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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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Table of Contents

Coming Attractions

The Story of Spelling Reform in Turkey, by Gertrude Hildreth
How to Learn to Spell, by E. D. Smelt
An answer to the Question, "Why Can't Johnny Read?"
Direct consequences of serious reading problems in the schools

1. To our Friends:

We are an organization composed largely of authors, teachers and other professionally-trained people who are proud of the English language. We are concerned that while English is being regarded as a logical candidate for acceptance as the universal second language thruout the world, it imposes serious complications in spelling and pronunciation both on foreign students of English and on our own American primary-grade pupils learning to read. These difficulties militate against the ready acceptance of the English language by such foreign students and by placing unnecessary obstacles in their path, retard the learning rate among young readers.

As we approach the close of the year, we encounter the traditional period of embarassment with regard to the exchequer. We have never made a secret of the fact that we have to operate on a very small budget and run a tight ship but in the past few years we have nevertheless operated with deficits that have to be made up by your editor and other interested persons. We could establish ourselves on a sounder financial footing if we could increase our circulation and we should like to offer for reader's approval the suggestion that for the holiday season which is approaching, gift subscriptions could be made by present subscribers to their friends or relatives who might thereby be encouraged to become active participants in the program. Since ours is a non-profit, educational organization, gifts or contributions are tax exempt. With enough response, we could thereby resolve our financial problems and at the same time hopefully extend our sphere of influence in this most worthwhile field of simplifying the English language with its attendant benefits.

The Editor and his Editorial Board

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1972 pp2–6 in the printed version]

2. Understanding the Negro Child's Reading Problem, by Gertrude Hildreth

We are vitally concerned today about teaching Negro children of limited background to read and write as the first step in emancipation from ignorance and poverty, sub-standard living conditions, and racial discrimination. It is through literacy that Negros will have basic skills for economic advancement and cultural enrichment.

A semi-literate young person at school-leaving age can not read and fill out an application blank, interpret signs and directions, make out newspaper headlines or advertisements. Through the ability to read, a young person not only has a practical skill for job competency, but also a means of self-education.

Ever since the enactment of Civil Rights legislation, social and educational provisions for Negros, North and South, have steadily improved. Nevertheless, a wide gap exists between the literacy rates of Negros and Whites in the general population, and the retardation of disadvantaged Negro children in reading is a persistent problem.

In the past, more attention has centered on urban than small-town and-rural Negro children. Since reports are least favorable for the latter, especially in poverty areas of the South, more attention must be paid to these children if they are to be assured the "right to read" by the time they leave school. This report relates for the most part to Negro children I have observed in the South in and out of school, especially those from lower strata homes.

National Literacy Norms and the Negro Child's Reading Achievement

What are the facts about the reading attainments of Negro children? This question must be explored as a basic for educational planning to insure literacy for every educable child in the immediate future.

The assessment of reading achievement through standardized tests affords reliable information concerning the proficiency of Negro children compared with the general child population at given age and grade levels. Comparisons have revealed wide-spred reading retardation among disadvantaged Negro children in all grades, elementary through secondary school, urban and rural. Some pupils have scarcely reached semi-literacy, equal to an upper third grade standard after six years of school. A substantial proportion of Negro youths leave school in the teens without having learned to read up to a practically useful level.

According to the Coleman report, Negros scored about one standard deviation (S.D.) below Whites in scholastic achievement fairly consistently in grades 1 through 12 **[3]**. The point at one S.D. below the national norm on an achievement test is the equivalent of over a year's retardation at age 8, nearly 1.5 years retardation at age 10, and over 2 years at age 14. Altho Negros rate lower than the lower quarter of White children, they are not so far below compared with other disadvantaged minorities: Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans, and American Indians. The report indicated that achievement in the North was ahead of that in the South, urban areas ahead of rural, for both Negros and Whites.

Retardation begins early. In a study of school readiness, Hanson and Robinson found that disadvantaged Negro children enter Grade one less well prepared for beginning school work and the difference increases from grade to grade **[9]**. A study by Blythe Mitchell of the predictive value of the *Metropolitan Readiness Tests* (1964-65), for first year reading achievement measured at the end of the year with the *Stanford Primary Achievement Tests* (1963, Form A, three reading sub-tests)

was based on the test scores obtained from a large number of Whites in various schools and a substantial number of Negro children [18]. The readiness tests were given Sept. 1964; the achievement tests, May, 1965. The means of the distributions for White and Negro children are as follows:

Metropolitan Readiness Test

	Mean Score	Percentile Rank	S.D.	N
Whites	56.41	53	15.80	7310
Negros	34.80	16	16.61	518

Stanford Achievement Test

	Reading Mean Score	Grade Equivalent	S.D.	N
Whites	21.4	Upper Grade 1	7.4	7310
Negros	14.7	Lower Grade 1	7.0	518

On Copying Designs of the readiness rest series, Negros scored about 53% of the White's average, suggesting lack of experience with pencils and paper or puzzle games. On tests of recognizing letters of the alphabet, a *Metropolitan* sub-test, Whites scored 10.1 letters, Negros 6.4, evidence that the latter have had less experience with print in the home environment. The Negro children had particular difficulty with the sub-tests of word meaning involving picture interpretation, and auditory discrimination. Negro kindergarten children rated 1.5 S.D. below Caucasians on a Seriation Test which measures concept formation related to thought processes in reading [21].

Lower class Negro children were significantly below the norms on the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary* Test standardized on White children, an indication of language immaturity in young Negros [19]. In the CRAFT Project conducted by Albert J. Harris and others with disadvantaged Negro children in New York City, the median reading readiness score at the beginning of first grade rated at the 20th percentile compared with national norms, the 50th percentile [10]. In a Southern rural community, Negro girls scored about 1 S.D. below the national test norms in reading achievement. Negro boys were equal to girls at the lower age levels, but dropped behind girls as they progressed through school [1].

Sixty per cent of the Negro ghetto children in urban schools enrolling a 50% Negro population are about three years behind in reading in the upper grades as reported by Ecroyd [6]. At the beginning of grade 7, Negro children from ghetto areas of New York City had a reading test average of grade 4.8. 57% were more than 2 years behind expected grade level, 18% were at grade level or above in reading [5]. The common denominator running throughout the test norms is the U. S. A. cultural level and standard American English.

The latest estimate is that 20% of the American Negro population grow up illiterate, that 50% in some Southern states do not complete high school.

All the data cited above are means or central tendencies of population distributions. There is a wide range of achievement among Negros as among Whites; at least 15% of Negro children exceed 'White norms. An occasional child catches on quickly and is soon far ahead of his age group.

Observations of teachers and supervisors bear out the results of the reading test surveys. Negro children in a Southern state are reported to be about two years behind expected achievement for grades 3 and 4. The director of student teaching at a southern college observed that standard

commercial reader series (the so-called Basal Readers] are at least two years ahead of the abilities of primary and intermediate Negro pupils in local schools. The children seem unable to progress by conventional methods, and are not responding to the type of instruction the school offers. Teachers give up almost everything else for reading, with negligible results.

Slow second graders enjoy the reading games, matching words with pictures, and so on; but when readers are brought out, faces fall, the children get restless, cannot respond, even fall asleep.

A fifth grade teacher who is responsible for four groups predominately Negro, nearly 150 pupils in all, says that the lowest group has no literacy skills at all after four years in school. Text material and juvenile literature is read to the children because many cannot read the material for themselves. A sixth grade Negro teacher reported that half of her sixth grade were retarded in reading, in need of remedial work. A seventh grade teacher has few pupils who read above fourth grade; several are non- readers, a few are at about Grade 2 level. An occasional child has not learned the alphabet.

The effect of desegregation above first or second grade when the children are grouped across the grade for instruction according to reading test scores is to throw Negro children into "slow" sections for the retarded and disability cases. When this happens, charges of discrimination arise.

Reading retardation attracts the most attention because reading receives the earliest, most intensive emphasis; but in other basic skills Negro children also lag behind Whites. The children are overwhelmed by spelling taught according to the primary grade syllabus. The faster learners can write and spell, but they write as they speak, with frequent departures from dictionary spelling.

Small town Negro children of the South impress one as being normal youngsters within their culture – alert, strong, active, good-looking, charming, polite, talkative, responsive. Scarcely a child with good nutrition shows any physical handicap.

Causes of Reading Backwardness

In attempts to explain the Negro child's backwardness in reading, there is a tendency to blame the school: poor teaching, limited objectives, wrong methods, lack of materials, but it now appears that the real culprit is social and economic deprivation – poverty, ignorance and illiteracy of parents, irresponsibility in child care, all a reflection of the Negro's inferior status and circumstances. Cultural lag in the borne and community is at the root of the Negro child's language and learning retardation.

According to the findings of the Coleman report, differences in school achievement appear to rise not primarily from factor s that the school system controls, but from factors outside the school proper [3]. The conclusions of the report are borne out by everyday observations of lower status Southern Negros. Families are large; the birth rate is above average compared with Whites. Small-town Negros of the South live in their own segregated quarters or dead-end sectors due to age-old discrimination, shut off from cultural influences that could offset home deprivation. The village life seems dull and empty to young people. The father of the family is often a low-paid, un- skilled worker with irregular employment, frequently absent from home. When the home is fatherless, the mother is the wage earner and the younger children are cared for by relatives, neighbors or the older children. Family dwellings are small, crowded, lacking modern conveniences save for a T.V. set.

The poorer-class Negro child lacks educational toys that are part of a better-class household. He is not accustomed to leafing through colorful picture books and hearing the stories read aloud. He less often has coloring books, a home blackboard, crayons, painting supplies. None of the village children have attended kindergarten or nursery school, though a few have had a summer term in Head Start programs. Until recently there have been no public supported child care centers. No wonder the Negro school beginner lacks the readiness background for academic school work the

instructional program presupposes. The effects of deprivation on the child are cumulative, becoming greater year by year.

The use of reading in the home circle depends upon the educational level of the child's elders. Books, even newspapers, are lacking from these deprived homes. Parents of limited education are not equipped to answer children's questions or help with homework. Over-burdened mothers cannot attend school meetings such as the P.T.A.

Is the Negro child's educational retardation due to innate mental backwardness in the race? The question of learning aptitude of Negros *versus* other children has been discussed at length by Arthur Jensen and others [12]. No definitive answer to the question can be given until the effects of equal opportunity, equal cultural background, and lack of discrimination can be observed in years to come.

The Negro Dialect and Reading Backwardness

A widely debated subject is the effect of the Negro child's dialect speech on learning to read. Certainly the use of sub-standard speech must be a major factor in reading retardation. How could it be otherwise when oral language is the trait most closely associated with learning to read and write, and interpreting page print is a derived form of language interpretation? Standard spoken .American English and the typical printed page, whether at a simple or more advanced level, have the same linguistic characteristics in vocabulary, grammar rules – and forms of expression.

Dr. Martin Deutsch concluded that the demands of first grade schooling were inconsistent with the language equipment of disadvantaged school beginners including Negro children [4]. According to a study by Pringle and others of socially deprived children, their greatest handicap is language backwardness in terms of commonly accepted standards of speech for children. Backwardness in language was greater than that for any other developmental trait or phase of achievement [20].
The Negro child cannot make much use of his own dialect speech in getting sense from print, in associating oral meanings with the printed words, or anticipating words in the expressions of school readers or story books.

If the Negro beginner's pronunciation of vowels and consonants is different from accepted sounds in common words, the standard sounds of the phonics chart will be confusing.

Characteristics of the Southern Negro Child's Dialect

The dialect of Negro children whose families originated in the South has been analyzed and compared with non-Negro speech by several investigators: Ecroyd [6], Entwhistle and Greenberger [7], Yonemura [25], and others. The dialect has its own phonology and syntax; it follows its own rules of usage. Philologists regard the Negro dialect as farther removed from Americans' speech patterns (the Broadcasting Network Standard] than any other regional dialect in the U.S.A. Even so, the Negro dialect is closer to English than to any foreign language. Differences in expression are more extreme in rural than urban regions of the South.

The Negro dialect is not the same as the "southern drawl" which characterizes the speech of people in the Southern part of the country, but is a distinct variant of the English language. The distinction is more in grammatical forms and sentence structure than in enunciation of speech sounds, because southern people in general tend to drop terminal phonemes, "r" and "g" of participles; they use a soft "&" and speak in more relaxed tones than "up north."

Let's listen to the oral expressions of Southern Negro children from homes of limited resources. Note typical usages of pronouns and verb forms:

Us got a new cah. It's yeller.
Us went to the zoo. Us seen de lion.
Is you problem right? No de been wrong.
I gone to school. I play wid de children.
Me goin' to do it.
Her brushes my hair.
I seed him.

Idiomatic expressions.

I's got it.
She be home.
Ain't you got. . . ?
I ain't gonna do dat.
I ask do he want it?

Confusion over verb forms *go-went-gone, do-did-done.*

I go yesterday . . . .
We have went . . . .
He done it.
He's did it.

Person-verb rules:

I pays for my lunch.
I is the oldest. . . .
I goes. . . .
What is you doin'?
He sing. . . .
She do. . . .
We likes . . . .
We knows . . . .

The past tense ending of regular verbs has not been learned:

The school is close today.

Copula of "to be" omitted or wrong form:

That my book.
They goin' to lunch.
She be goin'.

The double negative is habitual:

He ain't got none.
It ain't no use.
Ain't nobody got. . . .

Plural rules are undeveloped:

My mother give me two dime.

Question asked of young lad helping in the store:

How much are these oranges?
They cost ten cent each.

In conversation, a child told the teacher, "My mother has three sister." When the teacher suggested adding "s" to mean more than one sister, the child replied, "But I told you she has *three* sister."

The possessive rule has escaped the dialect-speaking child:

Her sister name Janie.
The baby name Katie.

Other Features of the Dialect

Vowels are pronounced differently by Negro children of the South, for example:

tin cents (ten)
rat now (right)
aigs (eggs)
Its looks *lak* mine.
The dog was *berking.*
dunna (dinner)

The younger children pronounce "th" as "d" in words such as *this, that;* as "v" in *mother,* "f" in *mouth.*

The sound of "s" is "x" in the common word *asked,* pronounced *axed*. Consonant ending "g" is unstressed or omitted.

The size of a child's vocabulary at a given age is determined more by his family's cultural level than by the fact that he speaks in a dialect. The more limited a child's background of experience, the more meagre his vocabulary, as a rule. A Negro school beginner did not know the word "red," the color of the dress she was wearing. When a teacher directed the beginners, "Get out your crayons," several did not understand the term. In an intermediate grade class the children did not know the word "magazine."

Negro children of the South are voluable enough, but forms of expression tend to be restricted, partial or incomplete. A nine-year-old girl called at my door with candy to sell, announcing with a smile, "Some candy," without explaining that the children from her school were selling candy today.

Attempts at written expression inevitably reflect the idiom, word usages, and pronunciation of the dialect.

They was differ. (different)
The store is *close* today.
Doing all these years . . .(during)
They *seen* the animals . . . .

Teachers have also observed dialect-speaking children *read* sentences in standard texts as though they were printed in dialect:

They's got three apples

instead of

They have three apples.

Words tend to be spelled as pronounced until schoolbook spelling is practiced.

Young children naturally absorb the speech patterns of those with whom they are most closely and continuously in contact. The Negro child growing up in an isolated all-Black Community and, until recently, in an all-Black school has had no other model than the dialect to follow. He is scarcely aware of the differences between his speech patterns and those of others, and since he already speaks a workable version of English, he has no incentive to change. Speech immaturities are reinforced by teachers who use the dialect at school. When the children become aware of school English, it is only natural that they should be puzzled by the strange talk and react against it. By age seven dialect expressions have become habitual and if unaffected by outside influences, will prevail through high school and on into adult life.

The Negro Dialect as Delayed Language Development

Research in language development proves that speech progresses by an orderly sequence of steps from infancy to adolescence. Accepted usages are learned gradually along with a growing vocabulary of words and their meanings. Young children simplify the language they hear in their early attempts to speak, regardless of race, before they catch on to standard rule-governed grammatical expressions.

In general language growth is correlated with age, but individual children vary in pace and ultimate level of language proficiency. Negro children from improverished homes have not advanced through sequential stages of speech development on a par with typical English-speaking children the country over. The lag begins to appear as early as three and four years **[20]**.

Age-level speech norms indicate that by school entrance typical school beginners have mastered the basic patterns of their mother tongue as well as comprehension, pronunciation and use of a substantial vocabulary. Disadvantaged Negro children entering first grade fall below these expectancy levels as the dialect expressions illustrated above suggest. A cumulative language deficit was observed by Deutsch as the culturally disadvantaged go on through school **[4]**. The fact is that Negro children are delayed in outgrowing their early speech immaturities in comparison with non-Negros. However, those from homes of educated parents speak on a par with children from educated non-Negro families. They show improvement in speech year-by-year as the result of home influence and school instruction.

The parallel between speech patterns of young children and the Negro dialect of older children and adults is by no means exact. The dialect speaking older child normally uses more complete sentences and better diction. Their elders, too, use more mature language than school- age children.

The explanation of developmental language lag is found in the conditions under which the children are reared. Southern Negro children in poverty pockets and rural hamlets know only the dialect of their parents and community, the language of unschooled, rejected people, the result of cultural inbreeding from one generation to the next, going back to the time when Negros were isolated from educated people, and even rudimentary education was denied them.

Users of non-standard dialects come mostly from the poorer, less educated classes; educated Negros in all walks of life are free from the dialect, and refuse to recognize such a thing as "Black English."

All young children make "errors" in pronunciation, word usage, and syntax, but the "errors" are normally conditioned out through experience at home and at school in contact with those who use mature speech patterns.

Throughout the childhood years the correct forms are constantly reinforced until they become automatic.

Esther Milner's study showed that there were marked differences in the home environment of children with advanced and retarded language development. The chief difference in the home situations of the two was in the amount of conversation with parents at mealtime and linguistic stimulation in the family circle **[17]**.

A Negro dialect is not a written-down language taught in school with a standard dictionary of word pronunciation and use, and a textbook of grammar rules, devices that normally guide school children in the attainment of correct form. Negro children who fail to form *reading* habits early lack this additional means of learning standard English, that is, by reacting.

The dialect is by no means an inevitable cause of reading backwardness. An alert child under good tutelage might easily learn to read in spite of the dialect by quickly catching on to standard form through oral recitation of his textbook sentences and expressions.

Shortages in the Education of Southern Negro Children

Schooling is normally a source of acculturalization, a means of evening-up opportunities of children from diverse backgrounds. In the case of Southern Negros, educational opportunities have been as poverty striken as the home environment. Social deprivation which forced the Negro into an inferior position also deprived him of quality education. Southern Negro children have been disadvantaged educationally by a short school term, antiquated buildings, obsolete equipment, lack of library facilities, inadequately trained teachers. Local money has not been allocated in sufficient amounts to improve conditions.

Attendance in backward communities is not compulsory, and often attendance regulations are not enforced. A youth of 17 may have had no more than the equivalent of a year's schooling altogether.

Children stay out or are kept at home on any pretext. Lacking any strong motivation to attend school, many drop out even before high school.

The best index of quality schooling is high quality teaching. A Negro director of teacher training remarked, "Our trouble is poorly trained, ignorant, incompetent teachers. They lack training for certification. Some of them are little ahead of the children themselves. These teachers feel inadequate for the task and admit they don't know what to do." In recently integrated schools, teach-

ers are usually better trained, more competent, their speech is good, they are alert to the problems described here.

The Teacher's Attitude Toward the Negro Child's Dialect

What should be the teacher's attitude toward the dialect the children bring with them to school, particularly in the early years when the foundation for learning to read must be established? In the case of beginners, to ignore the dialect and enforce standard speech would be both absurd and psychologically unsound. However, nothing is more obvious to the linguist than the ease with which children under 7 or 8 absorb new language forms, provided they have proper motivation and experience reward for their effort. Young children not only repeat the new forms easily, but they actually enjoy repetition.

Young Negro children need to assimilate as rapidly as possible the forms of English speech and writing that will put them on a par with their non-Negro classmates and remove a basic obstruction to learning to read and write. Teachers do Negro children a disservice when they perpetuate the use of dialect speech, which is not a medium of communication outside the local area. Integration in school and community life is rapidly advancing. The child growing up with a marked, almost unintelligible dialect will come into conflict with those who speak more acceptable American English, and will encounter discrimination because of it.

Isn't the high school level early enough for the Negro student to begin thinking about cultivated English usage? The answer is no, because by then he may be scarcely literate and on the point of dropping out. Furthermore, by the teens resistance to a different version of English is deep-seated. The best language learning years are the early childhood period when speech habits are forming.

The school experience can be the most effective influence in improving the articulation of cmdren who enter school with baby-talk and slurred or dialect speech. Teachers of young Negro children should begin at once helping them make the transition from dialect speech to standard American English as an important step in their education.

Specialists in early childhood education have described the many interesting and practical ways in which teachers of beginners can train children in new speech patterns through plays and games [25]. Suggestions include: daily story-telling, reading aloud from favorite picture-books, conversation growing out of daily activities and incidents, the use of repetitive stories, reciting verses, poetry reading, singing; spontaneous, creative dramatics, action games, question-and-answer sessions.

Conversation with simple hand puppets rates high in popularity. Props for these language development programs include familiar objects, toys, puppets, slides, tapes and recordings, the contact board, and a picture file.

Eventually, learning to read of itself will supply daily practice in the new speech patterns.

How best to teach young Negro children to read and write is a question agitating the best professional talent today. Fortunately, the U.S. Office of Education is undertaking a massive research effort to determine the most promising approaches for teaching all phases of language 6 and literacy in the school years. The hope is that the outcome of these studies and experiments will insure the right of literacy for every child, regardless of race or circumstances.

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3. Survey of Reading Methods Courses Probes the Extent of Preservice Requirements, by Harold H. Roeder*

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*Reprinted from *AACTE Bulletin* (American Assoc. of Colleges for Teacher Educ.), vol. XXIV, No. 4, July, 1971.

During the past decade, a sufficient number of research studies have revealed that the teacher is one of the most important variables in reading instruction. Unfortunately, very few researchers have attempted to establish whether or not our colleges and universities are preparing teachers to carry out this task.

When a teacher is graduated from an accredited institution and awarded some form of state certification, it is often assumed that he possesses at least a minimal understanding of how to reach reading. However, due to the variations which exist in institutional and state certification requirements, there is no guarantee that the graduates of all elementary education sequences have completed a course in reading methods. As a matter of fact, one of the researchers involved in this investigation received his baccalaureate degree in elementary education from an institution which required such courses as: industrial arts (three hours), music methods (six hours), arts and crafts for classroom teachers (six hours), and marriage and family relations (three hours).

Consequently, when he embarked on his professional career he was prepared to teach his fifth graders how to swim, sing, make puppets, build birdhouses, play volly-ball, settle family arguments, and weave baskets. Unfortunately, he was not prepared to teach his students how to analyze words, comprehend printed materials, or critically evaluate textbook selections. Some how his old alma mater had let him down; it had disregarded the most important R-reading. Although he had fulfilled all the requirements for graduation and state certification, he – and his contemporaries – were never required to complete a course in the teaching of reading.

Instruction in reading methods was relegated to a two-week segment of a language arts course. It was sandwiched in among creative writing, poetry, choral speaking, how to teach spelling, developing listening skills, teaching correct grammar, and letter writing. If a prospective teacher happened to be absent from the language arts sessions which dealt with the teaching of reading, he never met Dick and Jane, Jack and Janet, Tip and Mitten, or anyone else in the area of reading.

Succinctly stated, the purpose of this investigation was to ascertain how many colleges and universities throughout the United States required prospective elementary teachers to complete a course in the teaching of reading.

Procedures

Criteria: The colleges and universities which were included in this investigation met the following criteria:

- Each institution offered an undergraduate elementary education sequence.
- The undergraduate elementary education sequence was considered to be a major institutional offering.
- Each institution was a 4-year college or university.
- In states where appropriate, each elementary education sequence was approved by the state education dept.
- The elementary education curriculum of each institution was regionally accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting commission.

- The elementary education curriculum of each institution had been functioning for a minimum of four years.

Population: Identification of the population which met the criteria established for this investigation was not an easy task. Reference sources reported that in 1970 there were over 1200 approved teacher education programs in the United States. This totally encompassing figure included: 4-year colleges and universities, junior colleges, graduate offerings, undergraduate offerings, and all types of curricula from highly specialized areas of study such as art, music, to miscellaneous elementary education.
A total of 940 colleges and universities met this criteria. All 50 states and Dist. of Columbia were represented.

Data Collection: A questionnaire was sent or forwarded to the administrator directly responsible for the elementary education curriculum. Two follow-up inquiries were mailed to non-respondents. A total of 916 or 97.4% of the colleges and universities responded. In 33 of the states, returns of 100% were recorded.

Of the 916 responses received, 860 were usable, 9 provided insufficient data, 44 institutions reported they did not offer undergraduate elementary education, and 2 responses were received after the data were analyzed.

Major Findings

It was gratifying to discover that the majority of colleges and universities which were surveyed required prospective elementary teachers to complete a course in the teaching of reading. Most institutions also required prospective teachers to complete courses in language arts and children's literature.

Reading: Approximately 89% or 763 of the institutions which were surveyed required a course in the teaching of reading. Of the 143 (16.6%) institutions which combined the teaching of reading with another methods course, 110 institutions incorporated instruction in reading methods and language arts. It is interesting to note that only 42 of the institutions which combined these two courses allocated more than three semester hours of credit to the combined course.

Approximately 3% or 26 of the institutions which were surveyed offered highly specialized courses in reading, such as "Reading for Urban Teachers" and "Diagnosis for Classroom Teachers."

Related Findings

Language Arts: More than 83% or 715 of the institutions which were surveyed required a course in language arts; 256 (29.8%) of the institutions combined instruction in language arts with preparation in at least one other content area.

Children's Literature: Although an understanding and appreciation of children's literature is essential to the teaching of reading, 19.4% or 167 of the institutions did not require such a course.

Evaluation: Approximately 58% or 496 of the institutions did not require prospective teachers to complete a course in "tests and measures," Only 7.2% or 62 of the institutions reported that this area of instruction was a major component of another course. These data raise an interesting question, namely, if elementary teachers are expected to select, administer, score, interpret, and implement the findings of standardized and informal reading instruments, when and where is the necessary preparation obtained?

Conclusions

Requiring a course in the teaching of reading is certainly not a panacea. Prospective teachers may sit thru 2, 4, or 6 hours of instruction and remain virtually unchanged. [1] Naturally, a great deal depends upon the quality of instruction and the commitment of the student. However, requiring a course in reading methods, or a related reading course, does have certain advantages. It emphasizes the importance of reading as an area of instruction, commits institutional and state funds for the financial support of the course or courses, and guarantees the appointment of faculty members to teach the courses.

Altho the colleges and universities which were surveyed left little doubt that they were attempting to prepare elementary teachers to teach reading, perhaps they have not gone far enough. 10% of the institutions which were surveyed did not require students to complete a course in reading methods. Also most of the 143 institutions which incorporated the teaching of reading with instruction in at least one other methods course did not allocate the amount of time and course credit which the combined course merited.

Finally, while only 94 institutions required prospective teachers to complete more than three semester hours of course work in the teaching of reading, 133 institutions required more than three semester hours in art methods for classroom teachers, 152 institutions required more than three semester hours in music methods, 300 institutions required more than three hours in physical education, 305 institutions required more than three semester hours in religion and theology, and 124 institutions required more than three semester hours in geography.

Altho it is difficult to comprehend why prospective elementary teachers should be required to complete an excessive number of hours in art methods, music methods, physical education, and geography, perhaps requiring four or more hours in "religion" can be justified. If a beginning teacher is expected to teach reading and he has not been adequately prepared for the task, he had better know how to pray.

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[1] Ed. comment: This is hardly believable. Student teachers whose minds are a vacuum of experience, should readily absorb methodology when presented to them.

The above article is a scathing denunciation of the majority of American colleges and universities for their failure to prepare adequately elementary teachers who are supposed (primarily?) to teach reading. It is also only too evident that existing qualification requirements by state boards of education are all too lax in the area of reading methodology.

Who in the government in Washington, D.C. is going to do something about it, and when? Surely this is not, or should not, be unknown to high-ups in the Dept. of Education? They should be able to impose minimal standards for all schools by setting standards for accreditation for all teachers of reading.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §18.4 pp243–246 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 pp8–11 in the printed version]

4. On 'Spelling' and 'Spelling Reform', by Wm. Haas*

*Introduction to the book, *Alphabets for English,* reviewed on SPB Winter 1971 pp17,18

Introduction

Elementary education enables us, by a mere process of habit-formation and without much expense of thought, to acquire some of the basic achievements of our civilization We 'learn the figures' without marvelling at the efficiency of the 'Arabic' notation (which, had he but come upon it, would have given supreme delight to any Roman geometer or trader); and we learn to read and write without recognizing the enormous achievement of the alphabet. It is true that the 'thoughtlessness,' with which we now acquire and use these gifts from a distant past, has its advantage – it permits us to learn it all very early and to save our thought for other things. But such semi-automatic inheritance can be a drawback. Flaws may begin to develop in the equipment which is passed on as a fixed social institution; and without clearer awareness of its working structure and significance, we should hardly be able to deal with its defects.

Part I

The art of writing is one of the ancient arts and crafts in which the science of language has its origin. It is among the oldest of them, obviously reaching back as far as the beginnings of recorded history. Since then, the development of linguistics has continued to yield further technological advances: dictionaries and grammars of hundreds of languages, methods of language-teaching, notations for a variety of purposes, from logic and mathematics to shorthand and computer programming. But among these advances and, indeed, among all the gadgets of our modern age, the most ancient achievement – the art of writing, and especially alphabetic writing – remains unsurpassed in importance to the present day. As human civilization could not even begin to develop without this art, so a training in it remains the first step – the inevitable first step – for every child entering upon his cultural heritage.

Of all intellectual traditions, none are more firmly established than those which are passed on to little children in their first years of school. Such traditions tend to continue unchanged – safe from argument, and inaccessible to criticism. This is their power as well as their weakness. We never think of them. We are too young to do so when we learn them; and having learned them, we are loath to expend thought on what by then is a mechanical skill. We are glad, at last, to be able to think of *what* we read or write, without being distracted by problems of how to do it. No wonder, then, that we are instinctively protective about our mechanical skills. But to protect a mechanical skill is, precisely, to avoid thinking about it. For thought about it threatens all the advantage it has of saving thought for something else.

This explains why the mere sight of a new alphabet is enough to deter many who would like to learn Russian from even making a start. Proposals for spelling reform or alphabet reform arouse a similar instinctively defensive opposition. Such violent reactions are not quite so irrational as they are sometimes made out to be. True, the task of memorizing a new set of letters is easy enough. Once the art of reading has been acquired through one set of symbols, it takes very little time and effort to 'know' the use of another. But 'knowing' is only the first step; for we have not learned a new alphabet until we have made our use of it as 'thoughtless' and mechanical as the use of the old one had been. And this takes a lot of time. It is because of the difficulty of replacing it, that we are always ready to defend a semi-automatic habit. We do not relish the prospect of being spelling toddlers once more.

And yet, it would be a pity if all the knowledge people have of this supreme tool of civilization were to remain for ever at a toddler's level. Indeed, we might succeed, some day, in raising even

this level, if we can bring ourselves to see in 'spelling' something more than the dead letter of tradition.

Attempts are being made at present to enliven the teaching of arithmetic in our schools. Mechanical exercises are to be replaced, or at least supplemented, by mathematical explorations. The children are to do arithmetic as an answer to questions they have first learned to ask. It is not impossible that, some day, the teaching of writing will be enlivened in a similar way.

At present, however, among those who have acquired the art, there are surely not very many who know of the discovery which made it possible. And yet, it was a sensational discovery. When Plato wished to illustrate the power and techniques of scientific analysis, he was fond of referring to this marvellous reduction of all speech to just a few 'letters.' The facts which are the foundation of alphabetic writing must have been unexpected as well as hidden. How else could we explain that, in the long history of the human race, the alphabet appears to have been discovered only once – by a Near-Eastern people speaking a Semitic language? All the alphabets we know appear to be descended from this one source.

That the practically infinite number of utterances which may be produced and understood in a community should be capable of being reduced to a limited number of 'units of meaning' (ideas, words, roots) – this has occurred to many. Significant elements, however, such as words, must still be counted in thousands. No efficient technique of writing could be based on assigning thousands of different symbols to the thousands of lexical elements. In a society operating with such a convention (as the Chinese still do), as is as is as it is obviously very difficult for all its members to become literate; the task is too hard, and too time-consuming.

The idea that analysis of utterances could be pushed further – that is, beyond identifying significant units – to yield smaller recurrent elements which, though *constituting* significant utterances, may themselves *have no meaning at* all – this idea cannot have been easy to come by. And the result of such analysis ('phonological analysis') was truly surprising: the practically infinite number of different utterances turned out to be capable of reduction to just a few dozens of recurring 'sounds.' Now, and only now, was it possible to represent any of that unlimited number with the help of just a few dozen signs; and also possible, at once, to spread scholarship from a few priests and clerks to the people, and to develop that kind of modern society which relies on the literacy of its members.

This is a great story; one can understand Plato's fondness for it. But among all the children in our schools, and among the adults who have learned to read and write when they were children, and how many have ever experienced anything of the wonder and surprise which rewarded the discoverers and designers of their alphabet? Most of us have never learned to ask the questions to which our alphabet is an answer. And having never looked at it as being the solution of an analytic and technological problem, most of us, its users, never ask, *how adequate* a solution it is. And yet, such questions are obviously nothing less than a concern with the technological foundations of our society and civilization. And they happen to be of special urgency for readers and writers of English.

Part II

English orthography, as we all know, has long ceased to make proper use of the advantages of alphabetic writing. This is of course not due to any deep irrational strain in the English character. As in the case of most irrational institutions, there is an historical explanation. When, about 500 years ago, English spelling became conventionally fixed in more or less its present shape, the spoken language was yet to undergo extensive changes. As a result of these changes, the same letter would come to represent a number of different sounds (e.g. the letter 'a' in *same, fat, call, fast),* or indeed no sound at all (as the 'silent letters' in *know* or *wrestle).* But since at that time reading and writing was only the privilege of certain leisured classes, the inconsistency of English spelling was not felt to be any special disadvantage. On the contrary, its anecdotal archaic flavour was

sufficiently appreciated to discourage ideas of reform. It was enjoyable to discover in one's script some fossils of an earlier age. Also, to be able to spell correctly came to be a welcome sign of 'class,' and of more than average education. Inconsistency, however, if not removed, continues to breed further inconsistency. An esoteric concern with etymologies and pseudo-etymologies, rather than any regard for an efficient script, went on moulding English spelling conventions for centuries. It was only after the arrival of general education that the drawbacks of the archaic script were felt to be serious. Not every reader and writer of English could now be expected to know French and Latin; and there would be few, even among the educated, to appreciate that exquisite game of computing English spelling from a historical knowledge of three languages.

It should be admitted that present English orthography is not without interest, that it even has some advantages. The 'irregular' spelling of thousands of loan-words and technical terms is close to the spelling of similar words in other European languages – much closer than a phonetic English spelling would be. A Frenchman or German, who cannot understand a single sentence of spoken English, may yet find it fairly easy to grasp the substance of an English scientific text by silent reading. He would find it more difficult if the script were faithful to that English speech which he cannot follow. Even for the English user, the phonetically deviant orthography provides some useful non-phonetic signals. For example, there is a certain advantage in marking the English plural always by *s* (tho the phonetic value is either /s/ or /z/, or marking the English preterite always by *d* (instead of writing for it in phonetically faithful fashion, sometimes /d/ and sometimes /t/). Again, there is some sense in distinguishing the phonetically identical final vowels /ə/ of 'polar,' 'author,' 'baker,' so as to relate them to 'polarity,' 'authority' and 'bakery,' respectively. **[1]** It is important to remember in this connection that a *writing system,* even of the alphabetic sort, is never simply a phonetic transcription. Some of its deviations from a phonetic script – such as those just mentioned- are well motivated even from a purely linguistic point of view. **[2]**

However, even if we do not subscribe to any wholesale condemnation of English orthography, or to the idea that a perfect phonetic script would be best for English, it still seems impossible to deny that, on the whole, English-speaking communities are paying a heavy price for their analphabetic traditions. Their school children have to waste a great deal of time learning an unnecessarily difficult technique of reading and writing; and there is continual waste of time and of material resources in writing and printing superfluous letters. These are serious drawbacks, and not only for the English-speaking communities. For, in the same way, the use of English as a second language is being obstructed in all parts of the world.

It is on account of these social consequences that English spelling traditions have come under attack from many quarters – from teachers, writers, and politicians no less than students of language: from teachers, who feel in duty bound to voice the pains of their spelling infants; from writers, reflecting on the inefficiency of their tools; and from politicians, concerned about the educational level of their fellow-citizens, or about obstacles to the international use of English. Dr. Follick, teacher and politician, has been as eloquent as any of these, in denouncing the inefficiency of English spelling. The book he completed before his death under the title *'The Case for Spelling Reform*,' bears two inscriptions: 'To the Schoolchildren of Britain – a Consistent Alphabet,' and: 'To the Nations of the World – an International Language.' In his last years, Dr. Follick was inclined to think that the evaluation of alternative techniques of writing was primarily a task for linguistic studies (or, as he would say, for 'comparative philology'). In this, he was probably right. 'Primarily', however, must not be interpreted to mean 'exclusively.' It is important to realize that efficiency of communication is a social and psychological as well as a linguistic problem.

Linguistics provides the alphabet-maker with his principal tool – phonological analysis. But just as the engineer, who derives essential insights from physics, will yet not be able to decide on this basis alone what machines to build, so will the designer of alphabetic conventions find it impossible to decide, purely on linguistic grounds, what alphabet would be best in a given situation.

The problems of an English spelling-reform would have been solved long ago, if they were purely linguistic in character. It is not very difficult to devise a consistent alphabet (tho it is not quite so easy as amateurs tend to think); and *there is no shortage of such alphabets.* But it is extremely difficult to devise one that has any chance of prevailing *without causing more harm than good.*

Techniques of writing and printing are a very special kind of technological equipment. To replace them is not nearly as easy as to replace some other sort of machinery. In order to oust, say, the steam engine, it was enough to have constructed a machine which could do the job more efficiently. The scrapping of the old engines and of the plants producing them, and the re-training of a number of engineers and workers, must cause some harm and pain; but the harm will soon be healed, and the pain forgotten. The changes, on the other hand, which are called for by a new method of writing, are far more radical. A book lives much longer than any steam-engine; and every citizen has been trained as a reader and writer, while only a few are experts in steam-engineering. The institution of English spelling is entrenched in countless private and public libraries, in thousands of schools and offices, in the special skills of many thousands of teachers, and of millions of people all over the world. Moreover, the particular Roman alphabet we use is clearly related to hundreds of similar alphabets, currently employed for the representation of other languages. In a technique of writing we are dealing with a ubiquitous kind of technological equipment: it is nothing less than the principal medium of a modern civilization, a constant link with our contemporaries as well as our ancestors.

The problem of spelling-reform cannot, therefore, be approached merely by asking whether we can devise a linguistically more adequate technique of writing. We certainly can. The question is also: Is it worth while? As soon as we ask this question, the linguistically most adequate solutions – 'best' alphabets – appear immediately to be impractical. We need not go so far as to exclude them for all time. Possibly, some day in the distant future our economic and technical resources will permit a linguistically perfect spelling reform. Perhaps, some day, we shall be able and prepared to reprint the English texts in all libraries, private and public, all over the world. At present, however, a *perfect* convention for writing English needs only to be placed into the context of its prospective use, in order to be immediately rejected. This is why proposals for a spelling-reform cannot be judged by purely linguistic criteria. Having his 'perfect' constructions rejected, the linguist will be asked to try again, and to come back with proposals within the limits of what is practicable.

Social conditions will then control the very construction of a revised script. The reformer will not be able to ward off such 'extraneous' considerations by any mere strategy of skilful campaigning. For the campaign itself, to be successful, asks for compromise. This becomes immediately clear, when we consider, *how* any proposed new script might come to be *adopted,* how it might issue in reform.

Most spelling reformers agree that reform would have to be gradual. It would have to be carefully phased over a period of a few generations. What is true of every linguistic change – that the new must *co-exist* with the old before it prevails, would also be true of a reform of spelling-conventions. Even a reform by decree would have to simulate the gradual process of natural linguistic change. There seems to be only one effective way of ensuring at least a temporary co-existence of new spelling-conventions with the old – namely, by teaching both in schools. This is why the campaign reported by Sir James Pitman – in the first lecture of this volume (pp. 14-49), and in greater detail, by Dr. Follick in his book – is of crucial interest. A Minister of Education had given permission for precisely such an experiment in co-existence; and it is being carried out with apparently increasing momentum to the present day.

There might have been some uncertainty, at first. Would a second alphabet be an additional burden for the children at school? Might it not confuse them? Indeed, such fears would have been well-founded, had the new script been linguistically perfect. But nothing of the sort has been attempted. The new alphabetic system which is now being taught in some primary schools is in fact a

compromise with the old. And such a system has proved to be no burden at all. It has been shown – and this is, from the point of view of spelling-reform, the main contribution of Sir James Pitman's current experiments – that intrusion of a more consistent script of this sort will do no harm; there is even reason to believe that some such script could be of immediate use: it can make for an easier introduction to the traditional orthography, i.e. serve as an 'initial teaching alphabet.'

The first stage, then, in a reform of English spelling, could be almost painless. The initial co-existence of two alphabetic conventions can be cooperative rather than competitive, and yield immediate rewards in lightening the burden of learning to read and write, even with the given archaic tools. Indeed, nothing would be lost if the two conventions were to be kept side by side indefinitely – though, in that case, the ultimate greater gain of a reformed script would be forsaken.

Let us assume, then, that this would be the strategy of a spelling-reform – its progress to be channelled painlessly through its use as a transition-alphabet! It is clear that such a plan imposes severe restrictions on the reform itself. If the proposed new conventions are to be capable of serving as a first stage for acquiring the old, then any more extravagant novelty must be excluded. The Shaw alphabet would have no chance of being accepted as an 'initial teaching alphabet' because it offers no bridge or transition to traditional orthography.

How remarkable it is, then, that the only systematic script, so far, that has actually entered our schools as a transition alphabet – namely, Sir James Pitman's *i.t.a.* – does not claim to be a suitable candidate for spelling reform! Indeed, Sir James does not think that reform of English spelling should come by way of an initial teaching alphabet. In his opinion, a systematic script which is suitable for initial instruction in traditional orthography would 'thereby' be 'made less suitable for that other purpose.' – Now, it may well be true of *i.t.a.* that it would not be the best alphabet to serve both purposes. But the reason why Sir James considers the two functions to be incompatible is not to be found so much in the demands he makes on a transition-script as in the demands he makes on a spelling reform. This, he holds, should be on the lines of Bernard Shaw's proposals for a non-Roman alphabet, i.e. an alphabet totally different from our present techniques of writing. [3] Sir James's argument falls as soon as we abandon the idea of an uncompromising thorogoing reform. The auxiliary purpose of an initial teaching alphabet and the ultimate purpose of spelling reform are immediately compatible if we accept the general approach of Dr. Follick or Dr. Wijk or the Simplified Spelling Society who aim, all of them, at a reform 'with least disturbance' and, therefore, in the medium of the Roman script. Such a limited reform would permit precisely the kind of gradual transition and temporary co-existence which, through experiments with *i.t.a.,* has been proved to be educationally acceptable. For, it is *the same continuity with tradition* that has to be preserved, on the one hand, if a revised alphabet is to serve as an easy introduction to the old, and, on the other, if it is to take over *from* the old without too much disturbance.

Of course, a viable compromise is more difficult to devise than a utopian new beginning. If proposals for a spelling reform are to be judged by phonological criteria alone, then some English script on the lines of the *international Phonetic Alphabet* (IPA), or even the *Shaw Alpha*bet would probably have been accepted long ago. If we stipulate that the new script should be produced by subjecting some standard form of English speech to a strictly phonemic analysis, then no controversial issue remains except the choice of suitable letter-shapes. This, as Mr. MacCarthy has shown, **[4]** is not a linguistic problem, but a complex of social, psychological, aesthetic and technological questions. Whatever the decision we should reach here, it would not interfere with the basic analysis itself, nor could it alter its findings. We should merely be asking how to *represent* the results of a given analysis.

The situation is radically different, if we regard a consistent phonetic script as altogether too deviant from the present orthography to serve the purposes of either primary school-teaching or reform, and prefer to seek a compromise of 'least disturbance.' Then – and this does not seem to have been sufficiently realized – all kinds of social and psychological considerations must be brought in to

influence the basic analysis itself, or to modify its results. The very criteria then by which we shall produce and judge a script, *are no longer capable of consistent application:* the whole task becomes a problem of *balancing conflicting claims.* Hence, the difficulty of consistently applying 'guiding principles' such as those formulated by the Simplified Spelling Society. Mr. MacCarthy **[5]** has shown in fact how, in satisfying any of these principles, we are bound to contravene others. This issue must be faced squarely; or arguments for spelling reform will, as has happened so often, present themselves as just a welter of contradictions. Instead of pretending to some kind of deductive consistency, when we are in fact constantly and tacitly shifting our ground, we shall have to bring such shifts into the open, and acknowledge that our task is not to deduce a solution from first principles, but is the very different one of trying to attain a *state of balance,* precisely, on shifting ground.

It is from this point of view that Dr. Wijk's proposals **[6]** will be found to be especially interesting. At every step, the phonetician or linguist is called upon to decide how much he may reasonably concede to sociological, psychological, and pedagogical considerations. *Some* concessions are bound to be made. This is no longer the comparatively easy task of deducing solutions from general principles, but the highly controversial task of judging every single revision on its merits, and adjudicating upon conflicting claims. Nevertheless, we are not reduced to unreasoned intuitive decisions. On the contrary: rival claims must be clearly stated and the limits of compromise be accurately defined.

Problems of 'spelling reform' demand a great deal of further study; and some later volumes in this series will be devoted to an investigation of them. The present volume may serve as a useful introduction: the problems to be dealt with emerge naturally from reviewing some of the more important English alphabets so far proposed. The following chapters are, in effect, such a review.

Sir James Pitman's chapter presents the system of English spelling which he designed as an Initial Teaching Alphabet – *'i.t.a.*' A comparison with Dr. Follick's alphabet leads him to examine how different social and educational aims will determine the design of different scripts.

Mr. Peter MacCarthy (of the Dept. of Phonetics in the Univ. of Leeds) discusses some important technical alternatives, among which any spelling reform of English would have to choose; and he explains the principles which were adopted in the design of the two very different reform proposals – the Simplified Spelling Society's 'New Spelling,' and the 'Bernard Shaw Alphabet.'

Dr. Axel Wijk (of the Univ. of Stockholm) presents a system of 'Regularized English,' which may be described as a proposal for minimal reform and maximal continuity with T.O.

[1] It is remarkable that Sir James Pitman accepts the phonetically deviant representations of /ə/ *(Learning to Read,* p. 19), while rejecting plural *-s* and preterite *-d*.
[2] Cf. Josef Vacheck, *Some remarks on writing and phonetic transcription* (in 'Readings in Linguistics, ii', Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966).
[3] I. J. Pitman, *Learning to Read* (journal of the Royal Society of Arts, Feb. 1961, p. 27).
[4] See his chapter on the Bernard Shaw alphabet (pp. 105-115).
[5] See: Chp. 4, *New Spelling with Old Letters,* pp. 89-104.
[6] See: Chp. 3, *Regularized English,* pp. 50-88. Of the systems presented in this volume, Dr. Wijk's seems to be less widely known than the others. In a recent publication, *(Studies in Spelling,* Univ. of London Press, 1961), Dr. W. Boyd called for precisely the kind of minimal reform which had been worked out by Dr. Wijk in his *'Regularized English.'*

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5. A Glance Toward Norway, by Helen Bonnema*

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The three tasks of the spelling reformer are to:

(1) determine the need for change,
(2) devise a perfected spelling system,
(3) gain adoption of the new system.

The tasks are made easier when one studies the orthographic experience of other times and nations. The following two articles give incidents from the history of Norway, and impressions on how reading is taught there. In "Linguistic Changes in Norway" the reformer may see the difficulties encountered by those who try to bring about change, and in "Beginning Reading in Norway" a need for revising English spelling.

I. Linguistic Changes in Norway.

The language spoken in Norway is closely akin to Swedish and Danish. Its history from the third century onwards is interestingly told by Alf Sommerfelt of the Department of Cultural Relations, Oslo, Norway, 1968, publication.

Some excerpts from his account give an indication of the way in which orthographic changes have developed.

In their literary activity during the 16th century, the Norwegians took as models the writings of the early Danish Lutheran clerics. Altho it was Danish, their written language contained some Norwegian forms and expressions which were used for things and conditions found in Norway only. This literary language was used mostly on official occasions. The spoken language was split up into a great number of dialects. The common townspeople spoke the old town vernacular of a purely Norwegian type. Alongside this there appeared a middle-class language, the speech of the town burgeoisie.

In the 18th century a more uniform Norwegian appeared, based on the middle-class language of the towns in south-eastern Norway and spoken by the upper classes of the towns, especially in the southeast and by the civil-servant class. This language is clearly a mixture of spoken Norwegian and Danish literary forms.

Soon after the severance of the Dano-Norwegian union there was a reaction against the Danish influence. The so-called Norwegianizing of the written language was led by the pedagog Knud Knudson (1812-1895), who was untiringly engaged in proposing orthographic changes based on the spoken language. He exercised a strong influence on Ibsen and Bjornson (Nobel prize, 1903) who both followed most of his orthographic rules.

Another language reformer, however, Aasen (1813-1896) believed that no satisfactory result could be achieved by merely correcting the Danish orthography according to Norwegian pronunciation.

Himself of peasant extraction, he eagerly studied the various Norwegian dialects, and on the basis of these he showed that it was possible to construct a written language which would be wholly Norwegian. Aasen's language has been named *Nynorsk* (New Norse).

Thus, about the middle of the 19th century there arose what is known as the "language conflict," one side fighting for the introduction of the language of Aasen, the other taking written Dano-Norwegian, called *Bokmal* (book language).

Between these two parties has been waged a struggle, at times a bitter one, which is not yet concluded. The struggle is not only a linguistic one but bears a marked social character. The *Nynorsk* being nearer to the western dialects than the *Bokmal*, the former has gained a firm footing in West Norway. In the towns the *Nynorsk* is supported by people from the country districts, and all over Norway the class of elementary school teachers has been an important element in the struggle as ardent supporters of *Nynorsk.* Since 1885 both *Bokmal* and *Nynorsk* have been officially recognized on an equal footing. In the schools the pupils learn to read both languages, while the local school boards have to determine which is to be the chief language of each school and to be used in written exercises. In the upper sections of the secondary schools, the pupils have to learn to write both forms, but there, also, one of the two must be selected as the chief language. In the schools, in 1965-65, 79.5% of the pupils used *Bokmal*, while 20.5% used *Nynorsk* as their main language.

Many years had to pass before the Norwegian features of speech were given expression in the recognized spelling. In 1907 the voiceless consonants *p, t,* and *k*, were introduced to accord with the spoken language. Ten years later more steps were made in conforming spelling to Norwegian sounds rather than the former old Danish. These changes occurred in *Bokmal.* At the same time alterations were made in *Nynorsk* whereby many words which had been pronounced alike in the two written languages were given the same form in spelling. Since then there has been a movement in favor of bringing the two languages still closer to one another, with the ultimate object of a complete fusion, by adapting the grammar and word forms of *Nynorsk* to the East-Norway dialects and by ousting the last Danish forms from *Bokmal.*

In 1934 the government appointed a committee of scholars, teachers and authors who were to work out new orthographic and grammatical rules for both languages. The recommendation of the committee was published in 1936. The following year the Storting (parliament) declared, by a vote, that the orthographic rules of the two languages were to follow the main principles laid down in the recommendation. After revision by a second committee in 1938, the new orthography was introduced into public administration in 1939. The written forms of the two languages were made still closer to one another. Diphthongs were introduced into a great number of words in *Bokmal* in order to make them identical with the Nynorsk words. The grammar of *Bokmal* also underwent considerable changes. On the other hand, word forms and the grammar of *Nynorsk* were altered in order to make them correspond to the forms of the East Norway dialects.

The changes have caused some confusion in Norwegian writing. The reform of 1917 was met by strong opposition from many of the supporters of *Bokmal.* The latest reform brought even greater resistance from the partisans of *Nynorsk*. During the German occupation, the Quisling administration introduced a certain number of orthographic changes which were abolished at the

Liberation in May, 1945.

The confusion caused by the different orthographic changes and the many alternative optional forms have had serious effects in the schools. A movement of protest against the use of such a great number of the "radical" optional forms in the school primers has been organized and has received strong support in the principal towns. In order to elaborate a more fixed standard for the schools, the government appointed in Dec. 1951 a permanent linguistic commission (*Norsk Spraknemnd*) consisting of 30 experts in linguistics, school work, literary and journalistic activities, and broadcasting, with 15 for each language.

Many of the adherents of *Bokmal* have been strongly suspicious of all government action, and when a majority of the Norwegian Authors' Association chose representatives to serve on the commission, the minority left the association and formed their own. The seceding authors brought a case against the Authors' Association, first before the town court of Oslo and afterwards before the Supreme Court, arguing that the election of representatives to the commission ran counter to the statutes of the association. They lost in both instances. In 1966 the two branches of the organization were again united after a slight change in the rules for selecting representatives on the commission.

The fixed standard to be used in the schools, elaborated by the permanent linguistic commission, was published in 1958. It was nicknamed *Samnorsk* (Common Norwegian), and is violently criticized by some associations supporting *Bokmal*, but it was authorized by the Ministry of Education when the Storting had an opportunity of discussing it in 1958.

In 1964 a committee of nine members was appointed to study the language situation in Norway and to reduce the conflicts between the different language groups. The committee's report was completed in 1966. The government hopes that closer cooperation with less friction will be achieved in the future.

The above information was obtained from Georg Krane, counselor, Press and Cultural Affairs of the Royal Norwegian Embassy, and *The Norway Year Book 1967.*

II. Beginning Reading in Norway.

An interview with Prof. Berit Lindley, native of Norway, foreign language professor at Temple Buell College, wife of Charles B. Lindley, Colorado State Representative. Helen Bonnema taped this conversation a short time ago when Mrs. Lindley returned from her annual visit with relatives in Norway.

Question: As you know, teachers of reading in the United States are troubled that so many children don't learn to read in primary grades, and have to continue with these lessons during their elementary years. Even in junior and senior high school some are given lessons in remedial reading. Will you comment on your impressions of the learning of reading in Norway?

Answer: When I was there during the past few weeks, I discussed this with a number of teachers and with parents whose children are currently in the first grade. The public schools do not start with kindergarten, and so the children normally begin school when they are seven years old. That's when they learn to read. From what I have heard, it doesn't seem too difficult for the average pupil,

because the sounds of words are pronounced just the way the letters are named when you say them individually. There is usually just one pronunciation for each letter. Similar sounds, of course, change a little depending upon the position of the letter in a word, but generally, they pronounce each word according to each letter and this is the same regardless of which word you come up against. Some of my friends, and also a few teachers with whom I talked, said that normally a child who starts first grade will learn to read in *about three weeks.*

Q: What can they read?

A: Well, not everything within three weeks but within a year they are expected to read the newspaper and all types of material.

Q: How does a teacher start?

A: I remembered how it was when I learned to read, but when I described this to one of my friends who is one of the young, leading persons in public education in Oslo, she said, "Oh, that is no longer the way we learn to read. We now use every possible way, so we use a combination of word recognition and also sound out each letter."

I guess you call it phonics, I'm really not that familiar with it. They also use the more traditional methods, but she said, "We try to combine every single one we know in order to teach the child to read as quickly as possible!' Obviously it is quite successful.

Q: Is your friend a first-grade teacher?

A: She is the principal in one of the newest schools. I used to work with her in the scout movement, and she is really a very fascinating woman. She has a tremendous amount of drive, and a great concern for education. I guess she is really one of the pioneers. I asked her if she thought that the fact of the Norwegian society being so homogeneous had any bearing on it, because when we are speaking of public schools in the United States, we are also talking about the melting pot, and the service which the schools render the country in forming a whole by having all of the different kinds of students in one class. This to her was a completely surprising question because she hadn't thought about it. She said, "My particular school is kind of heterogeneous too." I asked, "In what way?" She answered, "Some of the children come from the big city, some from the country, and some from the smaller towns. The very thing we are working on is to get them worked into one uniform group." But she didn't think that had any bearing on their reading.

Q: Do you think that they are homogeneous?

A: Yes. I know a few people who have talked about that and wondered if the fact that the society is so similar might have some bearing on the children's success because they don't have to cope with all the differences and adjust to them. All that they are working on is the reading.

Q: Nor do they have to teach the meanings of words, as we do in the inner-city?

A: No, and another thing which I think people tend to forget is that English is such a rich language.

You have such a tremendous number of words of similar meanings -- so many synonyms. In Norwegian our language is so much poorer. It's adequate, but if you look in the dictionary, you may find one Norwegian word and six English words.

Another thing I have found very surprising is that in the United States the average person seems to have a certain amount of difficulty in spelling and has to check in the dictionary.

Q: Oh, everyone does -- even the college professor.

A: Right. Because you have such an enormous number of words. But I have found that if you have learned to read a foreign language -- for instance, I first learned Norwegian, then I learned to read German, and *then* I learned to read English, but that was the most difficult because your rules of pronunciation are practically impossible, even tho we don't learn it by rule. It is largely a matter of memory. But I had already learned the technique of reading, and for me the difficulty that confronts the six-year-old first learning didn't exist. I have noticed this in the teaching of English in the Norwegian schools. The average pupil learns to read and to pronounce English words correctly without difficulty, and I think it is because they can depend upon the technique they have learned already so they can concentrate on the new thing.

Q: That's the argument that is back of systems like the Initial Teaching Alphabet which was first introduced in Great Britain. They figure, teach the child a system that is regular, and then when he knows the techniques of reading, he can better tackle the irregularities of spelling.

A: It is very difficult to spell. I can see this myself. I have a daughter who is six and a half who is in the process of learning to read and I hadn't even imagined the difficulties they are up against. I wish that she had learned Norwegian first, because I can see now when she is reading English texts she can pick up a Norwegian book and pronounce more of the words there because she depends upon the pronunciation she already knows from speaking Norwegian. There is no doubt but that English is tremendously difficult. Just think of:

I have *seen* him.
She made a *scene.*

or you are talking about a *key*, a *sea,* or to *see.* To me, they should be spelled the same way instead of /ey/, /ea/, and /ee/.

Q: Right. In Norway, they do encounter some need for special work to help children of low intelligence, don't they?

A: Surely, this is true. I really never saw this myself, and I haven't been in close touch with the students in elementary or secondary schools for the past ten years, but no doubt there are children of low ability who have difficulty in reading. I remember a case where someone had said, "This person cannot possibly learn to read," and when this person became 17 or even later, he hadn't been given an education. They used the excuse that the person didn't have the ability. But they found later on that he *did* have the ability, and they sued the government for it. I've never seen the outcome.
(end)

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §12.3 pp173,174 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 pp13,18 in the printed version]

6. To all Spelling Reformers – Regimen Essentiale, by Newell W. Tune

In order to devise a system of reformed spelling, a reformer is faced with a considerable number of conflicting situations. First of all, will it be a new alphabet, augmentations to our 26 letter Roman alfabet, or will it avoid adding new letters by using digrafs when there are not enuf letters to represent the sounds of English?

It is easy enuf to put 3 or 4 dozen symbols in a hat, draw them out one by one, giving each a name; then tossing them back into the hat, withdrawing them again one by one and assigning each a sound (with no relation to its name). Some seem to be devised this way.

Unfortunately, a new alfabet such as Deseret, requires new type fonts, new typewriters, etc. Such a handicap means that it hasn't the slightest possible chance of getting establisht. It took a lot of money to establish Pitman's i.t.a. So let us confine our thoughts to Romanic spelling reform.

A reformed spelling must not only be a great improvement over T.O. (practically all I've seen are more regular and consistent) but it also must satisfy a half dozen or more requirements. Some of these conflict with others, so it is essential that a set of priorities be set up so that the most important principles get first consideration and take precedence over the less necessary changes.

In the questionnaire sent out by the Research Committee on Spelling Reform, a question was asked about these six factors and the vast majority of respondents gave the following priorities: 1. Phonetic perfection, 2. Simplicity, 3. Ease of writing, 4. Nearness to present spelling, 5. Compatibility with typing and printing machines, 6. Economy of space. This last was so low in the reader's estimation as to hardly be worthy of consideration.

With this in mind, I offer the following criteria for your reflection and consideration:

Regimen Essentiale for spelling reformats

Priorities for the selection of a system of spelling reform, listed in order of their relative importance.

1. Representing *all* the sounds of spoken English without combining any sounds needed for discrimination. A. system which fails to distinguish between the vowel sounds in *cot* and *caught,* consonant sounds in *this & then,* or *weather* and *whether,* is inadequate and must be rejected.
2. Simplicity, ease of remembering, and consequently ease of learning and teaching. This also includes rejection of a system which has reversible digrafs which could cause confusion in the minds of children learning to read, such as both *ei* and *ie*.
3. Freedom from confusion with our present T.O. words. This also includes nearness to the regular and consistent parts of T.O. spelling, because these are the parts of T.O. that are now used in the teaching of reading by phonics. Any system that tries to force upon the public the Continental vowel representations must necessarily change the spellings of a large majority of T.O. words. Such a system would cause a tremendous amount of confusion with existing spellings, and therefore would be unacceptable to the general public and educators.

Of course, the above applies only to an all-Romanic system of reform. It would not apply to a non-Romanic system, or perhaps not to some Augmented Roman systems. Perhaps there are other factors needing consideration. What do you think we have overlooked?

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 pp14–17 in the printed version]

7. Book Review, by Newell W. Tune

NewsBook in Reading Instruction: Series 1. Edited by Sandra M. Brown, Ph.D. pub. by MultiMedia Education, Inc. 1971. 192 pp, 8x11, $10-95, illustrated with photos.

This book is a series of interviews of 25 top-ranking American educators. Strange as it may seem, almost all of these nationally known respected professionals concur on what must be done to end the reading crisis. Included in these pages are candid criticisms of teacher training – pleas for early reading instruction in the home – hard hitting comments about present instructional materials – a description of the red-tape system which makes it almost impossible for a reading coordinator to bring about improvements in classroom reading instruction.

While it is not right to present a paragraph or two from each answerer to the interviewer, offering it as that persons main thoughts, because that would be like lifting out of context, yet it is felt that such remarks may stimulate our readers to want to read more of what these leaders have to say.

Accordingly, we present a few quotations, first, from the Editor, Sandra M. Brown:

"The interviews in this book have a magic about them. Each interview is different – each point of view is unique in its focus. Yet, when taken as a group – when internalized and considered – their message leaps forth clearly, without indecision.

"The total impact is almost that of a poignant poem – you feel it emotionally first – you analyze it later."

James E. Allen, Jr.: "Imagine, if you can, what your life would be if you could not read, or if your reading skill were so meager as to limit you to the simplest of writings, and if for you the door to the whole world of knowledge and inspiration available through the printed word had never opened.

"For more than a quarter of our population this is true. For them education, in a very important way, has been a failure, and they stand as a reproach to all of us who hold in our hands the shaping of the opportunity for education. These individuals have been denied a right-a right as fundamental as the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – the right to read.

"The suppression of the individual, which for so long characterized the government of nations rested on the ignorance of the many and the learning of the few. With the invention of movable type there was created a source of widespread learning that held hope for the eventual abolishment of ignorance and for the removal of the barrier to the participation of the common man in the determination of his destiny.

"Thus, from the beginning of our Nation, the importance of education has been recognized. Education has come to mean many things, and to encompass a wide range of information and experiences, but certainly it must still include, as it did in the beginning, the ability to read. Those of us who do not gain this ability in the course of their early education, lack a skill necessary to all other areas of learning and are being denied a fundamental educational right – the right to read.

"It is true, of course, that the inability to read effectively is only one of the many vexing problems facing American education, just as heart disease and cancer represent only limited dimensions of our National health problems. Yet, we have seen the value of concentrating attention on such medical concerns.

"The inability to read effectively, contaminating as it does every other dimension of education, is clearly one challenge deserving of our concentrated efforts. As we learn how to attack this deficiency cooperatively we ,will not only be getting at the foundation of learning, but will be gaining the strength and skills to meet together many other educational problems."

Here are some answers by a few of those interviewed:

Do you think the crusade to end reading failures by 1980 is realistic?
Mary C. Austin: "If we continue in the present direction during the next decade, we probably will produce the highest number of functional illiterates of the 20th century. With an estimated 24 million American adults in this category, and with schools adding approximately 8 to 12 million more, the problem of developing a literate society assumes astronomical proportions

"Although there are numerous reasons for reading failures, too many schools employ outmoded practices – organizational, instructional, and evaluative. They have failed to join the vanguard of recent research and development efforts. In effect, they say: 'Come back in ten years and you'll find us using the same reading programs. We make mistakes but not the same ones which other systems make when they try untested innovations.' "

Q: What do you feel are the major reasons for reading failures today?
Emmett A. Betts: There are a number of them. We need to re-tool teachers. . . all teachers, including teachers of teachers.
Q: So, you think phonemics is a key to reading success?
A: Not only phonemics, but also orthography, and perception. Before a teacher ever comes to learning anything about phonics, she needs to have some basic information on phonemics and orthography. And if she is to learn anything about word perception, which is phonics plus meaning, then she needs to have relevant background on that.
Q: What other prerequisites would teachers need?
A. Well, they naturally need to know something about motivation, and comprehension, or cognition. After all, reading is more than decoding of writing into speech. Too many linguists stop there. Reading is also decoding the message, which is semantics.

Q: Do you think that the goal to end all reading failures in the 1970's is realistic?
Dorothy K. Bracken: I think that if we don't accept it, we had better quit the education business! There are scores of educators who are spending most of their time investigating children's problems and helping them. We know we can do this, as we have a great body of knowledge that is still to be tapped and put to use."

Q: How do you define "illiteracy"?
S. Allan Cohen: The state of being functionally a nonreaders Illiteracy, defined in this way, could probably be eliminated in the United States, but it is not going to be done by 1980. Not because we couldn't do it, but because I really don't think the country takes it that seriously.

Q: Altho your work has not traditionally been considered to be in the field of reading instruction, our editors felt that you had contributed most significantly to reading this year. How do you feel about the Right to Read campaign, and how can "Sesame Street" contribute to its future goals?
Joan G. Cooney: I highly support the Right to Read campaign. I think it is just marvellous. While "Sesame Street" has not had reading, as such, as one of its goals, we hope to bring preschool children to the point of readiness in a more comprehensive way in the future than we have done this year."

Q: If you take a look at the history of education, you wonder how we could make such sudden progress. What do you consider as the two or three major areas that would have to be changed to achieve this goal?
Brother Leonard Courtney: Dr. Allen spoke of bringing everyone up to his ability to read and with the desire to read. *Desire* is the key. Children come to school eager to learn to read. The enthusiasm of a child when he comes home when he can read for the first time is beautiful. But something happens to a child after the first year. Perhaps it is our whole pragmatic approach that says, 'He has to read and do it successfully,' Someplace all the joy and fun is taken out of reading. The first requirement, then, is a return to the joy and adventure of reading.

Q: Do you think it is possible to achieve the goal of the Right to Read campaign?
Dorothy M. Dietrich: I do think there is a need for more concentrated effort on reading instruction, and perhaps the goal can be at least partially achieved. As I look at the schools around the country, some schools are not aware that they need to put more emphasis on reading and other schools are aware of the need, but they don't quite know how to go about solving their problems."

Q: Do you think the campaign to end reading failures by 1980 is realistic?
Donald D. Darrell: Sure! We know enough now about beginning reading to eliminate failures if we can provide the services. We learned from the national first grade study, which is, incidentally, the first study of a national rather than provincial nature, that two factors are essential for beginning reading success – phoneme identification and letter name knowledge. If these two skills are learned early enough – and they can easily be learned in kindergarten – any child who can understand spoken English can learn to read it. Without these abilities, failure is assured; however, their possession doesn't guarantee success; there are still other factors in the reading diet. But these two are critical.

"I have been teaching in the first grades in black inner-city areas during the past two years as I travel about. Among the 40 classrooms I've been in, the children have shown normal backgrounds in letter name knowledge and phoneme identification in only two. Altho they understand spoken English easily, they have not been taught to notice the separate sounds in spoken words. Without this ability, they haven't a prayer of learning to read. Yet I found that they could learn to identify the sounds of *m* and *f* at the beginnings and ends of words after ten minutes of teaching. They learn letter names quickly, too. It is tragic that we guarantee failure in reading among these children by lack of training in word element perception."

Q: In your opinion, why do we have so many reading failures today?
Siegfried Engelmann, For the most part, they are teacher failures. There are many causes why a child fails to read, but the primary cause is that he has not been taught the skills he needs in order to read. Every child does not need the same amount of teaching or the same routine by the teacher, but every child should be able to learn to read. For the most part when kids fail, it's the teacher's fault because she has not taught them skills they need. Typically, we say the student has not learned. This puts the responsibility on the student and it really shouldn't be there. It's the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the child is taught. If it takes more to teach one child than it does another one, we can't use this as a cop out. We all know that there are individual differences in kids."

Q: Are you saying that reading must be considered in terms other than "chronological age levels"?
Gerald G. Glass: Yes, of course. To think that all people who "read" must do so at a certain age level is making reading what it is not. Reading is not an absolute. Its existence must necessarily be unique in every individual. There is no measure of "read" as there is of an inch, or a weight, or any of the many definitive developmental activities. To be able to read is to integrate the abilities of decoding, understanding, reacting, recalling and interpreting. Reading is at one time all of these and

at another time only one or more. Each ability has its own dimensions and (other than decoding) has infinite levels.

"In addition, when you consider the deprivations under which a great many of our children live, not only socially and economically, but also emotionally, it is unreasonable to assume that they are all going to read at any normative chronological age level. You can't assume that any method of instruction or set of materials can compensate for any child's own background and capabilities."

Q: What then are the major reasons for reading failures today?
G. G. G.: It is difficult to say. Reading failures primarily have to do with the child not being emotionally set or ready to learn to read while he is being exposed to methods that are obviously not appropriate to his needs. Many of these children do not learn to read in the first grade simply because they have not yet learned to sit and feel at ease anywhere other than in their own homes. In school, when they are learning to read, they uniquely need to attend to what the *teacher* is presenting and discontinue their less mature behavior of attending to what *they* may be thinking about at any moment. If one is to learn to read, one needs to take in information and process it as required by the teacher. The poor reader cannot really "listen" to what the teacher says, i.e. comprehend what is coming in and adjust his own responses accordingly. It is an all too common diagnostic statement, concerning children who are having difficulty learning to read, that they are immature or seem younger than their counterparts. We tend to shy away from this information, rationalizing that these are psychological needs and not concerns of the teacher."

Q: What would you suggest that we do to bring about improvement in reading instruction?
G. G. G.: Initially, we should do a great deal more in the area of teacher training and in good, hard teaching of basic skills. I say this to counter the almost monotonous response from authorities that 'we need more research.' "

"As for actual reading instruction, children should first be taught to decode and not read. Yes, I feel that the ability to decode is only incidentally related to the ability to read. Reading should not (and in fact cannot) be taught until one has learned to decode. By 'reading' I mean the ability to use the printed medium in an attempt to gain meaning. Decoding is something that merely tells you what you must give meaning to. This is quite different from learning to read. One can bear yet not understand what is being said. However, one will never know *what* to understand if one cannot hear. The analogy between that and decoding and reading should be apparent."

Q. What do you consider then to be the major reasons why some of our students do leave schools without either the skills or the desire to read?
James L. Laffey: I believe the failure to acquire the desire to learn is a serious failure. Very often the students are faced with a variety of problems in the schools related to reading. In many instances, we know that drop-outs often leave school because they can't read and are continually frustrated in school. Schools continue to use textbooks in classrooms across the country when, in many instances, we know that 50% to 75% of the youngsters can't read these same textbooks. Yet they come to school daily and what do they face but failure and frustration. We continue to alienate and frustrate students because they never learn the skills necessary to read difficult textbooks."

Q: Do you feel that programs like "Sesame Street" can make an unique contribution to the language development of the disadvantaged?
Constance M. McCulough, As someone has said, T-V was in the homes of the poor before it was in the homes of the rich because it was cheaper than babysitters, going to the movies, or doing anything else that someone with limited funds might do to entertain himself or a child. Sesame Street can do a great deal of good for children's concepts and for sequencing of certain thought processes. I just hope that the people who are running it are open to all kinds of ideas, which they

seem to be. Because if you immerse kids in good ideas, then you can make a difference. One concept to the exclusion of others is not a good practice."

Q: Do you think the Right to Read campaign to end reading failures by 1980 is realistic?
Sir James Pitman: Certainly, but in order to accomplish it, there must be a departure from the complexities and irregularities of the English alphabet. The alphabet is over 2000 years old and the spelling is over 600 years old. Quite frankly, that is the worst import you ever took with you on the Mayflower, but you've stuck with it ever since and it is in a mess. I'm not plugging i.t.a. necessarily, but any simplified alphabetic system that doesn't make such a mess of what the child hears and what he sees.

Q: Aside from the difficulties presented by the alphabetic structure, are there any other major causes of reading failure?
Sir J. P.: Yes, the fact that so many children come from homes where they have not had sufficient linguistic environment. This has nothing to do with I.Q., socioeconomic levels, or with poverty or any of these factors that the reading experts think it is. Quite frankly, it is that the child has had very few experiences, has been kept home and not allowed to go out and learn the mechanics of language. If you have a child on Park Avenue whose father and mother are tycoons, and they are so busy with their tycoonery, cocktail parties and the like, the poor child will never be with his parents, only with some employed help. What chance do the parents have of getting a helper who is linguistic? The child may be surrounded by all the cultural richness that you can probably imagine, a library of books, artifacts, etc. The point is that the setting is worthless unless the child is given a linguistic environment with all the *words* for the concepts which he is able to see, hear and sense.

Q: What position does encoding play in the reading process?
Sir J. P.: Well, writing is very important. In fact, I would say that writing is more important than reading. Writing, like speaking, is the active form of the language. And when the child is writing he is using his tactile sense. Quite honestly, I think you ought to have all three senses of the learner operating in unison-auditory, visual, and tactile.

Q: Would you go so far as to say that a child should be able to write every word that he can read?
Sir J. P.: Well, they do it in i.t.a. Not only every word that they can read, but every word they can speak, and every word they can hear and understand. I can't see that there is anything but good in that."

Q: Do we need more research before we begin a massive attack on reading failures?
Helen M. Robinson: Well, it's important to note that research hasn't given us as many answers as we wish it had. Although we have great volumes of it – we reviewed over 400 reports last year – it's scattered and disorganized. I think the ten year R & D plan of the U.S. Office of Education to apply the convergence technique to research in which new information is accumulated is a good prospect, and one that's likely to bring us closer to the Right to Read goal in the next ten years."

Q: Do you think we need to develop new materials for teaching reading?
Nila B. Smith: We need continuously to develop and improve textbooks. In addition we need material other than textbooks – both books and pamphlets, as well as practice materials for skill development. You can't learn to swim in a bathtub, and that situation is analogous to trying to read in a classroom where the children are exposed to only a meager supply of books. We need a great variety of books at a great variety of levels dealing with the best in literature, but also including a wealth of up-dated material in social studies and science.

Q. How realistic is the date of 1980 for removing reading failures?
Harold J. Tanyzer: I don't think the issue rests in being realistic as in demonstrating one's intent. The date, 1980, is useful like the end of any decade. We can set dates by which we are to attain the moon; I suppose we can set dates by which we are to attain the end of something called reading failure. However, the entire concept of reading failure bothers me. I'm more concerned with *communication* failure. All the critical issues of our time – from the war in Vietnam, to racial problems and the generation gap – share one thing in common.- a collapse in communication. Although the goal is admirable, by being a myopic, essentially passive view of the communication process, it misses the point and focusses on the wrong priority.

"The issue is not reading competence but *linguistic* competence – the ability to use language in all its forms – listening, speaking, reading and writing, and most of all thinking. We need to attach far greater significance to the emissive modes of language: speaking and writing. It is through these modes that one gives expression to his ideas and beliefs. One of our major aims should be to help each student become an independent and self-reliant learner who expresses himself to the best of his capacity?' end.

Just as a bite out of the apple should cause you to want more, we hope these sketches will cause the reader to want the whole. We think this book will prove useful to both the experienced teacher and the newcomer to the teaching profession. Professors of reading will want to use such sage advice in their undergraduate and graduate classes to round out their experience and start them thinking of what should be done in the future to improve the teaching of reading.

Editorial comment: It seems that the consensus of opinion of these VIP's in the field of education is that most reading failures are the result of teacher failures – failure to know how to teach reading effectively. Of course, it never dawned on them to put the blame where it really belongs – on our unreliable, often conflicting spelling. Dr. Frank Laubach, in his world-wide campaign against illiteracy, has shown time and again that a student can teach another new pupil if he has a reliable phonetic system with which to do his instruction. So don't put all the blame on the teacher.

Almost all of those interviewed seem to think that if phonics were properly taught, we'd eliminate reading failures**.** But phonics was the prevailing method of teaching reading at the turn of the century and was replaced by Look-Say because it was only partially successful. The inescapable fact is that phonics has only limited usefulness – that it is limited to those words which are both regular and phonetically spelt. You can't get thru a primer without having to introduce some non-phonetic words such as: *was, is, his, to, do***,** etc. Therefore the logical conclusion is that the basic cause of reading failures is the large number of words which are either non-phonetic or only partly phonetic. Before a child ever really learns to read he is introduced to such unphonetic monstrosities that defy analogy, rules, or reason, or teaching by any one method. Anyone who fails to see this is closing their eyes to reality.

Unless we can get our government to see this basic truth, we will continue to have reading failures.

However, we will go along with the thinking that many teachers need more instruction in the use of phonics. School Boards can either require that all teachers of reading have a certain number of hours of instruction in the use of phonics (whereupon they would have to pay for the expense of the teachers' new training) or they could offer inducements in the form of reimbursements for such education fees and books. In either case, it will cost the school board more money, but it will result in improvement in the reading abilities of all backward pupils.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 pp17,18 in the printed version]

8. Two book reviews, by Newell W. Tune

Alphabets for English, Edited by Wm. Haas**,** Manchester Univ. Press, 1971, pp 120. $ 4.00. Barnes & Noble, New York.
Phonographic Translation, by Wm. Haas. Manchester Univ. Press, 1971, pp 94. $ 5.00. Barnes & Noble, New York.

These two books are vol. 1 and vol. 2 of a series of books by the Mont Follick Professor of Comparative Philology, a Chair established by the late Dr. Mont Follick, M.P. who introduced in Parliament the Bill to investigate the use of an Augmented Roman Alphabet as a medium for teaching beginners to read in a reliable phonetic spelling system. This was the Bill given the blessing and moral (altho not financial) support of the Government Minister for Education, Miss Horsbrugh.

Chapter 1, of vol. 1, *Alphabets for English,* was reprinted almost in toto on pages 8-11 of this issue of SPB. This gives us an insight into the objectives of this book, and perhaps even an idea into what the rest of the series may encompass.

Certainly no spelling reformer would want to miss this important book of the all too few on spelling reform and its impact on the teaching of reading.

Chapter 2 is an appraisal of Dr. Mont Follick and his assault on the conventional alphabets and traditional spelling. Much of the work of this great man is little known to Americans, and indeed even to many Britons. His proposed alphabet, as well as the Shaw contest alphabet and the system of Regularized English by Dr. Axel Wijk, are the subjects of Chapters 2 and 3. Regularized English is compared with Pitman's i.t.a. to show the differences in thinking of the authors as to what is needed for beginning learners.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Peter MacCarthy, Professor of Phonetics at Leeds Univ. discusses "New Spelling with Old Letters" and the Bernard Shaw contest alphabet – why they are different – because they were meant to accomplish different purposes.

Educators, even tho they may not be interested in spelling reform, will have their eyes opened to some of the more damaging faults of English spelling and see how carefully made plans can overcome these anomalies of English spelling.

Volume II, *Phonographic Translation*, is a quite different book from vol. 1. It is really a dissertation on the relationship of alphabetic writing and phonetic transcription. It might be considered as a complement and an adjunct to the Paul Hanna report for USOE. It does not overlook the total situation, viewing problems of reading and writing in relation to the grammatical and lexical parts of English structure. It explores the relation between letters and graphemes and their correspondence (or lack of it) to phonemes of English, and explains how the difficulties of learning to read and write which are due to the peculiar nature of English orthography may be graded.

While some of the discussion may be over the heads of some spelling reformers, professors of English will be impressed with the thoroness with which these subjects are handled. It may be enlightening to some to learn why English words are spelled as they are and what would happen if all English words were spelled strictly according to sounds. What is untranslatable? What about poetry – especially poetry in a foreign language? Are the foreign spellings we have absorbed helpful in learning foreign languages? Many more questions are posed to the reader to make him think for himself.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 p17 in the printed version]

9. Book Reviews, by Helen Bonnema

Shaw, John Robert, with Janet Shaw, *The New Horizon Ladder Dictionary,* New York: Signet Book, from the New American Library, Inc. 1970, 686 pp, 75¢.

A few months ago *The Ladder Dictionary* came to my desk. A 4"x7" paperback, it can easily be tucked into a handbag or camp kit, and this summer it has found itself going with me on jaunts to the mountains or wherever an hour for writing may be found.

Anyone who has fun working with words – be he a spelling reformer or other kind of linguist-will find useful information in it.

The basic research for the book was supported by the United States information Agency which wanted a dictionary in simple English for use in its overseas program among foreign readers of English as a second language.

The book includes 5,000 of the most frequently used English words, dividing them between five ladder rungs of about 1000 words each, according to the frequency of use. Each word entry is followed by a number in parentheses to show the level of frequency. Thus on the first page appear:
abandon (3)
abbreviate (5)
abide by (4)
ability (2)
able (1)
indicating that *able* is one of the thousand most frequently used, and *abbreviate* one of the least frequently used words appearing in this dictionary.

Inasmuch as the concern of the spelling reformer is largely with the most frequently used words, whether he is trying to show the difficulty a first-grader has in learning to read traditional orthography and the ease the child would have with his new system, or whether he is refuting the various objections to reform, this little paperback is ideal for his work. By confining his work to these 5,000 main entries, he is assured of dealing only with an essential vocabulary.

I have no information about the accuracy of these categories for frequently used words. An interesting comparison could be made between this ladder classification and the other well-known lists, starting with Dolch, Godfrey Dewey, Thorndike, and including Hanna & Hanna, *Basic English,* and others recently appearing in publications such as the *Reading Teacher.* The advantage of this dictionary's list (assuming it is accurate) is that it is accompanied by other information of value to the linguist and presents it all in a handy and inexpensive form.

The pronunciations shown are those which are accepted as standard in the United States. There is no quibbling over whether *cot* and *caught* are both enunciated alike by some people. The /o/ in *cot* is shown as the vowel sound in *far,* and the /au/ in *caught* as the sound in *all.* The phonetic system, an adaptation of Trager-Smith's, uses vowel graphemes more nearly like those of the International Phonetic Alphabet than those of the best known American dictionaries. For example, diphthongs are represented by the two vowels *heard* rather than by those most often *written* in traditional English spelling. This is reasonable in a book designed for foreigners because such users are likely to be familiar with the use of:
/a/ for the vowel heard in *far*
/ey/ for the vowel heard in *gate*

/u/ for the vowel heard in *put*
/ay/ for the vowel heard in *life* and so on.

The cover of this dictionary should state that it is written primarily for students learning English as a second language. As it is, the caption is misleading in saying that this is a "Dictionary for Young Readers." No mention is made of its use by foreigners except in the small print of the Acknowledgement and the Introduction.

Special features include a brief explanation of grammar, marks and symbols used in writing and arithmetic, explanations of 150 common abbreviations, and world wide place names with pronunciations and locating countries. More than 10,000 examples of proper sentence usage follow the word entries.

When away from his bookshelf and unabridged dictionary, a spelling reformer is likely to find this handbook as indispensable as his paperback Thesaurus.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 p18 in the printed version]

Harris, Albert J. *Casebook on Reading Disability.*
David McKay Co, New York. 1970. pp 345. $7.95.

This book is the result of the Editor's recognition, in teaching courses on the diagnosis and treatment of reading disabilities for many years, of a need for a collection of varied case reports, presented in detail and at length. These 16 case histories can provide examples of how diagnosis, planning, remediation, and evaluation are carried out in the leading reading centers.

The plan that has been followed involved the assembling of long case study reports, with each author (or authors) encouraged to present the cases in detail. The suggested maximum of 8,000 words corresponds to about 25 printed pages. The authors were selected, first of all, as highly regarded specialists whose writings and research have attracted wide and respectful attention, or as staff members of organizations that have developed superior reputations. The ones to whom invitations were sent were selected not only for the known quality of their work, but also to represent variety in location, auspices, and points of view regarding diagnosis and treatment.

Each author was asked to supply two or more cases in brief outline form, one of which was quite representative of the reading disability cases treated in that setting, and one or more which were somewhat exceptional but seemed to have desirable teaching possibilities. The editor chose the final cases from those submitted, and tried to see that there was sufficient variety in age, sex, degree of severity of the reading problem, kinds of related or causal handicaps, and types of treatment program used. Most of the 16 cases chosen had severe reading disabilities, as one would expect in clinical centers; the children with mild reading problems were either struggling hard in school or were already failing.

Altho the cases were chosen with variety as one of the criteria, there should not be any assumption that they represent a statistical cross-section of children with reading disabilities. More than half of the children were considered to have some neurological difficulty. It is also significant that the majority of the children showed emotional difficulties, ranging from discouragement and inferior feelings through depression, anxiety, and tension, to childhood schizophrenia. In several cases treatment involved psychotherapy as well as remedial reading.

Even when psychotherapy as such was not used, the remedial program was often planned with as much attention to the child's emotional and social problems as to his cognitive handicaps.

While nearly all of these children needed help in learning how to identify printed and written words, there was little similarity in their psychological patterns. Physical and especially visual difficulties were checked to eliminate that part of the problem.

A combination of teaching methods was used with most of these children, for example, teaching the visual recognition of some common words while also teaching phonics.

Direct teaching of perceptual skills was needed in one fourth of the cases. Medication was a significant part of the treatment in some cases. Some of the children progressed to a point at which it was necessary to place the major emphasis of the remedial help on comprehension and study skills.

Each case report begins with a brief description by the Editor of the setting from which the report comes. And ends with some brief comments by the Editor on certain points that he felt were particularly interesting from a teacher's point of view. Yet he did not want to second-guess the authors – to wonder what might have happened if a different diagnosis procedure or a different treatment plan had been followed.

It is felt that these cases present a very interesting set of children with variety in their difficulties and in the treatments given.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 pp19,20 in the printed version]

10. Our Readers Write Us

i.t.a. and spelling reform

Dear Mr. Tune: Gertrude Hildreth

In a letter from Mr. William J. Reed published in the *Spelling Progress Bulletin,* Oct. 1971, the writer observes that Mr. Pitman, Dr. Downing and other leaders in the i.t.a. movement have *not* said that the medium would be a boon not only in the infant school, but *at all later stages of education.* Some of us have wondered, why not?

When Sir James appeared at the American University of Beirut one day in the mid-60's to address a select audience of educators, linguists and English experts on the i.t.a. experiments, I asked the speaker when the meeting was thrown open for discussion, whether he would favor permanent English spelling reform rather than a transition alphabet. My question was met with a burst of derisive laughter from a segment of the audience. In reply, Mr. Pitman explained that the sole purpose of the i.t.a. experiments was to determine whether the new medium would ease the task for beginners of learning to read in conventional print. End of discussion!

As you may know, Sir James was one of the judges of the G. B. Shaw Alphabet Contest held in the late 50's. So perhaps my question wasn't so silly after all. Afterwards, I wondered whether Mr. Pitman felt that if English experts were obviously unready to face this issue (spelling reform), the general public, unsophisticated, would be even more antagonistic toward any reform movement.

Gertrude Hildreth, **Sea Cliff, N.Y.**

A light in the night: SR 1

Fr~~i~~ends: Dr. Douglas Everingham M.P.

At last a spark has been lit in the seemingly endless night of archaic English spelling. Immediate progressive reform is possible, practical and being practiced.

Harry Lindgren, whom I know only by correspondence since he published his proposal last year, has made the breakthrough with his *"Spelling Reform – a new approach".*

Having studied, reviewed, assisted and finally (1966) published spelling reform proposals for over 20 years, I find this SR presentation and programme best on all counts.

It starts from the premise that a complex set of conventions by means of which we carry on the world's work and play cannot be suddenly and drastically interfered with. But we can alter our spelling a little at a time, introducing reform in a large number of small changes. To cope with the variety of spelling-reform proposals, the first small change should be common to all of them except the unacceptably eccentric. Such is the writing of *e* for short *e* as in *bet.* This becomes reform step 1. Every writer is urged – as I now urge you – to adopt as soon, as often and as consistently as possible, this one reform. Whenever you write or type enything, use *e* only for this sound and add the code sign "SR 1" at the end. When you write for a typist or type for a type-setter or linotyper, ring each word with the new spelling (with red if convenient) and request that the ringed spellings be preserved. Only when enough writers with enough collective prestige do this will eny other reform ("SR 2") become acceptable.
Only when such persons take the initiative will governments and educators do likewise. Eny other sweeping steps are bound to fail in a democracy where majorities and mass media merchants make decisions.

May I have your support for this principle? Then let's get going. Unity is strength, and SR 1 is surely a step on which all spelling reformers can agree if they accept eny partial preservation of existing alphabets.

The next step is to be decided by an internationally recognized authority such as the collaborating SSS and SSA which, if they accept this principle, will grow in size and influence. SR 2 will be promoted only when SRI is widely accepted.

***Doug Everingham,* M.P, Commonwealth Parliament Offices Qld, Australia.**

How Americans are Classified

To the Editor: Miss S. G. Stewart

If the average American is to be classified on the basis of his knowledge about the inconsistencies of our spelling, it is easy to see that they could be grouped into four classes, which would include most of them with tolerable thoroness.

First, there are those who do not know anything about the question and *do not care* anything about it. These are in the great majority.

Second: those who know all about it, and consider it to be the one main vital aim in education – who look upon it as the most important reform not yet accomplished – as the chief panacea for most of the educational ills from which our English spelling system suffers. These are a generous class who are ready to sacrifice time, money, themselves, in order to build up in the minds of the

American people an understanding and a just appreciation of the virtuous principle of spelling reform. They are people of one aim, one hope, and possessed of that faith, courage and enthusiasm which is necessary for pioneers in thought in any direction. They should be listened to, for only they can show you how to save two years spent in needless toil in the lower grades by students who yearn for simplicity, regularity, and logic. But this is a small class, as reformers are always in a minority.

Then there is a third class: the very large intermediate class, who may have caught some glimmerings of the truth from the occasional literature on the subject, or from the frequent times they have to consult the dictionary for the spelling of words, or from the confusion they find in themselves when they sit down and try to write a letter or a composition, or when they have to help their children with the inconsistencies of our spelling. Even then, if someone were to tell them to do something about it, their answer would be: "What can I do about it?, when hundreds of reformers before me have failed to make a dent in Dr. Samuel Johnson's erratic spelling!"

The fourth class are those bitter opponents of any change whatever. Often they are the ones who have a *vested interest* in teaching our erratic spelling. They are the ones whose books, now being used to show how difficult it is to teach spelling and reading, would be obsolete if our spelling were simplified, and made easier to learn and to teach. They are the ones who fear the loss of their jobs if spelling were made too easy! Fortunately, these are a very small minority.

Perhaps we should say there is a fifth class; those innocent victims who are too young to do anything about it – the inarticulate children now facing the difficult task of learning to spell after the easier job of learning to speak English. Unfortunately, they cannot talk back to grown-ups. They cannot voice their objections to the unknown, inconsistent mess of the spelling confronting them. They must suffer needlessly simply because their parents are too lazy-minded or don't know what to do about it!

Three quarters of a century ago, all the most important educators in this country were enthusiastically backing the spelling reform movement. They petitioned Congress to do something about it. But Congress did not think the American people were ready for such reform, not could start this because the United States was not a leader – only a follower of Great Britain and the English-speaking countries. And at that time, Great Britain was too conservative to make any such change, but by 1953, the position was reversed. A bill in Parliament to establish a commission for spelling reform failed to pass by only 3 votes. A consensus of opinion as to why it failed was that they could not do it alone without the help and agreement of the United States.

Now, it is up to us. If there is to be any real improvement – any great progress in education, it must start with the fundamental basis of all learning – the three R's. Two of these R's depend upon our spelling -- the most unscientific system on the face of the earth (with the possible exception of the Chinese), and the one which has had no worthwhile improvement since the advent of the printing press. Education, if it ever expects to make any real progress, must throw off the shackles of this Johnsonian handicap, and be modernized like everything around us.

It is really up to the people, and especially the parents. They are the ones who have the greatest interest at stake. They are the ones to whom Congress will listen if they really want to show how they feet. If there is to be any change in the fundamentals of spelling, it must be done by Congress. No one else has enough influence or authority to do anything about it. The Education Sub-Committee of Congress, headed by the Hon. Edith Green, will act only if they feel that the parents and the teachers are back of them in their efforts to pass the Bill to establish a commission to consider some kind of a reform of our spelling.

Miss S. G. Stewart, Milwaukee, Wisc. US

Is the i.t.a. the Ultimate?

Dear Mr. Tune: Prof. Wm. Haas

Your last *Spelling Progress Bulletin* (Fall, 1971) quotes Dr. J. R. Block, Executive Director of the i.t.a. Foundation, who has been referring to researches which seem to him to have conclusively proved the effectiveness of i.t.a. He quotes from a report of a study carried out by the British Schools Council, "It would appear that the best way to learn to read in traditional orthography is to learn first to read in the Initial Teaching Alphabet," but omitted a qualification which appeared in the sentence immediately following his quotation, viz:

> "On the other hand, the evidence is not convincing that i.t.a. is the superior medium *after the transition to t.o."* (p. 235)

Here are a few further extracts from the same report:
"Certain linguists, educational psychologists and other deeply regretted that, when a large-scale experiment with an orthography other than the traditional one was being considered, it had not been preceded by a small experiment designed to discover, from among the various possible simplified spelling systems and coding systems, the one most appropriate for the purpose of helping young children to learn to read. . . .

Those who held the view that large-scale experiments with i.t.a. before it had been carefully appraised in experimental situations in conjunction with various likely alternatives, had been premature, were often not surprised that i.t.a. had been shown to simplify the task of reading for children. On the other hand, they were gravely concerned lest the success of i.t.a. should lead people to draw hasty and often unwarranted conclusions. For instance, it was considered that it would be disastrous if it was assumed, from the results of the current experiments and the extensively published literature referring to them, that i.t.a. was not only a 'better' medium than t.o. but also that it was 'the best possible' medium. Such an assumption could well lead to a closing of the door on careful and continued appraisals of *all possible* means of simplifying, for children, the initial stages of learning to read and write." (p. 129)

"The experiments with i.t.a. have undoubtedly revealed that this particular medium has made the initial stages of learning to read and write *considerably easier* for children than do most current practices employing t.o. But to conclude from the results that the use of i.t.a. is the *final* answer to initial reading instruction would mean that the ultimate benefits which might spring from this adventurous undertaking could be partially or almost wholly wasted." (p. 170)

"Certain anomalies remain in i.t.a. and it is by no means certain that *the most efficient* new alphabet would bear any close resemblance to i.t.a." (p. 278)

"It would be unfortunate if the mainly favourable tone of this report was taken to imply that the use of i.t.a. for beginning reading with infants was the *final and only* solution. The experiments of the past six years have demonstrated that in many cases the usual ways in which children have been taught to read can be improved. We should continue to investigate how children learn to read and the most effective media, methods, materials and procedures for helping them." (p. 284)

It does appear, however, that the British report has provided one clear proof in favour of i.t.a. -- namely, its superiority to the teaching of t.o. by a look-and-say approach. (Cp. my review "From look-and-say to i.t.a.," *Times Educational Supplement, 28-11-1969.)*

Prof. Wm. Haas, Univ. of Manchester, Eng.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §12.5 p175 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Winter 1971 p20 in the printed version]

Dear Mr. Tune:

Nonsense prose as a test for efficiency

Your article in the Spring 1970 issue reproducing Bernard Shaw's nonsense prose as a phonetic testpiece, brings back memories of my transcript of it -- in an over-subtle alphabet which embraced 24 vowels and vowel diphthongs. Shaw received it with such acclaim that he must have had some horrid howlers. That was in 1942, and we have all learned much since then. One does better with a set of 15 vowels now.

The importance you attach to nonsense words in test- pieces is questionable. Tests are devised to disclose: (a) whether a proposed alphabet suffices to distinguish word-meanings in a nominally phonetic spelling -- without exceeding that function by recording every trivial variant of the essential phonemes: (b) whether the writer in fact uses his alphabet as well as he might; and (c) how he proposes to choose between alternative spellings in words of variable pronunciation.

Reading deals with words in context. Let us not obscure the purpose and end-product of spelling, which is understood-meaning.

Where, then, is the special virtue in nonsense words or contorted sentences? Should not every word in a testpiece be familiar, or readily pronounced? The test does not set out to disclose one's ignorance of the vocabulary: it calls for good solutions of spelling problems. Shaw's testpiece is valuable in that it is grammatical and speakable without hesitations; and nonsensical only in order to group closely together words illustrating the same or contrasted phonemes. That enables consistency and discrimination of spelling to be checked easily. Much more could be said.

Kingsley Read, Worcester, Eng.