

# Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971

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

"A closed mind gathers no knowledge; an open mind is the key to progress."

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## **1. News from the Simplified Spelling Society**

At its meeting on Nov. 28, 1970, the Committee amended, enlarged and agreed on the resolution (item 12 on the A.G.M. Agenda) originally proposed by Mr. Reed and seconded by Miss Chaplin. The resolution was sent to the Minister for Education, to teachers' organizations, to the educational and national press, to radio and television authorities.

The resolution reads now as follows:-

"Whereas many great authorities on English have deplored the inconsistency of its spelling and have advocated reform;

And whereas no reasonable case against spelling reform has ever been made out by any considerable scholar;

And whereas experiments in Britain, America and elsewhere have proved our spelling to be wasteful of time and effort;

And whereas a number of other nations have in recent years reformed their spelling conventions with great benefit to themselves and to other users of their languages;

And whereas English is now being learnt as a second language by a large proportion of the human race and is the most widely used international language,

Members of this Society, feeling that it is now incumbent upon native speakers of English to remove unnecessary difficulties in the learning and use of the language, whether by students approaching it as a second language or by English-speaking and other children learning to read it and write it, urge the Government to institute an enquiry into the educational, financial and international advantages likely to result from modernizing our out-of-date spelling conventions."

William Reed, Hon. Secretary.

The Society is now working on a new code or Principles of the Simplified Spelling Society. On first reading it was sent back to committee for a few changes. Hopefully, it will be approved soon so that it can be given wide-spread publicity. As first submitted it consisted of 23 items along with examples and explanations of many of these. This code will be useful in showing to the world the aims and ideas of the Society.

Membership in the Society is open to persons all over the world. In Britain the cost is £1 and in America it is \$3.00. Everyone who is interested in plans to remove the anomalies of English spelling-the chief obstacle to learning to read, should join – by sending in an application to:  
William Reed, Hon. Secretary, Simplified Spelling Soc.  
Broadstairs, Kent, Eng.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971 pp2,3 in the printed version]*

## **2. The Road to Better Spelling** **By Raymond E. Laurita**

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A Special Section on Instruction.

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If there is one aspect of English language instruction that continues to confound those in education and out, it is spelling. The fact that so many children and adults never learn to spell with anything even approaching proficiency is graphic testimony to the extent of this confusion. Fortunately, it appears there is a ray of hope on the horizon portending well for educator and layman alike. A growing body of research evidence is being produced which will enable educators to better understand exactly how to instruct children in spelling.

This research is showing differences in the processes of learning to spell and learning to read. It is now obvious that although the processes involved are closely related, they are not one and the same, and instructional techniques must be differentiated. Thus, it is possible for one to be an excellent reader but a poor speller; and conversely, but far less frequently, for one to be able to spell with greater facility and skill than he can read.

Many adults who are poor spellers are mystified since they are at the same time proficient readers. It has been my own personal experience that adults who spell poorly very often give evidence, upon closer examination, of the vestiges of reading problems, probably encountered and overcome during the early years of reading instruction.

As a general rule, however, spelling difficulty goes hand in hand with reading problems. Again it has been my experience to find that aiding a child or adult to overcome severe reading problems is usually less difficult than solving their spelling problems, especially when treatment has been delayed.

It is apparent now that poor spelling ability is due at least in part to a failure on the part of the learner to develop a consistent method or process for use in developing an organized spelling vocabulary. It is a sad but nevertheless true fact that most laymen and many educators do not understand basic truths about how we learn to spell.

Learning to read is a very complex act still only incompletely understood. It has about it an almost mystical character which causes anyone who works closely with a young child to stand in awe at the child's ability to master this most complex learning task. Learning to spell, however, while – exceedingly complex, comes closer to being a mechanical skill, one which must be painstakingly learned like every other mechanical skill. It is tedious and frequently boring, but if a child is ever to develop an ability for written self-expression, he must learn to spell with some degree of facility. What needs to be most understood is that spelling is *not* reading, and being able to perform one act

does not automatically insure success with the other.

Spelling is, then, a complex skill to be learned early and practiced throughout life. The key to success is early mastery of a spelling process or method which facilitates the development of spelling categories or memory forms during the early period of exposure to language. Once an organized method has been established, the child can begin the lifelong task of adding words to already formed categories, while at the same time developing new and ever more complex categories to add to his inventory. Thus, as each new word is examined by the child's computer brain, an act most probably occurring at the perceptual level and not involving higher level conceptual processes at the recognition stage, it can be mechanically stored away in its proper place in the brain's memory bank for instantaneous recall on demand.

For example, once the child learns a process for integrating what he sees, hears and prints, he is able to comprehend the unchanging relationship between the sound of *it*, the consistent appearance of *it*, and the graphic representation of *it*. He has thus established a spelling category for *it* into which he can place words such as *sit*, *pit*, *lit*, *slit*, *spit*, *split*, and eventually *befitting* and *Sanskrit*.

The child who develops this kind of mechanical skill during the early learning stages has developed a method for responding to spelling consistently and successfully. This consistent response will in time enable him not only to learn how to cope with simple spelling categories such as *it*, *ap*, *un*, etc., but also increasingly complex spelling forms such as *ide*, *ack*, *ing*, *ight*, *tion*, *ture*, etc.

Chomsky, writing in the *Harvard Review*, states: "Many spelling errors could be avoided if the writer developed the habit of looking for regularities that underlie related words when in doubt. This is part of the strategy used by good spellers as a matter of course. For the child who spells poorly it is far more productive to learn how to look for these regularities than simply to memorize the spellings of words as isolated examples. Providing him with a strategy based on the realities of the language is clearly the best way to equip him to deal with new examples on his own."

With this in mind, there are a few steps that can be followed in assisting children either in learning to spell initially or in improving their ability to spell if they are already experiencing difficulty.

1. Don't concentrate on quantity, but focus attention instead on the quality of the child's spelling. If, for instance, a child in the second grade is already exhibiting signs of difficulty in remembering how to spell an assigned list of words, attention should be directed toward aiding him in the development of a consistent learning method rather than toward futile efforts at remembering an entire list of words.

For example, if the first word on the list should be *park*, don't lose sight of the real value that the learning of even one such word can have, especially at the lowest levels. Place the word *park* on the top of a sheet of paper and underline the last three letters – *park*. Underneath write as many words ending in the element *ark* as possible to show the child the consistent relationship between the appearance, sound, and graphic representation of this very consistent linguistic element – *mark*, *bark*, *lark*, *dark*, *hark*, *spark*, *stark*, *shark*, etc. In the case of extreme disability, far more benefit would accrue if such a course were followed and only this one word were assigned for memorization, rather than the indefensible practice of insisting that poor spellers attempt to commit

to memory as many as 20 such words per spelling lesson.

If the disability is of lesser degree, the same process should be followed, using as many words as the child can comfortably handle. This type of procedure should be consistently followed until such time as the child demonstrates empirically that he understands essential spelling relationships. Such relationships appear self-apparent to the average adult, but are among the most complex perceptual learning acts the child will ever be asked to master. Most teachers will be surprised to observe how many children do not really understand these relationships. And even if the children do understand the relationships, they frequently fail to carry their understandings over to the spelling act through lack of persistent instruction and practical experiences.

2. Once the teacher stops concentrating on quantity and thinks more in terms of processes used by the child in spelling, he becomes better prepared to understand the need for the integration of all available senses the child uses in the spelling act. Most of the great names in the field of remedial instruction, such as Fernald, Gillingham, Johnson and even Montessori, realized the need for such integration. I have developed a method which is a distillation of what some of these pioneers taught and which I have found useful for all children, with and without spelling deficiencies.

- a. Place the word to be spelled clearly on a piece of paper.
- b. Have the child look at the word, pronounce it, spell it aloud while looking or pointing at each letter and finally, pronounce it again.
- c. Next, have the child look at the word again, pronounce it, and then print it on the paper directly under the original word while saying each letter aloud, with a final pronunciation of the word after completing the spelling.
- d. As a test of proficiency, cover the word and try to have the child print the word again from memory using his voice as a memory stimulus if so desired. (With children suffering from extreme disability, this process may have to be limited to a single word at a time in the development of the essential sensory integration needed for the development of a spelling vocabulary.)
- e. As an added step, which I find invaluable, ask the child to write a short sentence from dictation in which he must recall the learned word in meaningful context. The sentence should be simple at first and composed of words which the child has already incorporated into his spelling vocabulary. For example, if the word to be learned were *park*, the sentence could be, "He is in the park," or "I can park the car." In short, the only word the child should have to recall for spelling purposes is *park*.

3. This method for learning to spell is one that can be recommended for any child or group of children for use until spelling skills are well developed or, more precisely, until a spelling process has been established and is being used automatically. The use of such an approach can be a useful experience for a number of reasons. First, it may provide many teachers with an enlightening experience in developing an awareness of the complexity of our language system. Second, it may give the teacher the opportunity of providing the child with meaningful assistance in mastering this most difficult skill. And, third and last, the teacher may become aware of a difficulty a child may be suffering, even a child who appears to be an excellent reader, but who has escaped detection in a busy classroom filled with children whose problems are more obvious and demanding of attention.

### **3. Ex Post Facto Deliberatio, by A. Lloyd James (Written as a preface to the 5th edition of *New Spelling*, by Walter Ripman & William Archer, 1940.)**

Since the first edition of this book appeared 30 years ago, much has happened in the world. The first Great War has faded into history, leaving the burden of its consequences to be borne by a generation which hardly remembers it. And among its casualties was thought to be the Simplified Spelling Society, that ardent band of scholar-reformers who laboured to achieve an end which they believed to be for the general good; they, like hosts of others, abandoned their cause for the greater claim of their country, and the Simplified Spelling Society sank into obscurity. Since then many of its stalwart champions who bore the burden during the heat of the former campaign, have died, among them Skeat, Furnivall, Lord Bryce, Andrew Carnegie, Walter Leaf, Sir James Murray, Charles B. Grandgent, Thomas Lounsbury, and Sir Geo. Hunter, the veteran ship-builder, who in the latter years of his life kept the cause alive with his zeal, and indeed with his money. But a cause supported by so much earnestness and depth of conviction cannot die; and whatever was to be said for Simplified Spelling a quarter of a century ago, there is more to be said for it today.

Our language is not only the mother tongue of millions scattered all over the globe, but is rapidly becoming the second language of millions of others. It is no longer the prerogative of those who live in the narrow confines of these islands, as it was in the days when the general principles of its orthography were laid down. It has become possibly to an extent that even we fail to estimate, the language of the world, and one of the main instruments in human relations. This, however much it may give us cause for elation, should also give us pause: for a language which spreads beyond the confines of its birthplace is always in danger of losing its entity. Today, however, when the spoken word is radiated throughout the whole world; when communication depends upon oral rather than upon written language; when telephone lines and wireless beams make speech with the further-most parts a matter of daily experience; there is hope that English will not follow the way of Chinese and Latin, great cultural languages which split into mutually unintelligible dialects. To us, brought up in the birth-place of our language, its history and its traditions are amongst our most cherished treasures. The idiosyncrasies of its spelling are as dear to us as are our ancient landmarks and national monuments. Its visual appearance is almost sacred, for there is hardly a feature of it that is not rich in history. If its sound had withstood the passage of time as stubbornly as its appearance, all would now be well: we should speak as we write, and write as we speak. But alas! sound is sound, and sight is sight. Would that the twain would meet!

To expect the hundreds of millions of English speakers, present and to come, in all parts of the world, to be burdened indefinitely with our traditional English spelling is to expect the worst. Sooner or later, progress must reach the most backward. Moreover, if we can give them a visual English that is more in accord with the spoken language than the present orthography, we shall have gone a long way towards removing one, at least, of the reasons that lead to disintegration. A rational phonetic spelling will do much to steady our language in the perilous seas upon which it is now embarked, for, in these days when we hope for universal literacy, the visual language exercises a remarkable influence on the spoken language. It is the one constant standard, common throughout the world: the more phonetic it is, the more uniform will pronunciation tend to be. When men first

began to write, they wrote as they spoke; now they tend to speak as they write – and we cannot blame them.

So it comes about that there now appears, after a lapse of 30 years, despite the outbreak of another war, the present edition of a remarkable little book, first printed in 1910. It takes up once again the cause of Simplified Spelling, and presents to a new generation the linguistic considerations that are involved in a scientific approach to the problem.

Scores of schemes of simplified spelling have been invented. How many of the inventors have studied the facts of the problem as minutely as the authors of this booklet, I should not care to estimate. But now that the facts are available, there is no reason for future inventors to rush in without study. This book is the Spelling Reformer's Vade Mecum; it is one of the most remarkable statistical investigations into English spelling ever undertaken, and must be reckoned with by all those interested in the subject.

The suggestions put forward in this book are to be regarded as suggestions mainly, and not as *ex cathedra* pronouncements. Those who advance them are ardent champions of our language, sincere in their reverence of its ancient monuments and its historical traditions, and anxious not only for the preservation of its past, but also for the welfare of its future.

They humbly suggest that the time has come for those who love our English language to consider whether zeal for the past may not now be tempered with anxiety for the future.

(Ed. note: the 6th edition (1948) of this 130 page hard cover book may still be available from Pitman Publishing Co. The price was approx. £1.00)

#### **Addendum by Sir James Pitman, KBE, London.**

In pursuance of the above discussion, I am offering the following addendum which is intended as an introduction to the i.t.a. Word List and Spelling Guide.

Note should be taken of the words (in the i.t.a. Word List) marked with an asterisk. These words are not mistakenly spelled, even though they will appear so to those in the national language group – British or American – who pronounce them otherwise.

Children will, of course; write the words to correspond with their own speech. (Indeed this is what in fact happens). Teachers likewise will write on the board and elsewhere in the classroom, spellings to represent the local speech. That is the way it should be for beginners. It is only publishers and printers who will need to accept these spellings as "world spellings" on the two grounds:

1. That the speech variant which yields the spelling nearest to the existing spelling is to be preferred for the standard i.t.a. spelling. For instance, the pairs of spellings fertiel and æt, scheduel and clerk

are to be preferred because they are closer to present day spellings than would be fertl and et, fheduel and clark were the American pronunciation of the one pair and the British of the other pair to determine the standard spelling. After all the spellings chosen represent an alternative pronunciation with which children in the one or the other of the language groups will need eventually to become familiar, if they are to listen with comprehension at the "movies" or when sitting in front of a television set. Here is, then, an opportunity to teach both pronunciations – and of course, the meanings of such words.

2. That books printed by the thousand – and even hundred thousand – need to be acceptable, as much in the one language group as in the other – indeed English is a world language which needs to maintain a single standard of spelling as much when it is printed as a simpler learning medium as when it is printed as the medium for general communication.

Indeed, any other course which tolerated variant spellings in printed publications will not stop at American and British variants. English is used as their mother tongue by Malaysians, Chinese, Indians, etc., as well as by Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and Canadians, including French Canadians. The variety in pronunciations is much greater than is supposed, and if disruption of the language as a means of spoken communication (this disruption is sometimes referred to as a new Babelization) is to be avoided, the opportunity needs to taken to resist variety of spellings in any form of printed matter, and *per contra* to foster during the period of learning certainly the representation of a single standard, one which is a good, indeed any good, pronunciation which is being frequently heard in mass communication. That pronunciation which is a good one and which most closely accords with the spellings in our traditional spelling will exert the strongest influence in maintaining the language as an effective means of communication in speech on a world scale, and that is why it is the one chosen for the i.t.a. spelling.

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[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971 pp5–8 in the printed version*]

### Cartoon



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*[Spelling Reform Anthology §19.2 pp251,252 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971 pp2,3 in the printed version]*

#### **4. PHONICS VS. LOOK-SAY: ... is the end in sight?** **by Raymond E. Laurita**

Reprinted from *New York State EDUCATION*, March, 1967.

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*"The price of continued conflict can only be paid for by the children."*

Over the past decade and more a serious debate has raged both in and out of education concerning the best method for the teaching of reading. One side argues the whole word or "look-say" technique makes the acquisition of reading skills natural and in keeping with the child's normal language patterns. The opposition steadfastly maintains that what is needed is some form of instruction in phonics as the best way to introduce children to their early language experiences.

Probably more words pro and con have been written about this subject than any other single aspect of the entire education process in all areas of the curriculum. The look-say adherents pointed to the majority of children who had learned to read quite admirably while the phonics group pointed to the many other millions who were illiterate or the fantastic numbers of annual school drop-outs, or the plight of the businessman who complained he couldn't find a young person who could spell or write a complete English sentence.

Undoubtedly the advocates of both the left and the right in this discussion had valid arguments and they were equally sincere in their claims of superiority for a particular approach. The point of this article isn't to dispute or support completely either side but rather to put the matter in better perspective and see if perhaps those who continue the argument aren't "flogging a dead horse." That there has been a subtle but clear-cut shift in emphasis in reading instruction over the past several years is obvious to anyone in the field. And it is agreed by most that this shift is very definitely in the best interests of the entire American student body.

The most productive aspect of the whole unhappy controversy has been the rise in importance of the reading specialist and remedial therapist whose job is to cope with the millions who cannot learn to read because of environment, poor teaching, or physical or emotional factors. These people are in fantastic demand and a move is afoot in the country's universities to mass-produce them. The schools have more or less been guilty of throwing the problem in their laps and asking them to come up with easy solutions.

Yet the interesting phenomenon is that educators seem to have been oblivious for years to the findings of the researchers in the field of reading. Education in general failed for a long time to profit from the discoveries of those laboring in classrooms and clinics trying to find ways to piece together the broken parts and return whole, productive human beings to the schools.

What have the remedial people told us about children they work with? What are the problems of the 30 to 35 percent of pupils who apparently cannot learn to read adequately or at all? And how can this information be used to help in the formulation of more humane and positive approaches to the infinitely complex job of learning how to read?

There is a growing body of literature in the field of remediation and from it can be drawn a number of valid conclusions concerning reading problems. There are a number of common factors, repetitive enough to allow some general conclusions to be drawn.

The child who is experiencing difficulty is deficient in at least one and usually more than one of the following areas: directionality, perception, association, discrimination and memory. These terms are used almost daily by most teachers but only the clinician, researcher or remedial therapist has sufficiently lengthy or deep contact with children who are abnormally deficient to see patterns developing. Because of this close contact, the therapist is better able to understand the deficiency and the role it plays in the over-all problem of reading retardation.

The first of these areas, directionality, is an overworked and often misunderstood term which refers generally to the ability of the child to respond in a learned manner to the left-right flow of language. Without complete facility in this ability, children are doomed to the most unbelievable confusion. It isn't a natural skill people are born with but one that must be learned by constant instruction and practice. And although research has been carried out for over a century into the exact mechanics of the process whereby most people learn to read from left to right with apparent ease, there is still no definitive explanation why so many others have such great difficulty learning to either see, hear or write language in a consistently left-right pattern.

What has been learned by the great experts in the field who have experimented with techniques to cope in a practical way with those afflicted with this aspect of reading difficulty? There is almost universal agreement that the most successful methods of treatment are those which stress the individual characteristics of words, that stress the individual component parts of words rather than the overall configuration or shape. Typical of these methods are the Fernald Technique, the VAKT (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile) approach championed by Margery Seddon Johnson, and the highly structured approaches of Bloomfield and Gillingham.

All these and others have in common the learning of either the letter names and/or sounds of the individual elements so that words can be constructed out of the component parts rather than learned as wholes. The end results of such teaching are reinforced abilities to view, to hear and to write in a more consistent left-right manner.

The second area of difficulty for the reading problem is deficient ability to perceive language in a meaningful way. Perception is defined as the process of gaining knowledge through the senses of the existence and properties of matter and the external world. Unfortunately most adults are either unaware or indifferent concerning the extreme difficulty many children experience in this area. It is a process infinitely complex and incompletely understood, yet which those in the fields of reading and psychology recognize as a factor of great significance in the total reading problem of many children.

If a child were partially blind or deaf, he wouldn't be expected to perceive shapes or hear sounds accurately or at all. Yet it remains a fact that an undetermined number of otherwise normal children cannot either see the shape of words accurately or hear their sounds with accuracy or consistency. These children suffer every day because they are asked to perform tasks in school which are not only difficult but perhaps impossible. Often a child who exhibits an avoidance reaction – who appears to have lost interest or given up – is the child who in his early language experience was

asked to perform just such an impossible task.

Once again, the best and most successful methods developed to help children with perceptual difficulty are those which go from the particular to the general, which help the child develop his abilities with the least complex forms before proceeding to the more involved. They are those which help him learn to perceive individual components accurately and consistently before learning to see and hear meaningful groupings.

The methods mentioned already have proven useful in assisting the child to learn how to make the relationships necessary for accurate perception. Also beneficial and now coming into widespread use are the visual perceptual materials of Marianne Frostig which again stress step-by-step integration of stimuli. She writes in the manual accompanying her materials: "This sequential integrating process, which is sometimes referred to as pattern vision, is usually so swift that the perceiver seems to experience all steps simultaneously."

The reason underlying the introduction of words as wholes in the first place was based on evidence supplied by the Gestalt psychologists who maintained that since humans appeared to respond immediately to shapes in their entirety, the most logical and efficient way to teach reading was by the use of whole words rather than by first introducing the letters or sounds.

This was a very tenuous foundation to base an almost universally accepted form of reading instruction to begin with. And now there appears to be a considerable body of writing and psychological thought that disputes, at least in part, the theoretical basis of the idea of immediate Gestalt. Indeed it may be that children do not perceive wholes immediately or in every case, but rather that this ability to learn whole shapes is a product of learning and maturity and that the best way to introduce language is via the individual letters and/or sounds of the alphabet.

Dr. D. O. Hebb of McGill University offers the theory that initial perceptual learning isn't immediate at all but proceeds instead in very minute steps and in a gradual and accumulating manner. He refers to the process as "serial apprehension" and bases his findings on research carried on over the past forty years. He writes: "it is possible that the normal infant goes through the same process (serial apprehension) and that we are able to see a square as such in a single glance only as a result of a complex learning. The notion seems unlikely, because of the utter simplicity of such perception to the normal adult."

In the face of two such conflicting theories one can easily see why so many question the use of the whole word technique in, as Dr. A. J. Harris has written, "Every popular set of readers in America today."

The third area in which the disabled child finds himself deficient concerns association, the ability to connect consistent individuality and meaning to language symbols. One of man's pre-eminent achievements occurred when he first learned it was possible to attach a consistent concrete meaning to an abstract printed symbol. The advantage this discovery gave him has led man to the point where the ability to understand the printed symbol is an essential prerequisite to success in life. Man has ceased being able to function without the use of printed communication.

With regard to reading, the ability to associate meaning with symbol is perhaps the most difficult and important single task the child is asked to do in his entire school career, for without it the whole

hierarchy of developmental skills we have so carefully organized is meaningless. Until the child learns the letters on the page stand for something concrete and consistent, he is unable to progress.

Association, difficult as it is, can be mastered by some children even before they enter school. But for many, many others it is a long arduous journey. Some experience severe difficulty in even beginning to comprehend that the series of lines and circles the teacher points to has any consistent meaning whatsoever or is in any way different from the scribbles he and his friends playfully place on their paper. Others seem to be able to learn that a few word shapes stand for some particular concrete objects but become hopelessly bogged down when the vocabulary load becomes even the least bit varied. For these children the process of relating meaning to symbol is extremely difficult because of their confused, immature ability to make consistent associations.

The journey once again for those suffering this form of deficiency is from the simple to the complex, from learning individual letters and sounds to the eventual mastering of letter and sound groupings. The same methods which work to improve directionality and perception have also been most useful in helping children to improved associative skills. Children learning to read need language experiences that will assist them in making correct associations gradually and logically so that with physical and intellectual maturity they will be prepared to learn at a more realistic rate.

One of the great misconceptions adults make is to project onto the child abilities which are not his. Too many think, for example, that when a child learns even before school that a shape such as "cat" stands for the concept cat, he is aware immediately of the complexity of what he sees and hears. Adults tend to believe that the shape the child discerns and that which he observes are the same, or that the child is aware that the shape "cat" is comprised of three separate, distinct and unchanging visual and auditory symbols in an exact sequence. To assume this is the ultimate in naiveté for it is imputing to the immature child a degree of sophistication that will not be his for a number of years.

The fourth area of deficiency for the disabled child concerns his ability to discriminate, to both see and hear the tiny differences between words which make them unique among all others. Assuming the child is able to perceive the shape of a word clearly, and that he is viewing it in a consistent left-right pattern and that he is able to make correct associations, he still has a task of immense complexity laid out for him. He must still have a degree of discriminatory ability that is highly developed to enable him to recognize the differences in words, especially those most common ones with which he has frequent contact.

To ask the immature child to see the miniscule change that occurs in such words as so-as-is-in-on-an-no-am-me-we or between five-fire-fine-find is often asking him to perform an operation that is beyond him. Add to this the practical fact that alphabet training to assist in this difficult process of differentiation is usually delayed until sometime after the child has started reading. And to complicate the problem even further, the child has first been exposed to the visual aspects of language so that his initial reaction to the stimulus presented by a word is to rely on the purely visual appearance of the word without any assistance from auditory clues.

Once again the principal methods used by remedial therapists in attacking this most difficult problem are those which rely on retraining the child to recognize consistently the individual letters of the alphabet. This training is usually reinforced by simultaneous learning of the sounds of the letters. Teaching the child with deficient discrimination skills is a most frustrating job, for the problem is almost always accompanied by directional difficulty and confused associations. When a

child cannot remember consistently the difference between a b-d-p-q-g or between n-v-w-m-n-r-h he is indeed a problem, for he is continually receiving misleading clues from the words he observes on the printed page.

The last area of general deficiency relates to memory. Children suffering from impaired ability may find it difficult to remember the names of the letters, the sounds of letters, or the names, sounds and appearance of words to be written. The degree of difficulty children manifest varies from moderate to severe in the case of the brain injured or organically-disturbed child. Instruction in helping them to improve their ability in this function is, as in all the other areas, usually limited to techniques which enable the child to first learn the names and sounds of letters then very simple and regular words and finally the more complex and irregular words.

With regard to impaired memory, it is often difficult to isolate deficient operational ability from poor performance due to failure in one or more of the other areas mentioned. The child who cannot perceive accurately, associate consistently, discriminate faultlessly or travel always from left to right cannot be expected to develop normal skill in the area of memory.

It has been clearly demonstrated in the research that exists that for the brain-injured, the mentally-retarded, the slow learner, the deprived child, those with deficient sight and hearing and a host of others, that the most logical approach to reading isn't one that exposes them initially to words as wholes. The question then arises: How are all these children to be isolated at the outset of instruction to provide them with the kind of teaching best suited to their needs? Pedagogues are in universal agreement that we ought to fit the instruction to the child. But to design, organize and carry out a massive screening program that would sort out all the millions of children in these categories is not possible within our present system of educational organization.

If this is true, then the only alternative would seem to be to continue to be plagued with the millions of children who yearly experience difficulty learning to read and whose accumulated ills grow until they either drop out of school or stay on to stagger through to graduation. These unfortunates spend the majority of their time making themselves and all around them miserable because they quite rightly hate school for what it has failed to do.

But there is a better solution, one which as mentioned earlier has already begun to come to pass. There is a discernible shift in American education away from methods which primarily focus attention at the outset on the total configuration of words. New methods are instead concerned with the child's initial ability to perceive the individual characteristics of language prior to or simultaneous with experience with more complex forms.

The linguistic approach fostered by Charles Fries and others, the use of color associations advocated by Banatyne and Gattegno, the Diacritical Marking System, the Progressive Choice method of Dr. Myron Woolman, the Initial Teaching Alphabet developed by Sir James Pitman, and a multitude of other highly structured approaches emphasizing the early teaching of phonics. All these ideas are attempts not to throw out the idea of using whole words in reading instruction, for it is a fact that children need to develop the ability to learn words rapidly once they have gained a degree of maturity in the visual, auditory and kinesthetic areas.

What is revolutionary about them is that they utilize the research that exists in an attempt to suit the methods used to the entire student body, not just those blessed with the complex readiness skills

requisite for learning words at sight. Because of the nature of these approaches, learning to read becomes truly developmental.

Because of the structured nature of these approaches, children develop the ability to learn sequentially. Attention is drawn of necessity to the individual characteristics of words at the outset, before the child has the opportunity to respond solely to configuration without prior awareness of first, the left-right directional flow of language; second, the logical structure which is very definitely there to be observed and learned; and third, the specific distinguishing characteristics which make each word in the language unalterably different from each other word. Once children have facility in these basic skills, they are able to profit from the acquisition of whole words.

It is also of great importance to point out that the use of these methods of instruction is in no way discriminatory toward the children who can learn whole words at the outset. The evidence is in fact that these children are capable of learning *no matter what method is used*. And further, there are many studies extant which lead to the conclusion that not only would the disabled child learn better by the use of structured, linguistically oriented methods, but so also would the remainder of the student body.

The conclusion to be drawn from what has been said is quite clear. Education must heed the warnings of those who work with the millions of students who cannot learn at present and find variant methods of language instruction which do not place an insuperable burden on so many children. Techniques which discriminate against this segment of the school population really need to be drastically revised.

The truth is there is room for both disputants in the phonics-look-say controversy. What is needed is a calm reappraisal of all the arguments pro and con. What is needed is a spirit of educational ecumenism so those on both sides can sit down and work together to find what is truly best for the students in our schools.

A careful examination will show there is no clear evidence to prove indisputably that children profit at the outset of instruction by learning whole words rather than by being exposed to some form of phonic- linguistic-structural approach. On the other hand, there is a multitude of research that strongly indicates that millions of children *cannot* learn by this method and are in many cases irreparably damaged by exposure to whole configurations without sufficient maturity. As Dr. Hilde Mosse puts it, "The whole word method does its greatest harm by being applied too early."

Let those both in and out of education who have drawn hard, fast battle lines to continue the fight retreat instead for renewed study. The price of continued conflict can only be paid for by the children who remain to be taught. The obligation lies on the shoulders of all interested to find the best method for all students.

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971 pp9–12 in the printed version*]  
[Altho there are reference numbers, there was no bibliogrphafy.]

*John Downing was formerly senior lecturer in educational psychology and director of reading research at the University of London's Institute of Education. He is now professor of education at the University of Victoria.*

In the February issue of *The B.C. Teacher*, Kenneth Slade and Tory Westermark provided an excellent summary of critical articles on i.t.a. research, including some criticisms which I have made of the details of the i.t.a. system itself. But all these criticisms (including my own) must seem like the nitpicking of ivory tower theorists to practical classroom teachers who use i.t.a., especially now that the British government report on i.t.a. has confirmed so strongly the teachers' favorable experience of i.t.a. This article explains why I, at any rate, have accepted the teachers' viewpoint that i.t.a. is better than T.O., and that, therefore, we should not delay introducing i.t.a. into more schools in the hope of minor improvements which may or may not be made in the i.t.a. alphabet in the distant future.

By the autumn of 1969, about one school in every five in England was using i.t.a. for the beginning stages of learning to read. The controversies have been raging among some reading experts, the teachers' grapevine has been spreading the practical down-to-earth good news that i.t.a. works well and, therefore, without pressure or persuasion, slowly but surely i.t.a. has been taking over. But in December 1969 the situation changed more dramatically. The trend toward the general adoption of i.t.a. suddenly acquired new urgency.

## **5. British and B.C. Teachers Agree i.t.a. is better.** **JOHN DOWNING**

"Reprinted from the *B.C. Teacher*, Volume 49 (April, 1970), pp. 278-283 and 297-299."

The man who is probably more closely associated with i.t.a. than any other person tells why he and teachers all over the world believe i.t.a. is better than traditional orthography.

### **i.t.a. Gets a New Boost**

The Minister of State for Education and Science in England and Wales, Miss Alice Bacon, went to the recognized limits within which a minister can bestow favor on any particular method or approach to teaching when, in the House of Commons on December 17, 1969, she referred to the Schools Council report on i.t.a. and said that its findings: 'will be covered in an article in a forthcoming edition of my Department's periodical "Trends in Education," and attention will be drawn to them in the Schools Council's newsletter "Dialogue," which goes into every school. And the Schools Council will be publishing an abridged and cheaper version of the report next year'(1970).

'It is to be expected that numbers of local education authorities will organize conferences and discussions about the initial teaching alphabet in teacher's groups and centres, that the alphabet will

feature in in-service training for teachers which is provided by authorities, institutes and colleges of education and other bodies, and also through my Department's short courses.'

Why has the Minister given such unprecedented support for this particular approach to reading instruction?

### **Vital New Evidence**

The Minister's support for i.t.a. is based on her reading of the special report commissioned by the Schools Council, the official body for curriculum in England and Wales. Professor Frank Warburton and Mrs. Vera Southgate of Manchester University's School of Education were asked to make a completely independent and detached investigation of all i.t.a. research and to study in depth i.t.a.'s current use in the schools. In September 1969, the results were published in *i.t.a.: An Independent Evaluation*. The following quotations from this book by Warburton and Southgate [1] indicate the reasons for the Minister's favorable view of i.t.a.

### **Easier Beginning**

Vera Southgate's task was, chiefly, to interview teachers, headteachers, inspectors, advisers, etc. Frank Warburton's part was to check all the research reports on i.t.a. by a searching critical analysis. These two authors of the Schools Council's report worked independently of each other. Their conclusions are published as separate parts of the book, although in a final section they summarize the points of agreement in their findings.

The interviews with the teachers led Southgate to conclude (p.65): 'Among infant teachers who had used i.t.a. there was almost total agreement concerning its favourable effect on children's reading progress. The comments most frequently made by teachers were that i.t.a. enables children to make a good beginning with reading; the task is simpler and consequently children can begin earlier, learn more quickly and achieve greater pleasure and satisfaction in so doing.'

The evidence from hard statistical research shows the same result. Warburton reviewed 17 i.t.a. experiments conducted by various British and American authors either in Britain or in America. Of these, he indicates that the original British experiments conducted between 1960 and 1967 were scientifically more valid and superior in design and methods to any others. The results of those large scale longitudinal experiments were published in *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet* [2] just over two years ago. Now, Warburton's critical analysis has vindicated their findings.

The teachers professional opinions of i.t.a. revealed by Southgate's interviews are completely in accord with the statistical results of the original British experiments. For example, when i.t.a. students were tested at the end of one year, they were able to read more than twice as much of the English language printed in i.t.a. as the T.O. control group could read when the same material was printed in T.O. Thus the i.t.a. pupils had a remarkably greater access to printed or written language.

### Creative writing

But the greatest joy to i.t.a. teachers of children in their first year of school has been its effects on creative writing. Southgate states (p.68): 'The common features which most teachers noted in children's free writing when i.t.a. was used were as follows: it begins at a much earlier age; it is greater in quantity; and the quality has improved in content, in the flow of ideas and in the breadth of vocabulary used.'

The experimental statistics support the teachers' opinions in this, too. A special study of creative writing in the British i.t.a. experiments was reported [3] early in 1967. It showed that i.t.a. pupils wrote 50 % more than T.O. students, and that the breadth of vocabulary in the i.t.a. sample was 45% wider in range. When independent judges graded i.t.a. and T.O. compositions for quality of creative expression, the i.t.a. students gained consistently higher grades. All the compositions were re-written in correct T.O. spelling so that the judges could not identify from which group they came. Despite this, the results for all practical purposes sorted the students back into the two groups, i.t.a. and T.O., on the basis of the quality of their creative work.

These results from the original i.t.a. experimental group were so dramatically superior to those from the T.O. control group that they seemed unbelievable to many educators not directly involved. Southgate's independent survey of teachers' experiences was needed to bring home the fact that i.t.a.'s effects are truly excellent.

Ituesdæ, Greg  
March 10, 1970  
The feebles niet hw was not  
aferaed ov the dragon but  
killed him.  
A long long long! tiem agoe  
thæ livd a prinsess and  
her pærents.  
The prinsess næm was mæry.  
Wun dæ mæry went tw  
pick flours in the park.  
A bad ugly witch captuerd  
her. Shee skreemd help! help!  
muther! father!  
thæ herd the caull.  
thæ caull aull the niet's thæ  
had.  
and thæ aull ran awæ.  
The brævest niet was ser niet  
hee sæyd her.  
hee killed the dragon and  
the witch.  
thæ blw the cast 'up.  
thæ got marid,  
and livd happily ever after.  
Thee end.

*A free composition in i.t.a. by  
Greg Walters, a Grade 1 pupil  
at Macaulay School, Victoria.*

A new American research report confirms the British conclusions. Auguste and Nalven [4] using objective measures found statistically significant differences in creative writing between i.t.a. and T.O. groups. They conclude: 'It is clearly evident that the i.t.a. program made it possible for more children to express themselves creatively in writing at an early and undoubtedly important phase of their school careers.'

### How i.t.a. Works

The i.t.a. experiment began as a straightforward test of a purely practical attempt to simplify and regularize English orthography. But as the research has progressed with such exciting results, there has been an increasing desire to understand 'how psychologically i.t.a.'s effects are being achieved. A recent theoretical article suggests that i.t.a.'s essential contribution is that, in clarifying the phonemic structure of spoken and written English, and the relationship between these two forms of the language, i.t.a. gets its results by providing children with experiences of language in a written form which help them to *understand* how language can be analysed into words and sound units (phonemes) and how these are represented by bundles of letters and individual written symbols respectively. (Any reader who wishes to have either a theoretical or a practical guide to the way the i.t.a. code system works can obtain either or both from myself, without charge.)

Besides this clarification of structure, i.t.a. produces an important by-product which further enhances its primary effects. Southgate describes this as follows (p. 57): 'Teachers' comments thus represented a general conclusion, which was confirmed by the investigators observations in schools, that usually children who learned to read by i.t.a. both want to, and do, spend more time on reading than children taught by T.O. This conclusion refers to all ages and all intelligence levels of children,

and covers lesson times, free times, break times, and time at home.'

This positively motivating effect the more rapid success in learning to read and write in i.t.a. is confirmed by Ivan Roses's [6] experiment at Stockton, California. He has shown by objective testing that, in contrast to T.O.'s ego-damaging irregularities and ambiguities, i.t.a.'s consistency enhances children's self-confidence in attacking new words.

### **Transition from i.t.a. to T.O.**

Many sensible teachers have not been prepared to consider adopting i.t.a. until they are satisfied that their students will be endangered by the inevitable change-over from i.t.a. to T.O. This seems a reasonable precaution, even though, if one reads the lecture on i.t.a., it quite soon becomes clear that i.t.a.'s designers claim to have taken very great care to plan its characters and spellings according to perceptual principles which would facilitate the transfer from i.t.a. to T.O. But 'how successful is this design for transition in practice?' remains a valid query about the claims.

On this point, Southgate expresses herself most adamantly (p.168): 'Of all the verbal evidence collected in this inquiry, the fact most frequently and most emphatically stated was that children did not experience difficulty in making the transition in reading from i.t.a. to T.O. Teachers and those experienced visitors to schools who had observed the transition taking place had no doubts whatsoever on this score.'

The original British experiments with i.t.a. were at first less certain in their results, simply because the available statistical data were rather meager. The most hopeful evidence, when the results were published in 1967, were those of a test administered at the end of three years of school, by which time most children had been transferred from i.t.a. to T.O. (Transition is individualized, and it is made when the student completes a course of i.t.a. materials. This takes about two years for the average British pupil.) The results of testing all the i.t.a. students *in T. O. reading* showed a statistically significant advantage over the T.O. students. But the other tests administered at that time showed no significant differences. Hence, the report was properly cautious concerning the effectiveness of i.t.a.'s design for transition.

But, in November 1969, a follow-up study of the children in the original study was published in an article in the *British Journal of Educational Psychology* [7]. This reports the results of various T.O. tests administered in the fifth year of school. All showed that the i.t.a. pupils were significantly superior to the children who had begun with T.O. However, a word of caution must still be uttered on transition because these follow-up data are limited to this one experiment only. Other investigations have not yet reached into the fifth year. Most studies have reported only T.O. tests of i.t.a. students in their second or sometimes third years, and the safer conclusion would be that the T.O. reading attainments of i.t.a. students are not worse than those of T.O. students.

Warburton did not have access to the fifth year test results when he wrote his report for the Schools Council. About the more limited data available then, he could say only that 'the results obtained when the children are pursued into the third year suggest that the T.O. groups catch up. We must await the findings of other researches, particularly Downing and Jones (1966), to obtain more conclusive evidence.' The new follow-up study of fifth year attainments contribute toward this need for more evidence, but, in any case, it must be remembered that i.t.a. never claimed to be a means of improving reading at such later stages. Its purpose was to make reading easier *in the first year or two of school*.

For this reason, Warburton concludes that, even if the T.O. students do catch up with the i.t.a. students after a few years, this does not 'necessarily imply that i.t.a. has failed. The educational and intellectual advantages of a child learning to read fluently at a very early age are very considerable

and may affect his whole confidence and future progress.'(p.277)

Southgate independently arrives at the same conclusion (p.165): 'it should be emphasized that an acceptance of the view that the reading and writing of i.t.a. and T.O. children are approximately the same at the age of eight, does not discredit the use of i.t.a. for the initial stages of reading and writing. No claim was originally made to the effect that i.t.a. would produce better readers in the long run. The aim was to simplify the initial task of learning. Thus, even if i.t.a. children are only at the same level of attainment as T.O. children after three or four years, if learning to read has been easier and more pleasant for them, if fewer children have experienced frustrations and failures and if many have known the enjoyment and value of reading a year or so earlier than they would have done, it can fairly be claimed that its use has been justified.' In this statement Southgate summarizes the opinions of the many British teachers who are getting so much more satisfaction from their teaching of the first and second years of the primary school curriculum now that i.t.a. has replaced T.O. in their classrooms.

## **Spelling**

'Not one infant teacher with experience of children transferring to T.O. spelling expressed the view that i.t.a. had had a deleterious effect on children's spelling in T.O. Hence the verbal evidence given by infant teachers as well as observations in schools, led to the conclusion that teachers' original fears that the use of i.t.a. would be likely to have a harmful effect on children's spelling have not been justified. No evidence of a decline in spelling ability was noted in infant classes and there were certain indications of improvements.'(p.74)

Southgate's cautious note of 'certain indications of improvements' have received rather strong support in the new fifth-year follow-up tests mentioned earlier. In these, the T.O. spelling attainments of the i.t.a. pupils were significantly superior to those of the T.O. students. An earlier independent study by Margaret Peters of the Cambridge Institute of Education in England reached a conclusion which may explain why i.t.a. students achieve surprisingly superior attainments in T.O. spelling after the transition stage is passed. She found that 'i.t.a. taught children, with their more systematic and economical attack, present a more receptive base for the teaching of spelling conventions.' This, she suggests, was because the experiences of regularity of relations between the i.t.a. characters and the phonemes of spoken English provided a kind of perceptual training which left the i.t.a. student after transition with 'the sort of non-redundant "skeletal" structure from which conventional English spellings can be readily developed.'

### **Which Children Do Best with i.t.a.?**

Southgate was unable to give a simple generalization in answer to this question. The teachers were somewhat divided in their opinions: 'More than half the teachers with whom discussions took place were convinced that the use of i.t.a. was beneficial to children of all levels of intelligence. This conviction related to earlier, easier beginnings, as well as to increased standards in both reading and written expression. Of the teachers who did not hold this view, a proportion thought that it was most effective with children of low intelligence and least effective with children of high intelligence: the remainder reversed this conclusion.' (p.84)

The statistical data from the original British experiments, however, show conclusively that the biggest improvements in test scores produced by i.t.a. occur among the superior students – those who learn to read satisfactorily with T.O. anyway. In i.t.a. these students seem to race ahead faster than ever.

But most practical teachers are concerned about the other students – those who are more likely to fail in T.O. How does i.t.a. help these children who are more 'at risk'? The earlier reports from the

British experiments were extremely cautious on this question – even pessimistic. However, in 1969, data were reported from new analyses and from the follow-up study. These articles report, for example [9] that 'i.t.a. reduces the proportion of poor achievements both in reading and spelling. The results of new follow-up tests show that these advantages of i.t.a. persist until at least the fifth year of school.'

Professor Magdalen Vernon [10] also has commented on the results of the original British experiment that 'there were fewer children of poor reading ability in the i.t.a. than in the T.O. group.' i.t.a.'s effect in reducing the incidence of reading failure seems likely to be regarded as its greatest benefit in most classrooms.

### **British Conclusions**

For ten years i.t.a.'s proponents have had to work hard to prove the worth of the new alphabet. The opposition to i.t.a. has rested easily on the long history of tradition and convention on which the use of T.O. is based. Probably, most professional educators have been waiting, quite properly, for more conclusive evidence on i.t.a.'s effects, although some seem to have believed that T.O.'s traditional use must be based on what they consider is the obvious fact that T.O. provides the best way to learn to read the T.O. that one must read for the rest of one's lifetime.

Now the evidence has accumulated to the contrary, and it is quite clear that this belief is unjustified. As Warburton says in his report to the Schools' Council (pp.234-5): *'There is no evidence whatsoever for the belief that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in traditional orthography. It would appear rather that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn to read in the initial teaching alphabet.'*

Because the research conducted over the past ten years has produced 'no evidence whatsoever' in support of T.O. but a great deal of evidence to sustain the claims of i.t.a., the Minister of State for Education and Science in England and Wales has given her support to official actions which seem bound to lead to the eventual ousting of T.O. from beginning reading classes in Britain. Its place, with equal certainty, will be taken by the i.t.a. alphabet.

### **i.t.a. in B.C.**

British schools were first to use i.t.a. in 1961. Two years later it spread to the United States, and soon it was taken up in other parts of the English-speaking world, including Canada, Australia and Bermuda, as well as for teaching English as a second language in many other countries, such as Russia, India and Nigeria.

In Canada, B.C. has been in the vanguard of the development of i.t.a. The Vancouver School Board first instituted i.t.a. instruction in 1965 in five Grade I classes. By the fall of 1968, 83 classes with first grade pupils had adopted i.t.a. This represents approximately 40% of the classes at this level. Thus the proportion of Vancouver beginners' classes using i.t.a. is about double the proportion for England and Wales as a whole, but several British cities have 100% of their first year classes in i.t.a. Several other B.C. school districts are using i.t.a., including Victoria.

The rapid growth of i.t.a. in B.C. is based on the same foundation as its expanded use in the country of its birth – teacher enthusiasm for an alphabet they have tested out for themselves and found highly successful. B.C. teachers have found the same benefits as those reported by Vera Southgate in her reports to the Schools Council.

For example, Mrs. I. Cowx, first grade teacher at Macaulay School in Victoria, summarized her own personal experience of i.t.a. at the end of the first year as follows:

1. Every child has learned to read. No pupil feels that reading is too difficult or that he or she cannot learn to read. All have experienced success.
2. The goal of independence in both reading and writing in i.t.a. is reached in four to five months.
3. Pupils write their own thoughts without frustration and concentrate for longer periods of time while writing, than under the regular system.
4. There are no interruptions to ask how to spell so seatwork assignments require less supervision and group instruction is more easily maintained.
5. Creative writing gives a clearer insight into the child's mind through ideas that can be easily expressed on paper.
6. The reading material used, right from the start, is interesting and varied, so that individual preferences and maturity levels are more easily accommodated.
7. Word attack skills are greatly improved and the size of a word is never considered a barrier to expression by the pupils.
8. The transfer to reading in T.O. occur at a higher level than is reached during the first year under the regular system.
9. Pupils do much more writing and gain greater dexterity in the use of a pencil because of the slightly more complicated forms mastered when writing in i.t.a. This should be advantageous in transferring from printing to writing.
10. Mistakes in pronunciation are detected more fully under i.t.a. and correct pronunciation is emphasized more fully.

No wonder that Vera Southgate's very first conclusion from her research was 'With only rare exceptions, the teachers concerned have no desire to revert to the use of T.O' (p.10) Her statistical evidence showed that, in fact, of all schools which had ever tried i.t.a. since 1961 only 2 per cent have reverted to T.O. and even then the cause was not dissatisfaction with i.t.a. itself. 'The reasons were often administrative – for instance a change of headteacher or of staff.' (p. 108)

British teachers and B.C. teachers have tried i.t.a. independently, and confirmed each other's experiences. They agree with the teacher interviewed by Southgate, who quotes her as saying (p.35): 'I have accepted i.t.a. so happily that I just cannot imagine teaching infants without it now. I am absolutely in favour of it. I only wish all schools would use it.' Mrs. Southgate comments: 'This last opinion was expressed by many teachers who approved of i.t.a. They felt sorry for children in other schools who did not have the advantage of i.t.a. and could not think why other schools were taking so long to change over from T.O.'

*Dr. Downing had submitted this article before the February issue reached him. In a letter to the editor he has commented in detail on the article by Kenneth Slade and Tory Westermarck. Unfortunately, the letter is too long to publish with this article. Readers interested in his specific comments should write him c/o the Faculty of Education, University of Victoria, for a copy.*

## 6. Homophones in a Reformed Spelling, by Harry Lindgren.\*

\*SR 1 used, (spelling reform, initial step).

Some persons attempting a spelling reform are impressed by the argument that the different spellings of a homophone, in narrowing down the meaning, promote comprehension of the written word and prevent misunderstanding it. So they would include plans for homophones in a reformed spelling. I am opposed to this.

On what principle does the reformer decide whether to make homophones of a particular set of sounds? The easy answer is that one retains homophones where the present spelling has them, and introduces no new ones. Thus we now distinguish the present tense *find* from *fined*, but not the past tense found from (to) *found*, therefore the reformed spelling would have homophones in the first case, but not in the second. This would make sense if the homophones we have arose through convenience of necessity, and if those we don't have were found not to be convenient or necessary. But we know that this is not true; the homophones we have are with few exceptions a haphazard growth unrelated to purpose. So the easy answer is irrational.

The present usage should be disregarded; homophones should be used in a reformed spelling only where they serve a purpose, either convenience (promoting comprehension) or necessity (preventing misunderstanding). Arguing that if they are such a blessing then why limit the blessing, we could decide to make homophones of all words that have different meanings but are pronounced the same. If a word has  $x$  different meanings, we may devise  $x$  different spellings for it, one per meaning. This may not be necessary, but it would maximize the convenience. Or would it? Alredy, I am sure, you have an uneasy feeling that it just won't do. Thousands of words have at least two meanings – open Webster's enywhere – find a daunting number of words such as names of materials (air, iron, water) have quite a multiplicity of meanings (run has 104 meanings). The  $x$  different spellings of each of all those thousands of words would not be a convenience, but an enormous and useless load on the memory. Only a handful of people, those with phenomenal word-memories, would find all those homophones a convenience in reading, and would be able to spell them all. Incidentally, the reformer would be hard put to it to think up ten or more different spellings, as would sometimes be required.

Clearly we can't be wholehearted about homophones; we should insted have just so meny,  $N$  say, that if we added more, making their number  $N + dN$ , the gain in convenience would be more than offset by the extra trouble of learning and remembering. The number  $N$  would of course also include those that are necessary. To find it, the question to be considered is, what is the convenience of homophones, and what is their necessity?

They narrow down the meaning of a word. Yet if a history book states that "The Duke of Wellington had a grand funeral, it took ten men to carry the beer," we know at once what is ment, for the meaning is narrowed down by the context. So the spellings *beer* and *bier* are not really a convenience – they give no help not alredy fully given by the context – and because we are not misled, they are not a necessity either. (The French manage with one spelling. This example illustrates what is true in general, namely that where the meanings are widely different, and because of the wide difference, homophones are neither a convenience nor a necessity.

.Suppose then that the meanings are not widely different. If I write that "China will make great scientific progress in the coming century," a pernickety reader may ask whether the last word means 1971-2070 or 2001-2100. To keep him quiet, I might change "the coming century" to "the future,"

unwittingly allowing him to rebound by asking whether that means the next few years or decades or centuries or milleniums. Should we silence him once and for all by having different spellings of *century* and *future* for the different meanings? Surely you find the suggestion preposterous; the poor writer would be hamstrung by spellings indicating an unwanted and useless preciseness of meaning. In any case, homophones of words whose meanings are not widely different constitute a danger; they can make one's meaning clear on paper but not in speech, leading to a divergence of the written and spoken languages. A particular example illustrates what is true in general, completing the argument that in no case are homophones either convenient or necessary. They are crutches which we lean on because they are there, but which we can easily learn to do without.

An obstinate homophone-lover may try to worm his way out of the argument by appealing to experience. It does show, says he, that confusion would arise, e.g. if *rode* and *rowed* were spelled the same; riding and rowing are widely different, but confusion could arise because both are ways of moving. Moreover confusion can arise most unexpectedly. *Son and heir* and *sun and air* seem to have nothing at all in common, yet a doctor might advise a little of either to a neurotic married woman. Here too, without homophones confusion could arise. The reply is that what experience shows is the opposite.

As already pointed out, an enormous number of words that are pronounced and spelled alike have more than one meaning; they are far more numerous than words pronounced alike but spelled differently. *Court* may mean a small thoroughfare, a place where justice is dispensed or dispensed with, palace, tennis-ground, or approach view mat. Yet there is negligible confusion due to this and the like, for the context nearly always makes the meaning clear. The same would apply where we have homophones, were they removed. Where context fails, the ambiguous statement is usually contrived, like those involving *rode/rowed* and *son-and-heir/sun-and-air*. In other cases where the context alone does not make the meaning clear, the writing is faulty.

For it must be remembered that the spoken language is *the* language; the written language should merely be a recording of it which when played back reproduces it. Any writing that is ugly or obscure when spoken is bad writing. When Coleridge in *The Aeolian Harp* perpetrated the awkward clashes of consonants in:

How exquisite the scents  
Snatch'd from yon beanfield!

he was guilty of bad writing, and if anyone writes that we are faced with too great difficulties," where only the spelling indicates the meaning, he also is guilty of bad writing. Of course we are not concerned here with euphony, only with clarity.

And how can spelling best contribute to clarity? By indicating the pronunciation and nothing else. We should not add any features such as homophones that promote bad writing, and that enable the written language to attain clarity otherwise than does the spoken, with the undesirable effect of tending to increase the difference between them.

Exception may be taken to my assertion that the written language should be nothing more than a recording of the spoken one. Not so, it may be said; as is well known in information theory, a message must have some measure of redundancy, to guard against imperfect transmission. So, in favor of homophones, it can be argued that in making the written language something more than a recording, they provide this redundancy. In reply I abstain from going into the difference between redundancy of symbols and of significance, but merely point out that the written language, whether in the present spelling or in a reformed one, already has high redundancy. (Half of the symbols in a message can often be deleted and we can still restore it.) There is no need to pile redundancy on redundancy.

Refusing to withdraw, the homophone-lover may repeat the appeal to experience with a different example, giving the argument a different twist. Suppose that both *to* and *too* were written *tuu*, and that a sentence begins, "Tuu meny of those among us who at some period of . . ."; you mightn't know until a couple of lines later whether *tuu* denotes *to* or *too*. Naturally you won't because writing *tuu* for *to* does not indicate the meaning or precise pronunciation; one should write *t'*, if the apostrophe is used for the obscure vowel. You attain clarity by faithfully recording the spoken language. (There are numerous instances of faithful recording, e.g. distinguishing slurred and clear *that* and short and long *who*, in the Phonetic A version of Poe's *The Purloined Letter* on pages 130-150 of my book *Spelling Reform – a New Approach*.)

Another way in which experience shows that homophones are unnecessary is found in that same version of *The Purloined Letter*. There is no obscurity due to lack of homophones in its 7000 words, a fairly large sample. This practical experience also disposes of another objection that could be raised, namely that classics written when spelling had homophones might be obscure in places if all homophones are removed. The objector will now have to do more than say they might; he has the hopeless task of showing that to a significant extent they would.

But the objector may have yet another card up his sleeve. We can remove perhaps 20% of the bricks from the lowest course of a wall, ses he, and the wall won't fall down, but we can't remove them all. Likewise we could remove perhaps 20% of our homophones, but we couldn't remove them all; we would need the remaining 80% in order to narrow down the meaning enough to make the 20% unnecessary. The reply is that this is not an argument but an analogy. An analogy may illuminate an argument but it never proves anything. It has already been shown that homophones are not necessary for narrowing down the meaning (except in the case of bad writing), so the only valid conclusion is that the analogy of homophones and bricks is fallacious. The objector has the task, still more hopeless, of showing that removing some but not all homophones would cause obscurity.

Not that there is anything to worry about. If our spelling ever is reformed, it can be done only in a large number of small steps. In the course of this, the number of homophones will be progressively reduced; thus SR1 removes the homophones *bread/ bred*, *lead/ led*, *leant/ lent*, *read/ red*, and *weather/ wether*. If after some 20% of them have been removed an incipient obscurity *were* to arise, we could cease to remove them. Of course we shan't need to, but the option provides an insurance policy.

A final argument thrown up in the deth struggle is that some words such as *raise* and *raze* (to the ground) even have opposite meanings. But such pairs are a defect, so they shouldn't be maintained by an artifice of spelling; the defect should be remedied by disuse of one of the meanings. This has actually happened with some words, e.g. *quean* (in spite of the different spelling). And when, except in this article, did you last see the word *bier*?

The foregoing shows that homophones are unnecessary. I now show that they are more than this – that they are positively harmful.

Apart from those with serious physical or mental defects, all should be able to learn to read and write, to the extent that they find writing almost as easy as talking, and reading as easy as listening to talk. This would be normal, were writing strictly a recording of speech. Regarding this standard as evidenced by habitual reading for plesure, make your own estimate of the percentage of us who fail to reach it.

English is the mother tongue of some 250 million people who should be literate. Was your estimate of failures  $n\%$ ? Then  $n\%$  of 250 million gives the number who have failed to reach the standard I

specify. If your estimate was realistic, this number will be several tens of millions; indeed it still would be, even for a much lower standard.

And why do so many fail? The most substantial cause is irregular spelling, hindering reading recognition (when reading and learning) and reproduction (when writing).

Every set of  $x$  homophones means  $x$  spellings to be learned, even if one of them is regular. For the regular spelling too has to be learned in association with its meaning, e.g. *week* meaning 7 days needs just as much learning as does *weak* meaning not strong. So it is true enough to say that every set of  $x$  homophones means  $x$  irregularities. Now if we are going to retain homophones, there will presumably be a few hundred of them, roughly a thousand irregularities. And at present there are let us say 10,000 irregular spellings in the normal vocabulary. (If you say this figure is too high, watch out – you're strengthening my argument.)

I think we can regard the number of failures as proportional to the number of irregularities, and we can allow for the fact that irregularity, though a substantial factor, is not the only one. For the benefit of those weak at arithmetic I point out that a thousand irregularities are a tenth of 10,000, and that a tenth of tens of millions of failures is millions of them. So the consequence of retaining homophones would be millions of failures, most of them apathetic, some of them delinquent. Is this price worth paying?

Definitely the number of homophones should be small. The smaller it is, the lower will literacy extend down the IQ spectrum, the smaller will the number of failures be. Since even a single irregular spelling such as *said* can set up a mental blockage in a borderline case, leading to failure, the only acceptable number of homophones is given by  $N=0$ .

In view of the harm homophones do, the arguments for them, like the arguments against spelling reform, should be weighty and proved to the hilt. In both cases they are far from this; relatively, they are frivolous.

\*In the SPB for Spring, 1971 are listed 1450 sets of homophones, some containing 3 and 4 words – probably nearly 4000 words in all.

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[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Summer 1971 p14 in the printed version*]

### **From "Out on a Limerick," by Bennett Cerf**

A jolly old Southern Colonel  
Has a humorous sense most infolonel.  
    He amuses his folks  
    By laughing at jolks  
That appear in the Ladies' Home jolonel.

There was a young lady of Crete,  
Who was so exceedingly nete,  
    When she got out of bed  
    She stood on her hed  
To make sure of not soiling her fete.

-o0o-

## **7. AZ WE SEE IT, by Leo G. Davis**

Inasmuch as the SPELLING PROGRESS BULLETIN is dedicated to simplified spelling the occasional unorthodox notations herein are deliberate demonstrations of "fool-proof" spellings that cannot be challenged by any progressive thinker. As we see it "common usage" is the ONLY authority for orthography of any sort;- therefore, if progressives would spell rationally in personal off-the-job notations, reform would eventually be effected through common usage, without specific action by any agency.

Referring to the spring issue of SPB;- As we see it, Editor Tune is absolutely right in noting that many would-be reformers are frequently blind to their own inconsistencies. Thus we support him in pointing out some of the booby-traps to be avoided,- by amplifying some of his comments thereon. We are with him 100% in discrediting use of French E and I,- not only because of the deviation from Anglo tradition, but also because the French vowel symbols are identical to the English,- therefore switching roles would not solve anything. We would still have but 5 symbols for the 12 vowel sounds. Likewise we support him in discrediting unorthodox use of Q, X, or C,- not only because such usage would be sociologically repulsive, but also because those symbols may well be retained in the interests of familiar pattern. From where we sit, QU seems to be the only traditional spelling for the slurred phoneme heard in such as QUIT, K and W always being pronounced independently, as in AWKWARD. Likewise X is the only spelling (in root words) for the phoneme heard in such as OX,- KS appearing only in a few plurals. And C always features in the dominant spelling of the CH phoneme.

Re the use of diacritics:- Inasmuch as most of us are quite careless about just how or where we cross our Ts or dot our Is, we are not apt to do even as well with diacritics,- because of our fixed writing habits. Nor are we apt to shift to upper-case in typing to get the diacritics, for the same reason. Furthermore, the marked letters would have to be independent matrices in linotype fonts; therefore we could just as well stabilize capitals or script symbols as independent letters.

Editor Tune's suggestion that we concentrate on HOW to implement reform is even more important than the exact system to be adopted. In keeping with his respect for "least disturbance" and the "fool-proof" spellings demonstrated herein, it seems that stable spellings for the basic phonemes only, is about as much as we can logically expect in the foreseeable future. Inasmuch as there is no doubt about the dominant role played by each letter, a new version of stability would be just about as good as any other. However, the new orthography should be introduced in the primary grades, and then let posterity take it from there. According to reports from all such projects as Pitman's i-t-a, children, who first learn to read stable orthography, voluntarily shift to traditional literature. Further,- if stable orthography should come into general use in the primary grades, there would be a growing tendency to continue using the simplified spellings,- and that tendency would be sure to "snow-ball" as more-and-more "stable" spellers become parents, teachers and/or authors. Thus the new orthography would gradually become standard through common usage, while irregular forms would gradually become obsolete with the passing of current generations.

The article by Gill Stevenson is pertinent indeed. It supports Editor Tune on "least disturbance". It also supports us, if not Mr. Tune, in contending that a modified alphabet offers no serious mechanical problem. . . . And the article by Ali Fiumedoro is an excellent argument for simplified English as the common world lingo. Furthermore his ad on the back cover projects a system quite worthy of comparative study.

In view of the foregoing comments, it is suggested that Editor Tune set up a "Readers Write" column for comparative study and free-for-all discussion of the various proposals in this field;- and that he

specifically invite all progressive thinkers to submit their "6-cents worth" (postage having jumped from the traditional 2 cents to 6). Only through such comparative study can we hope to reach agreement on WHAT to implement WHERE and HOW.

However, as we see it, Mr. Tune blindly falls into booby-traps comparable to those he warns others to avoid,- more specifically as follows:-

His suggestion that "everyone" would have to learn the new system is a thoughtless exaggeration,- because "everyone" is all-inclusive,- embracing the NON-literate, the nit-wit, and the senile. Furthermore, very FEW people are apt to change their personal spelling habits materially,- CUM WHAT MAY!!! And there is no reason they should,- because most of their correspondents read the traditional orthography more fluently,- and most of us will be dead before any new orthography is apt to come into general use. Likewise his reference to a "dozen-and-half" new symbols to be added, seems contrary to his proclaimed policy of "least disturbance". However, the number of symbols to be added depends on whether we go for impossible perfection,- or for practical stability. Therefore, inasmuch as consonant digraphs have never been very confusing, it would hardly seem logical to add more than 7 new symbols,- 5 for the long vowels, and 2 for the minor sounds heard in such as *haul* and *hook*.

And Mr. Tune's reference to new symbols being a "handicap" is a bit short on logic. At least factory agents assure us that if a modified alphabet were approved, the revised keyboards would promptly be available, on an optional basis,- and at near-standard prices,- and that the special type for converting old machines would be stock items at repair shops. Furthermore, the machine on which this was typed,- with NINE special keys, was secured directly from the factory for only \$35 more than standard price. Likewise, his reference to "millions" of machines to be converted seems short of reality. As suggested above, very FEW people are apt to change their spelling habits,- therefore, not many would use the new symbols, even if they were already on their keyboards. Also, his comment that use of full-size caps would be "strange and misleading" suggests that he is overlooking the fact that very FEW old-timers would be involved. Furthermore, even though the large caps might look "strange", they would seldom be misleading,- because they would seldom be in initial position, either in the word or in the sentence. And inasmuch as small caps are already available, use of the big caps would only be a temporary improvisation.

As for the 8 pages of homophones, homographs, and heteronyms;- Editor Tune seems to be overlooking the fact that most literate English-speakers are already familiar with most of those anomalies. However, inasmuch as we noted no suggestions for modifying the situation, we wonder just WHY the lists were compiled at all. Likewise with the SPECIAL ISSUE (just received) indexing all articles published since 1961. . . At least WE doubt, very seriously, if many of his readers have kept many, if any, past issues of SPB,- or consider any given item worth "looking-up".

However we wish to make it clear that our suggestion, that Mr. Tune may be as blind to reality as the rest of us, is not offered as a personal "dig". Our basic thought is to admonish all would-be reformers to analyze reform more realistically,- and then double-check their comments,- to be sure they are not outside the field of orthography,- not offering redundant comment or ambiguous generalities,- not double-crossing themselves,- and/or not making fools of themselves by offering thoughtless exaggerations. Being human we are all prone to be blind to our own shortcomings. . . Our secondary thought is to convince Editor Tune of the need for a "Readers Write" column, for comparative discussion.

Realistically,  
Leo Davies, Palm Springs, Ca. U.S.A.

## Our Readers Write Us

### 8. Research Needed

**Dear Mr. Tune:**

**by Ivor Darreg**

Verbal descriptions being useless, and a picture being worth 10,000 words, I find I can save much letter-writing by sending out pictures as well as recorded tapes.

As I mentioned, A. J. Ellis (d. 1890) needs vindicating and since much of his work was in reconstructing Early English pronunciation, and his proposed phonetic writing systems, both broad and narrow, including the Palaetype, which could be set in any British printing office, you should find someone to do a series of articles about his work. I won't have time to do it but I will supply references for anyone interested in this research.

I do not believe that legal processes will accomplish spelling reform, let alone be coordinated with similar processes in other countries. It's just too monumental a task.

I would rather look at the positive side: a most drastic, radical reform, namely Gregg Shorthand, has been tried out on a grand scale for a century, and there isn't a law for or against it; nor against Pitman, Speedwriting, or Stenotypy either. No legislation had to be exerted to get it tried and used, and these systems are still used. Moreover, Gregg is used in other countries for other languages. So is German Gabelsberger.

So shorthand is a well-established success without benefit of lawyers or governments, other than their acquiescence in its use for – get this – court reporting! Since I have never studied shorthand, I cannot be accused of prejudice in its favor, but I have a sort of moral obligation to point out all this accomplished fact. The idea here is unquestioned acceptance by a small group of persons, but steadily growing for many decades, and actual working trials of several rival systems without too much polemic or interference. The other idea is *motivation and need* – necessity is the mother of invention. Surely all this practical accomplishment is too valuable to throw away, or waste time trying to do it over again. Or to settle for "half a loaf" when the real thing is accepted by so many school systems and taught there. The future of it is determined by the possibility of an electronic machine that could write shorthand-like outlines for syllables as spoken.

I presume your best bet here is to get hold of some patent attorneys or their assistants, to ask them to cooperate with your *Bulletin* by watching the patents for just such machines. Then get in touch with the inventors.

It might even become profitable. If you can't find an attorney or his assistants, the librarian downtown will instruct you on how to search the patent Gazettes by classification numbers. Somebody in this area must be working on such a project. No doubt you can drive to their place, or at least phone them.

One way someone could start a patent search is to get the classification of the patents taken out by the Bell Labs. on those speech-related machines. These classification-numbers would then lead to similar patents, and then to their inventors.

The key words here are *necessity* and *motivation*; so if such inventions are really needed, they will come about, when people come to realize it, and so for any reform whatever – including smogless autos. And despite all the horrible frustrations thrown in inventors' paths.

One reason why I am not the right person for your work is that I am quite a bit over 30. You have to bridge the generation gap and reach those whose ideas haven't been slapped down and ridiculed, those who haven't been told that change is impractical or impossible. In a word, the *fearless*.

## 9. Spelling reform in European countries

Dear Mr. Tune:

by K. G. Aberdeen

I wonder if you have in your extensive library some information on the following questions:

In countries where spelling reform has been accomplished, what was the motivating force? What segment of their society instigated the movement and worked for reform? What forces opposed it? What effect did spelling reform have on education, reading and writing habits, industry and commerce, typewriting, foreigners learning the language, libraries, publishers, etc. Did they dispose of useless letters, invent new ones, use diacritics, use capital letters for other sounds? Was it accomplished by legislation? After the necessary legislation was passed, how was the new spelling introduced to the people? Did the government make the new spelling mandatory? Has any such reform been accomplished anywhere without government action? Perhaps you may think of some more questions pertinent to this subject.

There is no urgency for this information, but I would like to do a few things to help along the good cause.

I was thrilled to hear about the bequest of Mr. Kelley of the Coca Cola Company to Pitman's i.t.a. as I consider this method the best for the teaching of reading and a possible step toward spelling reform.

I agree with Mr. Leo Davis that "Half a Loaf is Better than no Bread"(SPB, Winter, 1969). I found your article, "A Gradual Means of Making a Minimal Change in our Spelling" very enlightening, and I know you won't mind if I use it.

Recently I left an article with our local newspaper editor to use when he has some space. I chatted with him and feel sure he will find space before too long. At present I am writing a synopsis of Geo. Riemer's "How They Murdered the Second R" for submission to our Teachers' Federation Bulletin.

Thanking you in advance for your help, I am, yours sincerely,  
K. G. Aberdeen, Swift Current, Sask. Canada.

### Dear Mr. Aberdeen:

Your thought provoking letter is just what we need to get us out of the doldrums and to inspire fellow alfabetees to conduct research to answer all your questions. It may well be that such answers will provide us with the key to unlock the door to spelling reform (if we can find the door). Certainly in all my correspondence, no one has come up with a better plan for unravelling the mystery of why such reform now shows even less chance of progress than it appeared to have 80 or more years ago.

I'm afraid I can't give you any answers to your questions at present, but do enclose a printed sheet from Homer W. Wood that touches on this subject. I will start the ball arolling by sending out copies of your letter to the key people who I think might be inclined to gather the data you request. I will also print your letter in the SPB. Do you mind if we expand it a little by adding a few more pertinent questions? If this reaches enuf college research students we may find someone with enuf interest to embark on this worthy project.

Thanking you for what I consider the most important letter I've received this year, I am, sincerely,  
N. W. Tune

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## 10. Guide lines for spelling reformers

Dear Mr. Tune:

by Ira B. Collins

The Spring, 1971 issue of the SPB laid down some guide lines for those who contrive new spelling systems. I wish to elaborate and add some thoughts of my own.

It is my observation that almost any fool can devise a phonetic alphabet in a Saturday afternoon. A further observation is that a lot of fools do.

I feel that any alphabet change should use the keys on our modern typewriter. They also should use them without back spacing. If later new symbols are to be introduced, they should resemble letter combinations that can be made with our present alphabet – similar to Pitman's i.t.a.

My first big change would be to change the names of several letters. As a teacher with years of teaching remedial children, I feel this is very, very important. All vowel graphemes should be named for their short sounds. These are the more usual sounds for these letters and much teaching time would be saved by the change. Change *c* to *coo* or some such a name. Quit spelling *s* with *c*. Change *g* to *gay* as it now is in shorthand. Change *w* to *wublyoo* or *woo*. Change *y* to *yigh*. (This really would be *yii* according to this system.)

Of all the changes that I am suggesting, the above will be the easiest to make. Teachers are always being presented with new curealls. Witness the New Math.

The new graphemes needed for one syllable words are a substitute for the *th* in *that*, *zh* for the *s* in *pleasure*, for the *oo* in *foot*, and long *i* as in *fight*. The very important problem of vowels in multiplical syllable words will be considered later.

First the voiced *th* sound. As a teacher I feel that *dh* is the most logical. Yes, I know that if you count all the "the's" and "that's", they add up to a lot of changes, but there will be a lot of changes no matter what we do. I still hold out for *dh*.

*Zh* is already used in the dictionaries. Keep it.

The vowel situation is more complex and the location of most of the trouble. I must beat *Time* magazine with the quip that our spelling is *all voweled up*.

First let us examine the vowel digraph situation. There are five vowel letters. If a new one is made for schwa, there would be 6, making 30 possible combinations. The present group show 25 combinations, to wit:

aa	ea	ia	oa	ua
ae	ee	ie	oe	ue
ai	ei	ii	oi	ui
ao	eo	io	oo	uo
au	eu	iu	ou	uu

In the a-column, ai is the most usual digraph for long a and should be the sole way of spelling it. Au will be considered in the discussion of dialects. Discard as unused: aa, ae, and ao.

In the e-column, ea is either a duplicate of long e or else short e; therefore discard it. Ee should be

the sole way of spelling long e. Ei spells either long e or more often long a; too confusing, discard it. Eu might be used for long u when pronounced yoo. Which to use, I am undecided. Perhaps both eu and yoo, both have merits.

In the i-column, ia should be used for the ia sound in Julia. As for ie, it is just too confusing. Restricting it to any one sound would mix people up. For example, "The chief had pie in his diet." – discard ie. I would suggest using ii for long i. The big disadvantage would be that if someone forgot to dot them the result would be u. Keep io for Ohio and violets. Discard iu.

In the o-column, keep oa as it now often spells long o. Exceptions are very rare. Oe occurs on the end of words to spell long o; not needed, discard it. oi is now used for the vowel sound in coin; keep it. Keep oo to spell the vowel in boot, but not butte – use byoot. Keep ou to spell the diphthong in out.

In the u-column, discard ua. Ue now spells long u in the terminal position; not needed, discard it. Ui spells both long u and short i; discard it. Discard uo. I would use uu to spell the vowel sound in foot and put. As most of the words have either oo or u, uu combines them. Call it twin u to avoid the w-name.

Regarding dialects, the digraphs au, ou, and oi will be needed for the diphthongs in.- haul our oil. These sounds are needed to express sounds found in dialects as well as in general speech.

Much to do has been made about c, q, and x. Really for what little trouble they cause in reading and word identification, it would not be worth while writing about. C does cause trouble in spelling but not in reading. Q is useless but no bother. X is a sort of digraph in reverse. It is one letter for two sounds, i.e. ks. When voiced, it is gz, as in exact.

X is useful in expressing the unknown as: For a wholesome breakfast, eat x amount of rolled oats; for a wholesome drink, drink x amounts of orange juice, and for wholesome entertainment, see x movies. Q for questionable might be used for the last statement. These letters will find use for a long time.

Well, here is where all confirmed Saturday Afternoon Spelling Reformers quit. And why not? Should the world be forced to wait for another day for the product of their genius?

Unfortunately our language is not that simple. Syllables must be accented in the right places. Spanish has rules and if the rule does not work they use an accent mark. I feel that it would be better and faster if either all the high or all of the unaccented syllables were marked. I believe that it would be easier to mark the *unaccented* syllables and at the same time denote the correct vowel sound.

There are fairly reliable rules on where to divide the syllables *if* one knows how to pronounce the word. But, what good is that? What is needed is how to pronounce *an unknown* word.

I am enthused about using @ for the schwa sound. It is easy to write and looks somewhat like *a*, *e*, and *o*. Furthermore, it is usually available and needs no backspacing.

Some like to say that schwa is the same as short u, but it is not. Whether it is the way I say it or not, but I have taught children to distinguish the two sounds. One is high and distinct and the other is low and obscure.

There is another vowel that could often be heard in unaccented syllables. It is the sound of *y* in *many* or the *e* in *return*. Long *a* sometimes has this sound in unaccented syllables. Made in

isolation, it sounds like the unaccented Spanish *i*. I would make a digraph @i for this sound.

N, m, l, and r may act without vowels in their own right. They really don't need a vowel with them to form a syllable even if we do usually use *e* with them to form a syllable. Thus *earth* does not need the *ea* – just *rth* is enough. Applying the schwa symbol, we then would get: *er* in *worker* becomes @r, *le* in *bottle* becomes @l, and *en* in *wooden* becomes @n.

Besides the multiple syllable words, which by all means need their syllables either accented or unaccented, there are some words that by themselves are unaccented and should be spelled with a schwa. Most prepositions whether detached as in English or attached as in Latin, are in this class. This is the source of the schwa sound in: *of*, *among*, and *from*. Noun signals are also in this class.

What to do with *ar* in *car* and *arr* in *carry* is a moot question. As it is now they are fairly consistent. Possibly *ar* should be *aur*. Somewhat the same situation prevails in *err* and *irr*.

All compound words should be hyphenated. This should be freely done. This will show equal accent on both syllables.

When two letters come next to each other in such a way that they appear to form a digraph (but are not), separate them with a colon.

To resolve the many questions of spelling reform, it is going to take the help of many disciplines, experiences and talents.

I feel I have been very fortunate to have experiences to aid me to be a help in this project. While I started out teaching Mexicans and later some negroes and adults, my main teaching has been teaching slow learning Navajo children.

I feel that there is nothing better to teach a person the English sound system and structure than to teach English phonemics, phonics and structure to pupils with a native tongue as differing from English as Navajo does.

Let me be the first to point out that experience alone proves little. It alone is of no more validity than the ivory towered and arm chair theories so common in spelling reform literature. I do have some scientific background best summarized in *Teaching Word Recognition* by Davison.

Most of our spelling troubles came from foreign words introduced as spelled. We can prevent this when introducing any more new words. Establish the nearest sound to be used when foreign words are introduced from languages with other sound systems. New foreign words should be introduced as they are pronounced, not as they are spelled. This might cramp the style of those would be crudites but I think they will live through it.

If we are going to spell words as they are pronounced, whose pronunciation shall we use? The answer, of course, is mine. The obvious joker is that perhaps some four hundred million other people feel the same about their pronunciation and unfortunately it is not the same as mine. Somebody is going to have to give in or at least compromise. But how?

I have prepared some ground rules for this.

1. The pronunciation that has the *most users* is the preferred one. This could be an agreed Standard-the same as in most dictionaries.

2. When there is more than one pronunciation and one is like the present spelling, that one shall be preferred.

3. If two words usually have the same pronunciation but if 30% do make a differentiation, the two pronunciations shall be acceptable. This takes care of the difference between a knotty question and a naughty question. This also brings up the question of *au*. Is it the same as short *o*? If not, teach the difference.

4. Where the same word has two pronunciations of about the same prevalency, let both be right. This is best illustrated with the anecdote of the fellow who asked the Irishman which was correct for neither – *neether or nighther*. He replied that *nayther* was correct. Because of the limited number of users, his pronunciation would not be admitted.

My hypothesis is that the adapting public will be most likely to accept that which they now know or what is not confusing, and will reject that which causes confusion by causing a reverse of accepted word identification skills, such as using any discarded letters for new sounds not related to any present use. For example, using *c* for *th*.

Any spelling system can be proved workable if it is complete and consistent. What is needed is the most *painless* workable consistent system.

How now to implement this program?

To change the names of the alphabet letters, let some Ed. D. do research showing the superiority. Book companies will then incorporate the changes in their books.

To change the spelling itself will be harder. Push for a law requiring all dictionaries published three years after the passage to use the new spellings for respelling instead of diacritical marks.

To determine which is preferred, I think that most dictionary companies have a good start on this data. If a linguist is to be hired, let him finish the job quickly or else he will want the spelling to be IPA, or his pet version of it, or as he used it to describe the verbs of some obscure tribe.

After the preferred pronunciation is decided, work to have it required of all radio and TV announcers.

About 10 years after the dictionary change, make it an alternate legal form. Gradually the new spelling will replace the old.

In closing I must say that I doubt that I have said anything new. I merely want to add my vote in this direction.

I expect that by now you have had many requests by Saturday Afternoon Spelling Reformers of new systems for provision to have statues erected in their honor. You must by this time have a form prepared. If you are going to send me one, prepay it as really I don't need a statue. All I need is an easy way to teach word identification, especially in words of more than one syllable.

Sincerely, Ira B. Collins, Ganado, Ariz.

The following poem is offered as a demonstration of the feasibility of this alphabet:

This poem is repeated in World English for comparison. Note the difference due to the absence of a symbol for schwa.

An obst@cl, bii Charlotte P. Stetson

Ii wuz cliiming up @ mount@n path  
with meni thingz too doo,  
Import@nt biznes ov mii oan,  
and udher peep@l too,  
When Ii ran @genst @ prej@dis  
dhat quiit cut auf mii veu.  
Miii wurk wuz such az cuud not wait;  
mii path quiit cleerli shoed;  
Mii strength and tiim wur lim@tid.  
Ii carid quiit @ load.  
And dhair dhat hulking prej@dis  
sat aul @cros the road.  
Ii spoak too him poaliitli  
foar hee wuz heuj and hii,  
And begd dhat hee moov @ bit  
and let mee trav@l bii.  
Hee smiild – but az foar mooving!-  
hee didnt eevn tri.  
And dhen Ii reez@nd quii@tli  
with dhat c@los@l meul.  
Mii tiim wuz shoart – noa udher path-  
the mount@n windz wur cool.  
Ii argeud liik Solomon;  
hee sat dhair liik @ fool.  
Dhen Ii floo intoo @ pash@n -  
Ii dansd and hould and swoar.  
Ii pelted him and bilaiboard him  
til Ii wuz stif and soar.  
Hee got az mad az Ii did,  
but hee sat dhair az bifoar.  
And dhen Ii begd him on mii neez -  
Ii miit bee neeling stil  
If soa Ii hoapt too moov dhat man  
ov obdeurait il-wil -  
Az well inviit the moneum@nt  
too vaicait Bunker Hill.  
Soa Ii sat bifoar him helpilis,  
in an ecstasi ov woa.  
The mount@n mists wur riizing fast –  
the sun wuz sinking sloa -  
When @ sud@n insp@raish@n caim,  
az sud@n windz doo bloa.  
Ii tuuk mii hat, Ii tuuk mii stik,  
mii load Ii set@ld fair.  
Ii @proacht dhat auf@l incub@s  
with an abs@nt miind@d air-  
And Ii waukt directli throo him  
az if hee wuznt eev@n thair.

An obstacl, bie Charlotte P. Stetson

Ie wuz klieming up a mountin pathh  
with meni thhingz too doo,  
Important biznes ov mie oen,  
and uther peepl too,  
When Ie ran agenst a prejudis  
that kwiet kut auf mie vue.  
Mie wurk wuz such az kuud not waet;  
mie pathh kwiet kleeerli shoed;  
Mie strengthh and tiem wur limited.  
Ie kaerid kwiet a loed.  
And thaer that hulking prejudis  
sat aul akros the roed.  
Ie spoek tuu him poelietli  
foer hee wuz huej and hie,  
And begd that hee moov a bit  
and let mee travel hie.  
Hee smiield – but az foer mooving! –  
hee didnt eeven trie.  
And then Ie reezund kwie.etli  
with that koelosul muel.  
Mie tiem wuz short – noe uther pathh –  
the mountin windz wur kool.  
Ie argued liek Solomon;  
hee sat thaer liek a fool.  
Then Ie floo intoo a pashun -  
Ie dansd and hould and swoer.  
Ie pelted and bilaeboerd him  
til Ie wuz stif and soer.  
Hee got az mad az Ie did,  
but hee sat thaer az bifoer.  
And then Ie begd him on mie neez -  
Ie miet bee neeling stil  
If soe Ie hoept tuu moov that man  
ov obdueraet il-wil -  
Az wel inviet the monuement  
too vaekaet Bunker Hill.  
Soe Ie sat bifoer him helpless  
in an ekstasi ov woe.  
The mountin mists wur rieving fast –  
the sun wuz sinking sloe -  
When a suden inspuraeshun kaem,  
az suden windz doo bloe.  
Ie tuuk mie hat, Ie tuuk mie stik,  
mie loed Ie setld faer.  
Ie aproecht that aful inkubus  
withh an absent miended aer -  
And Ie waukt direkli ththroo him  
az if hee wuznt eeven thaer.

## 11. A New Approach

Newell:

by Sinclair S. Eustace

I am glad the SPB is continuing. At the same time I feel sure that those advocating spelling progress hitherto have been approaching it in an impossible way. The traditional approach to spelling reform is utterly unrealistic and ineffective.

The new approach which I favour is a parallel language based upon speech, not spelling, but not on any one dialect. The best known spelling reforms have been based on nobody's speech. The unstressed syllables, which account for most of the language, have nevertheless been largely neglected. (This is a relic of the days when spelling was taught by syllable and when there were therefore no unstressed syllables!)

At the same time the parallel language must resemble the old spelling enough to be readable at sight without instruction. It must also offer the concrete advantage of up to 10% saving of letters. Brevity is useful above all in road direction signs, where time is safety and money, and in polyglot texts, for example on packaged foods, where everything must be said four times, each in a different language. So brevity is a selling point.

One kind of solution which I offer is not in the least eccentric, as you well know. It is similar to the systems of the Simplified Spelling Society and the Simpler Spelling Association, but with the *fundamental* difference that it requires the extra letter ə (which is sometimes called yet). That one little letter is the essential key to progress. It means nothing less than the addition of a letter to the international alphabet, our ABC'S, but this is much easier than you might think. It is essential for indicating the unstressed syllable. On the typewriter it could go next to M, m.

Such a parallel language would be used at first for limited and definable purposes:

1. As a logical introduction for children to the notion of properly representing sounds by marks on paper. Experience shows that once this is mastered, the transition to the old spelling is not difficult.
2. In texts for foreign students which should show the true pronunciation, especially of unstressed syllables, and by the most economical means.
3. Other applications which the parallel language will itself create.

Thus we begin not by threatening to replace the old spelling, but by offering a supplement to it. The parallel language will gradually drive out the old spelling because of its superior merits, and the ambition of four centuries' spelling progress will someday be achieved. *Sincerely,*

-o0o-

## 12. Just in Case

Letters have upper and lower case;  
There's a case for every noun;  
Casewood, caseweed, casework;  
No wonder schoolboys frown...

Take a case of German measles  
And a case of Pilsner beer.  
The difference is more than slight  
In case it isn't clear.

The Dreyfus case aroused the world,  
To name a case in point;  
To give a dive the once-over  
Is called to case the joint.

Pity the foreign student  
Fitting each word in place.  
Case history or case reserved;  
Can he solve the case of 'case'?

From: *New York State Education* 5 February, 1971