or, at most, to those of our present United States, of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and such other all but empty lands England was to colonize. Wouldn't Mrs.

Boer's opening paragraph be just as true today? To wit; that "whether in Capetown or Calcutta, Hamburg, Rome, or Moscow, English is understood and spoken. All over the world, English newspapers, magazines; books are sold, English business letters composed, English textbooks written into copybooks by school children?"

English gained its world prominence not because of such linkage as it has with other languages – and how much did it have with Hindu, Russian, Chinese, or Arab? – but because of the military might, the command of the seas, the industry and commerce, the science and technology, the level of education, and the missionary activity of the English-speaking lands. It wasn't a case of the flag following the language, but the language following the flag.

Now, there's another flag seeking world predominance. Packed by a military might, an industry and commerce, a science and technology, and a level of education which at least approximates that of our Anglo-Saxon world – and its language is phonetic.

I wonder if Mrs. Boer has thought out the connotation of this last. If not, I hope she will. Meanwhile, I send her my warm appreciation of her foreigner's love of my native tongue – in spite of a seeming insensitivity to the caricature of its beautiful sound which its present spelling makes.

Yours, E. E. Arctier.

[1] by Sir Thomas Smith, Secretary of State, and William Bullokar, John Hart (Chester Herald).

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### **The Calamity**

It came without a sound,  
Without the slightest tone  
Of warning to be found  
By which they might have known

With neither trumpet call  
Nor finger beckoning  
With nothing said at all  
Aloud or whispering

To wake their faintest fears  
Beyond what they had read  
Each day for years and years  
And had not credited.

(Anon)

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963 pp11,12 in the printed version]*

## **8. A Lesson in Beginning Reading, by Horace Mann.\***

\*Gathered and quoted by Ralph Dornfeld Owen, Ph.D., Temple University, retired.

About twenty years ago (in 1823), teachers in Prussia made the important discovery, that children have five senses, together with various muscles and mental faculties, all of which, almost by a necessity of their nature, must be kept in a state of activity, and which, if not usefully, are liable to be mischievously employed. Subsequent improvements in the art of teaching have consisted in supplying interesting and useful, instead of mischievous occupation for these senses, muscles, and faculties. Experience has proved that it is much easier to furnish profitable and delightful employment for all these powers than it is to stand over them with a rod and stifle their workings, or to assume a thousand shapes of fear to guard the thousand avenues through which the salient spirits of the young play outward. Nay, it is much easier to keep the eye and hand and mind at work together than it is to employ either one of them separately from the others. A child is bound to the teacher by so many chords, the more of his natural capacities the teacher can interest and employ, the better.

In the case I am now to describe, I entered a classroom of sixty children of about six years of age. The children were just taking their seats, all smiles and expectation. They had been at school but a few weeks, but long enough to have contracted a love for it. The teacher took his station before them, and after making a playful remark which excited a light titter around the room, and effectually arrested attention, he gave a signal for silence. After waiting a moment, during which every countenance was composed and every noise hushed, he made a prayer consisting of a single sentence, asking that, as they had come together to learn, they might be good and diligent. He then spoke to them of the beautiful day, asked what they knew about the seasons, referred to the different kinds of fruit trees then in bearing, and questioned them upon the uses of trees in constructing houses, furniture, etc. Frequently, he threw in sportive remarks which enlivened the whole school, but without ever producing the slightest symptom of disorder. During this familiar conversation, which lasted about twenty minutes, there was nothing frivolous or trifling in the manner of the teacher that manner was dignified though playful; and the little jets of laughter which he caused the children occasionally to throw out were much more favorable to a receptive state of mind than jets of tears.

Here I must make a preliminary remark in regard to the equipments of the scholars and the furniture of the schoolroom. Every child had a slate and pencil, and a little reading-book of letters, words and short sentences. Indeed, I never saw a Prussian or Saxon school, above an infant school, in which any child was unprovided with a slate and pencil. By the teacher's desk, and in front of the school hung a blackboard. The teacher first drew a house upon the blackboard; and here the value of the art of drawing – a power universally possessed by Prussian teachers – became manifest. By the side of the drawing, and under it he wrote the word "house" in the German script hand and he printed it in the German letters. With a long pointing rod – the end being painted white to make it more visible – he ran over the form of the letters; the children; with their slates before them and their pencils in their hands, looking at the pointing rod, and tracing the forms of the letters in the air. In all our good schools, children are first taught to imitate the forms of letters on the slate before they write them on paper, here

they were first imitated on the air, then on slates and subsequently, in the older classes, on paper. The next process was to copy the word "house" both in script and in print on their slates. Then followed the formation of the sounds of the letters of which the word was composed, and then the spelling of the word.

Here the *names* of the letters were not given as with us, but only their powers or the sounds which those letters have in combination. The letter *h* was first selected and set up in the reading frame (the same before described as part of the apparatus of all Prussian schools for young children); and the children, instead of articulating our alphabetic *h* (arch), merely gave a hard breathing, such a sound as the letter really has in the word "house". Then the diphthong *au* (as the German word for house is spelled "haus") was taken and sounded by itself in the same way. Then the blocks containing *h* and *au* were brought together, and the two sounds were combined. Lastly, the letter *s* was first sounded by itself, then added to the others; and then the whole word was spoken. Sometimes the last letter in a word was first taken and sounded, then the penultimate, and so on, until the word was completed. The responses of the children were sometimes individual and sometimes simultaneous, according to a signal given by the teacher.

In every such school, also, there are printed sheets or cards containing the letters, diphthongs, and whole words. The children are taught to sound out a diphthong, and then are asked in what words that sound occurs. On some of these cards, there are words enough to make several short sentences; and, when the pupils are a little advanced, the teacher points to several isolated words in succession, which, when taken together, make a familiar sentence; and thus he gives them an agreeable surprise, and a pleasant initiation into reading.

After the word "house" was thus completely impressed upon the minds of the children, the teacher drew his pointing-rod over the lines which formed the house; and the children imitated him, first in the air, while they were looking at his motions, then on their slates. In their drawings, there was, of course, a great variety as to taste and accuracy; but each seemed pleased with his own, for their first attempts had never been criticized so as to produce discouragement. Several children were then called to the blackboard to draw a house with chalk. After this, the teacher entered into a conversation about houses. The first question was, "What kind of a house was that on the black board?" Then the names of other kinds of houses were given. The materials of which houses are built were mentioned, – stone, brick, wood; the different kinds of wood, nails, and where they were made; lime, and whence it came, etc. When the teacher touched upon points with which the children were supposed to be acquainted, he asked questions; when he passed to subjects beyond their sphere, he gave information, intermingling the whole with lively remarks and pleasant anecdotes.

And here, one important particular should not be omitted. In this as well as all other schools, a complete answer was always required. For instance, if a teacher asks, "What are houses made of?" he does not accept the answer, "Of wood" or "Of stone"; but he requires a full, complete (*vollständig*) answer, as "A house may be made of wood." The answer always must contain an intelligible proposition, without reference to the words of the question to complete it. And here, the greatest care is taken that the answer shall always be grammatically correct, have the right terminations of all articles, adjectives, and nouns, and the right grammatical transpositions according to the idioms and structures

of the language. This secures, from the beginning, precision in the expression of ideas. When the hour had expired, I do not believe there was a child in the room who knew or thought that his playtime had come.

It is obvious that in the single exercise above described, there were the elements of reading, spelling, writing, grammar, and drawing, interspersed with anecdotes, and not a little general information; yet there was no excessive variety, nor were any incongruous subjects forcibly brought together. There was nothing to violate the rule "one thing at a time."

Life and Works of Horace Mann, (1891, Boston) vol. 3. pp. 304–308 inc. Annual Report on Education for 1843.

### **Horace Mann, on English Spelling.**

"Such are the difficulties in acquiring the orthography of our language that it is said we have but two or three classes of uniformly correct spellers. Almost all, except publishers or printers and proof-readers, are more or less deficient in this acquisition.

While some other languages, as Italian, French, or German assign to individual letters a power (i.e. a sound), which is scarcely varied wherever they occur, the power given to letters in the English alphabet bears little resemblance to their power when they are combined in words. In a vast number of words there is a uniformity of pronunciation with a diversity of spelling, or vice versa.

"The same letter has many different sounds, while different letters have the same sound, so that the learner, after learning the sound of a letter in one place, has no assurance of being right in giving it the same sound in another place. The letters seem to interchange work with one another.

Added to this, many words have silent letters, and in words otherwise of a formation exactly similar, some have silent letters and some do not."

From Horace Mann's *Second Annual Report* to the Massachusetts State Board of Education. See Life and Works, Vol. 2, pp 518–19.

Editor's note: Here we are on one hand, trying to give children confidence in their ability to decipher new words and with the other hand, surely destroying that confidence at every opportunity with our inconsistent spelling. Have you ever watched a bug trying to climb up a dry, steeply sloping sandhill? Every step forward is accompanied by an almost equal amount of sliding back. Are we no more intelligent than bugs? Learning to read is accompanied by the same advances and setbacks.

Let us not continue to blind ourselves to the major cause of difficulties in learning to read and spell. But there are none so blind as those who don't want to see.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963 pp12,13 in the printed version]*

## **9. A Report on I.T.M. by Maurice Harrison, Director of Education, Oldham Education Committee.**

The name, Pitman Initial Teaching Method, is now generally applied to what was formerly called the Augmented Roman Alphabet. It makes clearer the fact that simplified spelling is only an initial step towards learning reading in ordinary print.

At the beginning of the present school year, there were 18 (half of all) infant schools in Oldham working with the new method. The other half are being used as controls. There are also a number of junior and secondary schools using it remedially. What happened in the first schools in 1961–2 is happening again in 1962–3. The results are truly remarkable. In the country generally the method has spread from the 5 education areas of 1961, to 37 areas in 1962.

The original difficulties which faced the first teachers have now been overcome. There are lots of books available and it is not uncommon for infant children before the first year is completed to have read most of them. The following is typical. In St. Mary's Infant School, the children before transferring to ordinarily printed books, have first to read in traditional print the ordinary books of the reading scheme used in years before. In October, 1962, 16 out of the 40 children who began a year earlier, read straight through Books III, IV, V and VI of the Gay Way Series. The books were borrowed from older classes in the school. In April this year, there were 36 children in the class and 28 of them had passed this test and were reading library books in ordinary print. The most backward children were on Janet and John Book III in the special print.

With respect to the remedial work, one teacher of long experience in remedial teaching says that never before has he had to order books for his special class because everything in the classroom in ordinary print had been read.

In the beginning, many teachers feared that the children would learn to read in the special alphabet but that their skill would not be transferred to ordinary reading. This fear is proved groundless. Having acquired confidence, the children, without any special teaching and indeed without apparently noticing the difference in the type, transfer to ordinary reading.

On every side, I receive reports of amazing improvements in standards of writing and speech, and of happy and contented, trouble-free children. The confidence in reading, early affects achievement in other activities.

I feel strongly, therefore, that all teachers not using the method should most carefully consider its introduction to their schools. I know that we do not yet know all the answers but we know sufficient to ask whether in the interests of the children and their happiness in school, we can in good conscience, remain aloof from this method.

Yours faithfully, M. Harrison, Director of Education.

This table covers every child in Oldham Infant Schools, where the Janet and John books are used. The children, with the exception of a very few late entrants, began school in September, 1961. Their



positions on the Janet and John Reading Scheme at the end of the spring term in April, 1962 are shown below, on page 12.

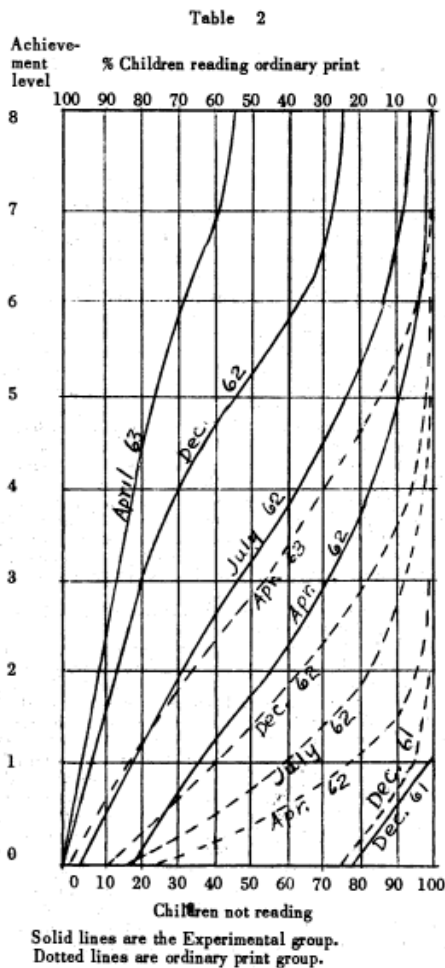
A brief summary of the results in the table will show the difference in the two groups. The 57.5% of the experimental group (80 out of 139) who have completed the reading scheme, are reading books in ordinary print, and many have been doing so for some time. Comparing this achievement with those learning directly in conventional print, we find only two pupils or less than 1% who have completed the scheme.

Another comparison point that is impressive, is those who have completed Janet and John Book III or better. Only slightly more than 24% of those on ordinary print have come this far, whereas about 85% of the experimental group have reached this point or better.

Finally, looking at those who are either non-starters or have completed only the first book – "Here We Go", we find here almost 20% of the traditional print group, whereas there are less than 3% of the special print group, or a total of four pupils.

Every possible attempt has been made to equate the ability, efforts, time, and enthusiasm of the teachers in both groups, so as to give unbiased results.

**Table 2**



**Progress Table for Oldham Schools, as of April, 1962**

Progress	% of 259 children on Traditional Print Scheme		% of 139 children on Special Print Scheme	
	At position in first column	Aggregate	At position in first column	Aggregate
Completed scheme	0.77	0.77	57.55	57.55
Once Upon a Time	1.93	2.70	3.60	61.15
Janet and John Book IV, or I know a Story	5.40	8.10	9.35	70.50
Janet and John Book III, or Through the Garden Gate	16.22	24.32	14.40	84.90
Janet and John Book II, or I Went Walking	22.00	46.32	7.94	92.84
Out and About	17.38	63.70	2.15	94.99
Janet and John Book 1	16.60	80.30	2.15	97.14
Here We Go, or Off to Play	17.77	98.07	1.43	98.57
Non-starters	1.93	100.00	1.43	100.00

## 10. Watch Out for China, by Helen Bowyer.

Scarcely had we recovered from our first perturbation over *The Challenge of Soviet Education* when we found ourselves faced with one which may prove even more serious. For China's population – now well over 700,000,000, outnumbers that of the U.S.S.R. more than three to one, and in its veins runs the blood of a scholarship probably as old as Egypt. The fact that China has to conduct her education primarily in the Mandarin characters of this reproduction, instead of a phonemic notation such as that with which Russia is blessed, is not standing in the way of an elementary and secondary school enrollment of some 105,000,000 children. Or of such scores of millions of adults in spare-time courses as the world has never seen till now. For of the 50,000 characters, a knowledge of which, down the ages, the scholar has spent his life in acquiring, there are some thousands, naturally, of more importance than the others in the affairs of the street, the farm, the home, and the worship of the household gods. Some hundreds of these, everyday use had already simplified – written with fewer and handier strokes. To these the Ministry of Education added enough others to make a vocabulary deemed sufficient for the elementary schooling of both children and illiterate adults. With it, Chinese beginners learn to read simple, useful material – some of it very beautiful – with an ease, speed and pleasure that leaves ours simply nowhere, and puts the content of our basal primers and early readers to shame.

What, then, of all this lettering beneath the mandarin characters? Oh, that is a phonetic rendition of them in Peking Chinese – and gladly would some leading educators have seen it replace those characters as the medium of instruction in the schools. But the trouble was that the country is split into regions of dialects so different that spoken Pekinese is unintelligible to most of their population. But the characters were more or less independent of the ear; it was not sound they transcribed as much as meaning. And through the long centuries of their service, their meaning had been as clear to the scholars of one region as another. So the simplest way to get education to all the people, seemed to be to make the characters the medium of reading and writing, but use phonemic spelling along with it for whatever help it could give. To this end it accompanies the characters in most of the elementary textbooks.

It was not easy to devise an alphabet even for Peking Chinese. The achievement of phoneticism in it presented difficulties far beyond what we would encounter in our English. Here, all one has to do is to isolate the forty (or 41 basic speech sounds into which all our words break down, and assign to each a symbol (letter or letter combination) which would never be used for any other sound and never fail to be used for the one assigned to it. And that would be the case no matter what its position in a word – initial, medial or final – and no matter what its contiguity with other symbols. But in Chinese not only are sounds more dependent on their position and relationships within their words, but the meaning of the word itself may depend upon the tone in which its vowel is uttered. Thus the word which sounds like our English *my* means *sell* if uttered in one tone and *buy* if in another. There are now four of these

tones, each indicated in this Romanized version by one of the four accents: ˊ ˋ ˊ ˋ and a glance at even the first line of our alphabetic reproduction shows how large a role they play.

This alphabet is the fruit of a long line of experimentation in which British and American missionaries played a vital pioneer part. True, Italian Jesuits had been working on the problem, on and off, for more than two centuries before our gospel-bearers reached China in the early 1800's. But the intent of the Jesuits had been primarily to work on a notation by which they and their successors could themselves learn to read the language of their flocks. This had, of course, to be the first aim of the British and American missionaries, too, but it was only a step on the way to a broader goal. That was to teach the Chinese masses to read the gospel on their own. And for this they needed something much more easily and speedily learnable than the Mandarin characters. For some half century, these missionaries were the main protagonists of a phonemic print and script, and it was largely because of the attention their success aroused that in the late 1800 outstanding Chinese linguists began to take up the matter.

Before making a certain drastic comment to which this American and British missionary good sense inevitably exposed their countrymen back home, let's turn our attention to the English translation of the phonemic Chinese. What travail its mastery must cost the beginning student of our tongue. For how many words can you pick out which are spelled in compliance with a decently regular alphabet? What common rhyme-words of *there* can you call to mind which end in *ere*. Oh, to be sure there are *ere* and *where*, but the Vocabulary of Rhymes of my Webster Collegiate Dictionary lists 58 which transcribe themselves à la *air, dare, bear, e're, their, millionaire*. As for *some*, apart from *come*, its speech analogues spell themselves in line with *rum, dumb, vacuum*, while its orthographic mates commonly pronounce themselves as *home, comb, chrome, foam*. The rhyme words of *young* and *among* align themselves with *hung, tongue, wrung*, and the oral confreres of *what* are *dot, knot, yacht, squat*. The *ost* of *most* sounds itself differently in *cost* and *dost*, and an added letter is required for the rhymes *ghost, boast, poste*. *People* is out of step with *steeple*, and *courses* with *horses, sources, forces*. *Are* rhymes with *bar* but spells with *bare*. Working is at odds with *lurking, clerking, shirking*, and *go* with *to* and *do*.

Mind you, all this violation of consistency, analogy, of the mind's natural expectation of a perceptible relationship of cause and effect, occurs within 93 *running words*. Within fewer, that is to say, than one fifth of the number in a full page of the *Readers Digest*.

The Chinese are a gifted race with an immemorial respect for learning, so it may be that their school children tackle jumbledom like this with more success than our experience with our own young would lead us to expect. And of course it afflicts them only through the classroom and homework periods devoted especially to English. It doesn't hang like a blight over their other studies. It doesn't encumber their textbooks in history, geography, science, mathematics, and their own literature, as it does ours. But why should it cost the Chinese student any more time, energy, nerve strain to learn English as a foreign language than it would the Spanish or Italian he might have elected instead? It would be no trick at all to make it just as phonemic even more so, indeed, than even they are at present. It lends

itself so easily to a *wun-sound-wun-simbl speling hwich admits ov noe eksepshnz and rekwierz noe roolz*. Why dont we make the simple decent gesture of a communique like this to the Chinese Ministry of Education: Look, here's a phonemic alphabet which will magic away most of the difficulties your students have with the mechanics reading and writing in English. Along with it we are sending a boatload of classroom materials in it which our best teachers have prepared in close cooperation with the appropriate Chinese Literati we are so fortunate as to have living in our midst. It is, of course, to our own best interests – cultural, economic, political – that English should be spoken, read, written by as many hundreds of millions of foreigners as we can encourage to learn it. But will you also believe that. along with this self-preserving motive, many of us are motivated by a sincere desire to further, if we can, your vast and vital educational effort – the most tremendous this old earth has ever known."

But.... Before we could offer phonemic English to the Chinese, wouldnt we first have to wish it on ourselves? Of course we could – and high time. Where has been our vaunted "practicality" in clinging to the laborious spelling of our fathers while giving up the washtubs of our mothers for the labor saving washing machine? Where has been our patriotism that we have sat on our minds these forty years while a lately illiterate U.S.S.R. put her curriculum all over ours, mainly because the regularity of her orthography gave her a so much more efficient earning tool? Where has been our highly vaunted business sense while we let reading retardation cost us millions on millions of tax dollars every year – not to mention what parents shell out for "remedial" lessons for their own retardees. Where was our concern for our national culture that we let the first graders of 10-20-30-40 years ago grow up into the tens of millions of no more than semi-literate adults who depress its level today. Into those citizens of a great and evermore complicating democracy who don't average even one thoughtful book a year, and pass over the informative and interpretive features of even their daily papers in favor of the comics, sports and fashions, and the more atrocious of yesterday's murders. Where has been our moral responsibility for our children that we have let our unfortunate heritage of "spelling demons" hurry evermounting numbers of them it to mental disturbance, street gangsterism, juvenile delinquency and criminality in the teens and early twenties.

There are few thoughtful Americans to whom these questions might not he justifiably directed, but there is one enormous group of them who, it seems to me, are most directly in line for their reproach. And that group is composed of the millions of church members actively furthering native education in the foreign field. The successors, that is to say, of those church members whose moral and financial support back in the early 1800's, made possible, not only those bibles, hymnals, creeds and catechism in phonetic Chinese, but comparable initiative in other parts of the missionary world. Today, the native schools of Commonwealth Africa may be supported by the national or regional governments thereof, but they hark back to this or that early English-speaking missionary. Of the 800 tribal and sub tribal tongues of the negro portion of that vast continent, most had never been reduced to any visualizing beyond a few crude picture scratches, when the Bible crossed their frontier. So what the arriving missionary had to do was listen for basic sounds which no one till then had ever isolated. And, assured of them, to assign to each a symbol which the most elementary practicality provisoed should not he used for any other sound. So there in due course were thousands of little black protegés of American

parents and grandparents streaking happily thru primers and readers which depicted the pronunciation of almost every word as reliably as ours could so easily do if we modeled all their vocabulary on the consistency of *mat, met, mit, not, nut-up, down, seen, lie, soon*. But the anomaly of this is precisely what has never – apparently – flickered thru the gray cells of these parents and grandparents. They have just gone on dropping their dimes and dollars into the collections for the lucky little blacks, and left their own young flesh and blood to flounder thru the morass of *does, dozen, cousin – go, know, toe, sew, rain, vein, feign, campaign, champagne, window pane*.

Even tho Dr. Frank Laubach, the apostle of phonemics in teaching in the foreign field, is a devoted Board Member of our Simplified Spelling Association here at home.

Editor's comments: I don't agree with some things said in the above article – particularly where it is said that the anomalies of our spelling and the need for spelling reform never flickered thru the grandparents' gray cells. I believe that in many cases it did – and that person was changed into a spelling reformer, and sat down and devised the perfect phonetic alphabet – the first of such a remarkable invention, and the solution to all our troubles. Then at this point, the inventor had no idea of what to do with this remarkable device. He wanted to tell the world about this wonderful invention – but didn't realize that the world wouldn't do anything about it when they heard about it. He didn't realize that the only place where his voice would be effective is in congress. But one person's voice is not effective on a Congressman – it takes many, many voices to get action in Congress. From this it should be obvious that parents must band together and in large numbers tell their Congressmen what is needed and wanted – spelling reform.

### Exercise

Translate the following into English:

1. Shangge yue wo ganmao le.
2. Zhege youyongchi hen da.
3. Wo ganggang xuehui you ziyoushi.
4. Haojige xiaohair zai lianxi youyong.

Correct translation of the exercise in the July issue:

1. I lived in Peitaiho for a month.
2. This dish is very delicious.
3. He sings very well.
4. We picked up many shells.

### A Simple Key to Pronunciation

Consonants: b, c (ts), d, f, g, h, j, k (as in *kill*), l, m, n, ng, p (as in *peak*), q (as in *cheer*), r (as in *run*), s, t, w, x (as in *ship*), y, z (dz), zh (as in *rich*), ch (as in *chew*), sh (as in *shrub*). The last three are pronounced with the tip of the tongue curved back.

Vowels: a (as in *father*), o (ô), e (û), i (ī), u (ōō), ū as in German), after j, q and x, u pronounced as ü. The sounds of combination vowels such as ai and iao are as in English.

To save space, letters in which the sound is the same as, or similar to, that used in English are not further described.

A fuller key to pronunciation of the phonetic alphabet used in this column may be obtained on application to *China Reconstructs*.

Language Corner

China Reconstructs, August 1962.  
 第 XI, No. 8. 游 泳

Yóuyǒng  
 Swimming

上 星期天, 我 和 几 位 朋 友 去  
 Shàng xīngqītiān, wǒ hé jǐ wèi péngyou qù  
 Last Sunday, I and several friends went

游 泳。 那 是 一 个 炎 热 的 下 午,  
 yóuyǒng. Nà shì yíge yánrède xiǎowǔ,  
 swimming. It was a hot afternoon, (there are)

游 泳 的 人 比 平 常 多。  
 yóuyǒng de rén bǐ píngcháng duō.  
 swimmers than usual more.

我 们 先 到 更 衣 室 换 上 游 泳 衣,  
 Wǒmen xiān dào gēngyīshì huànshàng yóuyǒngyī,  
 We first (went) to the changing room changed to swimming suit,

然 后 到 淋 浴 室 用 冷 水 冲 洗,  
 ránhòu dào línbàoshì yòng lěng shuǐ chōngxǐ,  
 then (went) to shower-room, used cold water (to) wash, (to)

预 防 感 冒。  
 yùfáng gǎnmào.  
 prt. catching cold.

这 里 一 共 有 三 个 池 子。 一 个 是 普 通 的  
 Zhèlǐ yìgòng yǒu sānge chízi. Yíge shì pǔtōngde  
 Here altogether there are three pools. One is (an) ordinary

游 泳 池, 一 个 是 练 习 跳 水 用 的 深 水 池,  
 yóuyǒngchí, yíge shì liànxí tiàoshuǐ yòng de shēnshuǐchí,  
 swimming pool, one is practising diving used for (a) deep-water pool,

还 有 一 个 是 儿 童 游 泳 池, 许 多 活 泼 可 爱  
 hái yǒu yíge shì értóng yóuyǒngchí, xǔduō huópō kě'ài  
 still one is (a) children's swimming pool, many lively (and) lovely

的 小 孩 儿 在 那 里 学 游 泳。  
 de xiǎoháir zài nàlǐ xué yóuyǒng.  
 kids are there learning (to) swim.

我 的 朋 友 都 是 游 泳 能 手, 他 们 都  
 Wǒde péngyou dōu shì yóuyǒng néngshǒu, tāmen dōu  
 My friends all are (in) swimming experts, they all

会 游 好 几 种 样 式, 如 蛙 式、 自 由 式、  
 huì yóu hǎojǐzhǒng yàngshì, rú wāshì, zìyóushì,  
 can swim several styles, such as breast-strokes, free style,

蝶 式 等。 我 刚 刚 学 会 游 泳, 现 在  
 diéshì děng. Wǒ gānggāng xuéhuì yóuyǒng, xiànzài  
 butterfly style, etc. I just have learned (to) swim, now

只 能 游 蛙 式。  
 zhǐ néng yóu wāshì.  
 (I) only can swim breast-strokes.

Explanatory Notes

1. *Yóuyǒng* 游泳 can be used both as a noun and as an intransitive verb. But when an object follows, we use *yóu* 游 instead of *yóuyǒng* 游泳. Compare these two sentences:  
 I can swim. (*Wǒ huì yóu yóuyǒng* 我会游泳.)  
 I can swim free style. (*Wǒ huì yóu zìyóushì* 我会游自由式.)  
 It would be wrong to say *Wǒ huì yóuyǒng zìyóushì* 我会游泳自由式.)
2. *Shàng* 上 in most cases means "on", "above", or "up". But it can also be used as a modifier denoting time, such as *shàng xīngqītiān* 上星期天 (last Sunday) or *shàng ge yuè* 上个月 (last month).
3. *Wèi* 位 is an alternative to *ge* 个 as a classifier for persons. It is the more polite form.
4. *Yóuyǒng de rén* 游泳的人 is literally "people who swim", so it also conveys the meaning, "swimmer".
5. *Ge* 个 is a classifier. It is often written together with the numerals denoting the quantities of things given. For instance, in *sānge chízi* 三个池子 *sān* 三 is "three" and *ge* 个 the classifier.
6. *Bǐ...duō* 比...多 (more than) is used to show the comparison between two things. The person or thing with which the comparison is made is often put between *bǐ* and *duō*. For example: *Wǒ de yīfu bǐ nǐ duō* 我的衣服比你多 (I have more clothes than you). The same is true with *bǐ...shǎo* 比...少 (less than), *bǐ...hǎokàn* 比...好看 (more beautiful) or any other adjective of comparative degree.
7. *Huàn* 换 is literally "change". When we say *huànshàng yóuyǒngyī* 换上游泳衣 we mean "change and put on a swimming suit".
8. Both *èrge* 二个 and *xiǎoháir* 小孩儿 mean "children", but *xiǎoháir* is a more colloquial expression.
9. *Hǎojǐzhǒng* 好几种 is the same in meaning as *jǐzhǒng* 几种 (several kinds). Used in this way, *hǎo* does not carry the meaning "good", but is merely used to add emphasis to the expression.
10. *Huì* 会 is literally "can" or "to be able to", such as *Wǒ huì chànggē* 我会唱歌 (I can sing or I know how to sing); *tā bù huì chànggē* 他不会唱歌 (He cannot sing, or he does not know how to sing.) In the sentence *Wǒ gānggāng xuéhuì yóuyǒng* 我刚刚学会游泳 (I have just learned to swim), *xué* 学 means to learn, *huì* 会 is added to show that the skill has been mastered.

## 11. Reviews of New Books, by the editors.

### **Suffer, Little Children, by Dr. Max Rafferty, California State Sup't. of Education.**

Just how much this book contributed to the election of Dr Max Rafferty to State Superintendent of Education is, of course only conjecture Yet it is our guess that it contributed a lot of his support. Seldom do we come across a book written in such a striking, forceful style. William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow had better watch their laurels, for here is a challenger worthy of their mettle. We think that every educator ought to read this book even if they disagree with Dr Rafferty's thinking (and I doubt they will after reading it) simply because it is an unusual and outstanding style of prose. He makes very effective and frequent use of similies and metaphors, many of which are drawn from the classics, but a lot are his own invention. This editor hardly realized how unrounded was his education until reading this book.

Just as an example of how forceful and engrossing this book is thruout, let us quote from one page,'

Fairy Tale Number Two – the Enchanted Maturation Level. "When I was just a broth of a high-school principal, the Wise Men of the profession all told me that algebra should never, never be taught any earlier than the tenth grade because the older the child the more easily he learned algebra. I had a fuzzy, uneasy feeling at the time that if I were to persue this thesis to its logical conclusion I would end up offering algebra only to postgraduate students, but, like Scarlett O'Hara. I decided to think about that tomorrow.

Teaching a college-preparatory foreign language in junior high school was looked upon as so outrageous a proposition that no one even dared to think about that at all,

Then there was kindergarten. The slightest hint of formal instruction in this preserve of nose blowing and toilet training caused every primary supervisor within a radius of five hundred miles to swarm to the attack like so many maddened barracuda. I almost hate to bring it up here, but recently certain institutions which shall remain discreetly nameless here have actually been teaching kindergartners to *read*. Well! When I read that one, my head swam, my eyes lifted involuntarily to Heaven, and I waited numbly for the Second Coming.

But the world jogs on, and apparently the planet is going to muddle along for a few years to come, anyhow. In more and more schools next year, certain eighth-graders will be exposed to algebra, biology, and even Latin, and quite a few five-year-olds will be reading just as merrily as though what they are doing would not have constituted educational heresy when you and I were young, Maggie.

"You ask, what am I doing about it?

"Oh, just turning over some of the sizeable rocks out this way to locate some of those experts who were so positive only the other day that it couldn't be done."

Remember those reading readiness tests that showed so positively that most children weren't ready till the mental age of seven years? Now we must have an awful large crop of seven-year-olds starting kindergarten,



This is just one of the hundred facets he covers in such a hypnotic, engrossing style that it is difficult to put aside the book until the end.

We would like to hear from our readers if they disagree with some parts of the book. At any rate, I'm sure you will enjoy reading it.

-o0o-

**Basic Reading, by Glenn McCracken and Charles C. Walcutt,\***

\* Published by J. B. Lippincott Co. New York

In the ever-quickenening retreat of all-out Look and Say, several all-out "back-to-phonics" reading series have edging into the field so long held by its Dick and Jane's. Held so almost by themselves that even Glenn McCracken of the New Castle Reading Experiment made shift for years with the Laidlaw cousins of this banal clan. But recently he joined with Dr Charles C Walcutt [1] of Queen's College to author a series so uncompromisingly phonic that Page One of the preprimer starts the child off on the audible and visual recognition of the short vowel *a*."

While deploring the arrested development of any primary school texts which content themselves with back-to-phonics instead of "Forward to Phonetics" [2], the Bulletin finds in this one several merits which it hopes to discuss in a later issue. For the moment it will simply voice its appreciation of the clarity with which the authors state their conception of the job they are undertaking. In their *Message to the Teacher*, they write:

"To define reading, we must try to get at the element that sets it apart from other similar activities. It will not do for example, to define reading as a thought getting process because we get thoughts just as surely from a lecture or a conversation. There is, to put it another way, no difference between "reading" a page of difficult philosophy and trying to understand it – and simply hearing the same page "read" to us by another. The problem of understanding is virtually identical for both reader and listener.

"Nobody would deny that the purpose of reading is to get information of some sort from the printed page. But since we get information in the same way from spoken language, this purpose does not define reading in a way that distinguishes it from talking. As soon as we grasp this point however, the problem resolves itself immediately. If we see that meaning *resides in language*, then we can ask how writing (which we read) is related to language (which we hear). If language, which is sound, carries the meanings, what is writing? It seems obvious that writing is a device, a code, for representing the sounds of language in visual form. The written words are in fact artificial symbols for the spoken words, which are sounds.

So reading must be the process of turning those printed symbols into sounds. The moment we say this, however, someone is sure to ask (and probably in a tone of the greatest anxiety). "But what about *meaning*? Do you propose to define reading as mere word-calling, without regard for meaning?"

Yes, we do. Reading is first of all, and essentially, the mechanical skill of decoding, of turning the printed symbols into sounds which are language. Of course the reason we turn the print into sound (that is. read) is to get at the meaning. We decode the printed symbols in order to hear what they "say".

"Now, what is the value of our definition as regards the teaching of reading? We believe its value is that it enables us to put first *things first* and approach the task of learning to read, with our children, in

an orderly and effective manner. We are intensely concerned that our children understand what they read, but the mechanical "decoding" skill must come first if we are to get them started properly. In the earliest stages of learning to read, there is very little need for thinking or reasoning on the part of the child. What he needs is practice in mastering a decoding skill, and the thinking will come along quite some time later.

"For the fact is that the language, the imagination, the experience, and the conversation of a typical six-year old child are enormously far beyond anything he is going to be able to read for some time. It will be quite a few months before anything he can read will even approach the vocabulary and thought of what he has heard or even spoken himself. We believe this is more true today than it was in the past, What the child hears on radio or television is often very advanced linguistically compared to what he will read in his first books.

"So the faster we teach him the skill, the faster will his ability to read catch up with his language, which, of course, has had a six-year headstart. Once he has mastered the skill, this relation changes radically: reading becomes the prime source of growth in vocabulary, in language, and in intellect. Within a very few years the child who has learned to read properly will be reading and understanding hundreds and hundreds of words that he may never use or hear until he is attending lectures in college!"

[1] Editor of *Tomorrow's Illiterates*, an Atlantic Monthly Press Book published by Little Brown & Co. 1961 and sponsored by the *Council for Basic Education*.

[2] Title of an article in *Phi Delta Kappan*, February, 1961, and reprinted in *Readings on Reading* Instructions by Dr: Albert J. Harris, Queens College. N.Y. David Mc Kay Co. 1963,

### **English Heterography, or How We Spell, by Godfrey Dewey, Ed.D.**

Here is a book that has long been awaited by research scholars on spelling. It is a factual data study sponsored by the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, at Lake Placid, New York.

All the 41 sounds of spoken English are arranged in the logical order of the phonemic basis of the Simpler Spelling Association Alphabet. More than 500 different spellings are exemplified for these 41 sounds. Then looking at the anomalies of English spelling in the reverse direction, it is found that for 262 spellings – single letters, conventional digraphs and larger letter combinations – there are listed 507 pronunciations. Also listed are examples of silent letters showing that every letter of the alphabet is silent in some English word. A copy of this interesting book may be obtained from the Foundation mentioned above.

### **Readings on Reading Research, edited by Albert J. Harris, Exceptional Children in the Schools, edited by Lloyd M. Dunn, Reviewed by Helen Bowyer.**

If all the books on the teaching of reading, got out by the Education Press since the first Sputnik beep-beeped across our skies, were laid end to end, would they reach clean across our continent or only half way? One admits, of course, that the problem should be more explicitly posed. "Along which parallel of the continent?" springs at once to the mind. Also, "Should the East-West line be rigidly undeviating, or might it veer minimally to dodge snow-capped mountains, traffic-jammed city streets and unbridged points on the Mississippi and Missouri in its path?" But leaving such considerations to be worked out

by whatever specialist or Ed.D. candidate undertakes this piece of research, the Bulletin is happy to inform its readers of two books in this five year outpour, which differ, if only in a few significant pages, from all the others which have come its way.

Both came out this spring. The first – the *Readings on Reading Research* – is a collection of 99 articles edited by Dr. Albert J. Harris. Director of the Education Clinic of Queen's College, Flushing, N.Y. In a later issue the Bulletin hopes to comment on some of the other articles, but for the moment it will restrict itself to number 51 – a veritable fish out of water among the other 98. It is a reprint from the *Phi Delta Kappan*. (February, 1961) entitled *Not Back to Phonics – Forward to Phonetics*. It also appeared in *Education Digest*, (May, 1961). The writer (incidentally, the Bulletin's Contributions Editor) used the term *phonics* for the revived attempt of some educators to employ in place of Look-and-Say (or in conjunction with it) such limited sound-sign regularity as our disastrously non-regular spelling permits of. *Phonetic* she reserves for that spelling reconstructed to rule out anything but total regularity – one symbol and one only for each of our 40–42 basic speech sounds, and every such sound sticking invariably to the one symbol allotted to it.

It surely is not possible that among the other 74 contributors to this symposium there weren't at least some few who realized the magic such a spelling would work on our reading problem – the worm at the root of our whole vast education system. Even Dr. Arthur I. Gates goes on record here as considering the relationship of English letters and sounds as "distressingly inconsistent and bewildering."

Why he should continue to sanction this distress for ten million little primarites who would prance so joyously thru primers and readers in phonemic notation, let whoever can explain! Happily – as evidenced in an earlier book of his – Dr. Harris is aware of what primers and readers of this sort are doing thruout the length and breadth of the Soviet Union. Here's to any attempt of his to open the same "royal road to learning" for the children of the English-speaking world.

The other book *Exceptional Children* is edited by Dr. Lloyd M. Dunn, Chairman of the Dept of Special Education, Peabody College; Nashville, Tenn. Everyone of its seven authors is thoroly worth the attention of our readers, but the section on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is all we have space to consider here. In it, its author uses not only the above mentioned Phi Delta Kappan article, but a S.P.B. report of Mr. Tune's on the Augmented Roman Alphabet in England. Moreover, to illustrate the simplicity of World English notation, he quotes Mr. Tune's transliteration "Just bekauz wee'v bin duuing it aul rong for senturiz iz noe reezun tuu chaenj nou." He finishes his discussion of orthographic reform with a conclusion – however tentative – which the S.P.B. takes the liberty of recommending to other reading specialists: "It would seem premature to recommend that phonetic spelling be adapted in the early instruction of deaf children. However, if dramatized language can be taught the deaf with the speed demonstrated in the Thompson (1927) research, and if normally hearing children can learn within less than half a year to read phonetically spelled language to the limit of their auditory language, and if phonetically spelled language constitutes a decided aid in teaching speech to the deaf, then the profession owes these possibilities some thorough research."

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §17.8 p236 in the printed version*]  
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963 p19 in the printed version*]

## 12. Under the SPELL of English, by Arthur Bennett

Would you like to be Carnegie's *heir*,  
With never a worry or *ceir*?  
That most of us *would* is well *understould*.  
One who would not would surely be *reir*.

When one makes a hole in *eight*  
It's a very sad story to *releight*  
Bad work with the putter and he will mutter  
"I'll correct that at some *lighter deight*."

Once there was an infantry *colonel*  
Who fought where the blitz was *infolonel*  
Want to know the result? You'd better consult  
The obituary writ in the *Jolonel*.

The groom advanced down the *aisle*  
With a *smaisle* he thought to *begaisle*  
The crowd into thinking he wasn't shrinking  
But was scared to death all the *whaisle*.

A poem is writ word by *word*;  
May be lofty, or may be *absord*,  
May picture the *sea*, or a *bord* wild and *frea*,  
Or tell of hope long *deford*.

If a fellow is a regular *guy*  
He'll aim for marks way up *huy*  
He'll push to the top of the hill, witha will  
Never pausing to loiter or *suy*.

Kayak and Seabiscuit *raced*  
They were urged to move and make *haced*  
But for humans to hurry, speed up or worry  
Would be breaking the rules of good *taced*,

What causes a horsie to *neigh*,  
And what causes a donkey to *breigh*?  
Is it because of their diet they shatter our quiet  
Or for pride in their vocal *displeigh*?

To fly a plane over the *ocean*  
Is possibly not a bad *nocean*.  
Such a perilous flight will turn out all right  
If you are able to keep up the *mocean*.

Look back at the deeds you have *done*,  
Take stock of your griefs and your *fone*.  
Can you really feel pride and frankly decide  
You approve of the race you have *rone*?

Sent in by Mrs. Ethel Hook, Palm Springs, Calif.

### 13. This Side of the Sun, by R. F. "Phat" Graettinger\*

Sometimes like a K  
Then again like as S  
No wonder the spelling  
Of Johnny's a mess.

This all started as we were rolling along Interstate 10 and a car barged past us with the license plates, KAT.

The Little Monster who was riding with us, cried out

"Oh, look, pussy cat!"

So I went into an explanation that KAT was not Cat. I wish I hadn't. The barrage of questions fouled me up.

"Well, if Kat ain't Cat, why ain't Kitten, Citten?"

That went on and on, around and around, and I was glad when we dumped him at his mother's home. But it started a train of thought which interfered disastrously with my computations from the Racing Form.

The ultimate conclusion was: It's no wonder Johnny (which isn't his name at all, it's David) can't spell. And if he can't spell, it's no wonder he can't read.

Now you take that mystery, why it's spelled with a K in one place and a C the other but pronounced K. And C sometimes is pronounced S. Like what you pay sales tax with, cents. And then, cancel. K in the front, S in the middle. Poor Johnny.

Then there's that four letter combination, *ough* That one is *tough* on little Johnny – big Johnny, too. *Cough* is something you do in church which annoys other people. But if *bough* is *bow*, why isn't *cough* a bovine quadruped?

And if *tough* is *tuff*, why isn't *cough cuff*, like on your shirt sleeves if you aren't wearing a loud sports model or on your pants if you aren't wearing shorts?

Then look at *through*. If that's the way it is, why isn't what the doves do early in the morning that sounds so soothing you decide against getting up, spelled *cough*, too?

No wonder Johnny thinks that those five or six times you take ough during the day is *coughce*, or maybe *coughey break*, *brake* or *brayque*.

And if One and Won sound alike, it's *kno* or *gno onder* he's a bit *cunphewsed*,

When you want to sweeten your *coughee* you put sugar in it but if you say you're going to *shue* somebody people will sure think you're a blacksmith when all you have in mind is to *haul*, *hawl*, or *hall* him or her into *court* or *cort*.

That's why I pheel phor Johnny but I wyshe he'd asque sumbody else those kwestshuns. They throe me.

I hope his mother doesn't ask us to pick up Johnny, alias David, at his grandmother's again soon. It's sew phrustraighting.

\*Reprinted from the Palm Springs *Desert.Sun.* (Calif.) of Feb. 6, 1963. Sent in by Leo G. Davis.

*[Spelling Reform Anthology §17.7 p236 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963 p20 in the printed version]*

#### 14. From "Out on a Limrick" by Bennett Cerf, (Harper & Bros. 1960)

A fellow they call Aloysius  
Of his wife and a gent grew suspysius  
    And as quick as a wink  
    Found the two by the sink  
But they only were doing the dysies.

There was a young girl in the choir  
Whose voice went up hoir and hoir,  
    Till one Sunday night  
    It vanished from sight  
And turned up next day in the spoir.

A gent with a drooping mustache  
Chewed some hair out while eating his hache  
    The phrases profane  
    He shrieked in his pain  
We shall represent here with a dache.

A handsome young gent down in Fla.  
Collapsed in hospital ca.  
    A young nurse from Me.  
    Sought to banish his pe.  
And shot him. Now what could be ha.?

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin June 1963 p20 in the printed version]*

#### 15. Pitman Explains

Mr. Leo G. Davis,  
Palm Springs, Calif.  
3rd January, 1963

Dear Mr., Davis

Thank you for your letter and plan "Let's Test for the Best" sent to Mr. Downing and myself.

You raise the question of whether augmentations, by joining two letters, can be effective in creating a new character. I have only to refer you to "w" and to remind you that you undoubtedly accept it as different from "v" and "v"!

On the other question – that you want a permanent reform (rather than to teach children to read our Traditional Orthography, (T.O.) and therefore find merit in economy, I hope you will accept my challenge on page 16 of Issue I. Vol. II of the Spelling Progress Bulletin – to which challenge I have received not a single response. I had expected that someone would be able to make a case!

The question of pronunciation does not arise in the printing of books to help children (who have a variety of widely accepted different pronunciations) to learn to read. You will appreciate that neither does it arise in the making of sound programmes for young children – who are the same young children with the same lack of homogeneity in their pronunciations. Just as the producer of a T.V. programme for children asks himself only, will those words so pronounced carry their meaning (and so the understanding to every child listening, so we in printing need only similarly regard the individual variety as not detrimental to a general comprehension.

Were we teaching speech to the child, a particularly chosen pronunciation would be not only relevant but essential. But the child is reading and not speaking, and what he might have said had he been speaking (which he was not!) is of secondary not primary importance. The primary is that his listening vocabulary happens to include what is printed even if his speaking vocabulary does not.

I believe that the world will not much longer tolerate the 'untruth' of T.O. It will be necessary, however, for a new generation to have come into power, who will have learnt reading by the I.T.M. approach before the world will be ripe to consider supplanting T.O. and if so, what form it should so adopt.. Above all, that generation will decide when it will be ready and willing to adopt it.

In the meantime, I am the first to agree with you and anyone else, that my I.T.M. is not suitable for any such reform. It was designed to teach T.O. and its merits for that purpose make it less suitable as a substitute for T.O., just as any alphabeticism designed as a permanent substitute for T.O. would not and could not, without compromising its main purpose, be a good medium for teaching T.O.

With best wishes for your good work in casting stones (with me) at the untruth of the old, but with reservations of practicality, of wisdom and of timeliness in the policy (and the detail) of your attempts to make the adult literate world vary its habituated literacy.

Yours sincerely, Sir James Pitman.

**Editor's comment:** Whether or not a completely phonetic alphabet designed for a permanent reform could not be a satisfactory means of initially teaching reading seems to be quite a controversial question, which deserves adequate research and an experimental teaching project to prove the point. Pitman's modifying phrase "without compromising its main purpose" seems to indicate that he is worried about the transition to T.O. from such an alphabet.

Previous experimental teaching projects in the U.S.A. in Denver, St. Louis, and Waltham, Mass. indicate that such a phonetic alphabet is very satisfactory. [\[1\]](#) Whether or not it would be equal, superior or inferior to Pitman's I.T.M. deserves academic proof by means of an experimental teaching project.

[1] see article by Dr. Godfrey Dewey in [June, 1962, S.P.B.](#)