

# Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973

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

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## Table of Contents

1. [I.R.A. 18th Annual Convention program.](#)
2. [Your child can't read: How can you help?](#) Better Homes & Gardens.
3. [A Tragic Tale](#), by David Donaldson.
4. [Causes for the common mistakes in English](#), by K. Pushpanadham.
5. [The Summer Reading Course](#), by G. S. Mudambadithaya.
6. [Electronic Mail Begins \(news\)](#).
7. [Shall we teach skills to embrace rather than attack words?](#), by Helen Bonnema and Arnold Burron.
8. [What Reading is Primary in Secondary Schools? a round table discussion](#) by Frances Roome, Eileen Allen, James Roome, Helen Bonnema.
9. [Reading: Interpreting Graphic Signals](#), by Emmett A. Betts.
10. [The Early to Read – i.t.a. program: Effects and Aftermath](#), by Albert J. Mazurkiewicz a six year longitudinal study.
11. Book Reviews, by Newell W. Tune:  
[Comparative Reading](#), by John Downing, Cross-National Studies of Behavior and Processes in Reading and Writing.  
[Evidence Submitted to the Bullock Committee of Inquiry into Reading and the use of English](#), by Douglas A. Pidgeon.
12. Our Readers Write Us:  
[Problems in reforming our spelling](#), by Barnett Russell, M.D.  
[Venezky's research in symbol-sound correspondence](#), by O. K. Kyöstiö.  
[Public lethargy and lack of publicity](#), by Arnold Rupert.  
[Basic Problems in Education](#), by Harvie Barnard.  
[Phonemic Spelling Council announcement.](#)
13. Advertisement: [RIT, a new Logical Spelling System for our Kids.](#)

## **1. Program**

### **International Reading Association 18th Annual Convention, Denver, Colo. 1973**

#### **Co-sponsored meetings planned by other organizations**

##### **Phonemic Spelling Council**

Wednesday, May 2, 3:45-4:45 PM, Room 1D, Currigan Hall

##### **Subject: Reading/Writing Research**

Chairman: Helen Bonnema, Co-ordinator, Phonemic Spelling Council.

Symposium: Henry Fiske, Utility Engineer, Denver, "What Foments a revolution in orthography?"

Arnold Burron, Univ. of Northern Colorado, "Shall we teach skills to embrace rather than attack words?"

Emmett A. Betts, Univ. of Miami, "Proposed orthographic systems and Reading/Writing Research:'

The above meeting, lasting for only one short hour, will be concurrent with eleven other sessions being held in separate rooms of the convention building. We have been assigned a room with a capacity of 150, to which we hope to attract local educators as well as conventioners, in order to convince them of the existence of a spelling problem and the need for a change. We hope they will become alerted to the advantages of adopting a new system. This is not an official business meeting of the Phonemic Spelling Council Board of Trustees, and therefore no decision will be made as to policies.

##### **Regular Session**

Friday, May 4, 1973

The topic for the Friday morning sessions, 10:30 to noon will be, "Issues, Innovations, and Confrontations in Reading," with sixteen sectional meetings. Number 15 is, "The i.t.a. Approach to Teaching Reading Strengths and Weaknesses."

Chairman: Helen Bonnema

Speakers: John Downing and Albert J. Mazurkiewicz.

Among the topics for discussion will be: The transfer from i. t. a. to Traditional Orthography by pupils in reading, and The relationship of the i.t.a. to spelling reform. The actual titles of the speeches to be given were not available at this time.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp2-4 in the printed version]

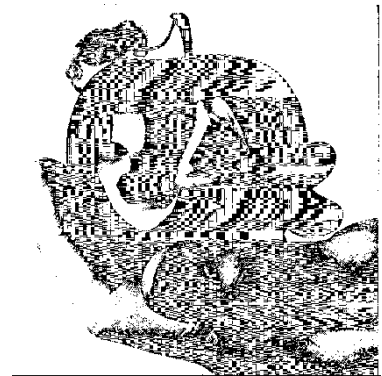
## 2. Your child can't read: How can you help?\*

\*Reprinted from: *Better Homes And Gardens*, Oct., 1972.

The facts speak for themselves. A large number of American children are not learning to read effectively-and in most cases their parents, and too often their schools, don't even know there's a reading problem.

And, to bring the issue closer to home, the odds are surprisingly high that your own child-or one you know well-has a reading problem grave enough to prevent him from coming close to his potential, either as a student or as an adult in later life.

How serious is the problem? Let's look at a typical elementary school classroom. Of the 30 students in the class, only six to 12 youngsters are "normal" readers, doing just about what can be expected of them. Between 12 and 18 pupils probably have minor deficiencies -possibly caused by lack of understanding of some skills - which could develop into serious problems if not given special attention by the teacher. From three to six youngsters probably read significantly below their classmates' level - and could use remedial instruction from a trained reading specialist. And at least one or two may have deficiencies serious enough to require clinical help.



All of this adds up to a national reading crisis, a situation the U. S. Office of Education (USOE) has been trying to make the country aware of for the past two years. USOE points to these shocking nationwide statistics to cinch its case: one in four students is performing two or more years below his grade level, and more than three million adults are totally illiterate.

### **Is your child part of the problem?**

You can find out by asking your youngster's school for the results of his diagnostic reading tests. If no such diagnosis is part of the school's reading program (it should be a "must"), you can give him a test of your own making. And if the results of your test or the school's indicate reading deficiencies, there is much you can do at home to help him. Even more important: If your child is still in the preschool stage, you can play a major role in preventing a reading problem from developing later.

The homemade reading test is really quite simple. All you need are three or four reading books representing grade levels above, below, and at the grade level of your child. Ask him to read from the lowest grade level book first. If he encounters no more than one word per page that he can't pronounce or understand, have him try the next higher grade level book. Keep raising the book level until he begins missing more than two or three words a page. At this point you have just passed his reading grade level. Repeat the process several times to make sure where the break occurs. The highest level book that he can read with less than two or three word errors per page represents his approximate reading grade level. If the book is a year or more below his actual grade level in school, he probably has a reading problem. At least you have a clue that he may need special help - at home and at school.

### **How are good readers raised?**

Opportunities present themselves all day long for parents to help their children become good readers. First, and most important, you must maintain a good reading climate at home. From the earliest years, attitudes toward reading are learned by children from the attitudes and action of their parents.

An adult who likes the child and who enjoys reading is almost always the essential ingredient in bringing a child and books together in a lasting relationship. However, this adult need not be the parent; an aunt, grandmother, or another relative can be equally effective.

Since developing a constructive atmosphere in the home for reading is so important, how is it done? Long before the child enters school, parents of good readers spend time talking with him. They make certain he's surrounded by all kinds of reading matter – from preschool level up. They are often seen by the youngster reading themselves and discussing what they've read. They make use of their local library, and they buy books-for themselves and for their child. By example, they are demonstrating that reading is valuable and important.

When their child asks a question, they usually take the time to answer with descriptive sentences rather than a mere "yes" or "no." Then, when the child has reached the first or second grade, he can find his own answers when he's referred books and other sources. Talking with youngsters is vital. Most reading authorities agree that the child who speaks fluently usually is the one who's ready to read when he goes to school. Thus, the parent who encourages the child to talk – and who learns to be a good listener is providing the best possible foundation for reading.

Older brothers and sisters also can make an important contribution to the home's climate for good reading. They should be encouraged to share books with the young child, to listen to him read, to read to him, and to go out of their way to talk with him.

And perhaps most important in developing a good reading climate is to provide your child with a relaxed, tension-free atmosphere. At all costs, avoid pressuring him. Remember that enjoyment is what's most important in reading.

### **What can you do at home?**

The next step, after achieving a good reading atmosphere, is to initiate several activities in the home. The ones described here are considered particularly helpful ways to whet a child's interest in reading. It may sound old-fashioned, but reading aloud is one of the best ways to help a child become a good reader. It's like taking a beginning piano student to a concert to hear how a piano should sound. A beginning reader should have a chance to hear how a well-told story sounds. This gives him an idea of what he's working toward as he struggles through a reading lesson. And it gives his work in school much more meaning. Unfortunately, preprimary and primary children rarely hear a good story read aloud. This provides a fine opportunity for parents to fulfill an obvious need-at home and at school as volunteer readers to small groups of children.

(Many children will remember the time when their parents read aloud to them as the happiest part of their days – and it often builds ties of deep, lasting affection between the parent and the child. You and your child can talk about the story and look at the pictures together. Often your child will be so enthralled he'll ask you to read the story a second and third time.)

Don't forget poetry in your reading aloud program. It's especially successful with young children. Even before your child can talk – and even before he can walk – he'll invariably enjoy hearing

poetry read by someone who reads it well and with obvious pleasure. A child particularly enjoys the melody and the element – the music and the dance of words. He instinctively knows that he's hearing something fine – even when he doesn't understand it. In the process, the child is learning a respect for the printed word.

Here are some hints to help make your reading aloud sessions more fun. Let your child help select the stories he wants to hear. Make sure he wants to read when you do; if you see that he's getting restless, don't force him to continue sitting quietly for reading. Make certain that you read to him at least 60 minutes each week (recent studies indicate that 60 minutes is the minimum time necessary to have a significant influence on improving a child's reading ability).

To encourage your child's interest in reading, surround him with books on subjects that particularly interest him. Remember that gifts of books help a child develop pride in owning books. Here are a few examples of highly recommended books for preschoolers and beginning readers: *Little Bear* by Elsa Minarick; *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey; *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slododkina; *The Two Reds* by Will Lipkind and Nicholas Mordvinoff; *Play With Me* by Marie Hall Ets.

Good books are also available to help parents prepare their home reading programs: *Children's Reading in the Home* by May Hill Arbuthnot; *Recipe for a Magic Childhood* by Mary Ellen Chase; *Helping Your Child Read Better* by Robert N. Goldenson; *Helping Your Child Improve His Reading* by Ruth Strang; *That Eager Zest* by Frances Walsh.

Storytelling makes an interesting change of pace from reading aloud. Your child will enjoy listening to tales from your childhood or ones that you make up. Sometimes you can tell him part of a story and let him finish it. Later the stories can be made into little booklets with simple drawings and a few words to plain what's happening. These "books," which can be just a few pages of folded paper, are particularly treasured because they involve people close to the child – himself, his friends, his parents. Only a few words are needed to write about everyday happenings of your child – John jumps, John runs, John kisses Grandma, John helps Mary. Each caption can describe snapshots you've taken or simple drawings made by you or your child.

Another interesting approach is to let your child "dictate" his own stories from his daily experiences. He'll enjoy watching you write them down, and he'll feel an author's pride in the book that results.

Word cards are another device to improve reading skills. For young children, print "Mommy" or "Daddy" on a three-by-five card, staple a string to it, and wear it around your neck. Ask your child: "What do you call me?" Then wear the card. It won't take long before he identifies the word with you. This idea can be expanded almost indefinitely. Eventually, everything in the house can be labeled, including food in the kitchen. You might keep a food label box in the kitchen, and have the child match the labels with the food you're preparing. Another box could have labels for all types of furniture.

There are lots of easily available reading sources in your child's world: newspapers, cereal boxes, milk cartons, napkin boxes, toys. Everyday experiences, such as walking to the store, give you an opportunity to point out signs, labels in the market, street and traffic signs. Commercial word games also are helpful. Good examples are Lotto, Zing, Scrabble for Juniors, Word Roll, Toyland, and Read-a-Word. These games usually can be borrowed from school or public

libraries. You also can help your child make his own word games, such as flash cards, rhyming words, look-alike and opposite words.

Any time during the day can be opportune for word games – mealtime, bedtime, rest time. Vacations are a particularly good time to promote interest in reading. Take along a variety of reading material – short stories, folk tales, descriptive pamphlets about the places you'll be visiting. Short pieces are best: There are many good collections to pick from. Among them are Nancy Larrick's *Piping Down the Valleys Wild*, William Cole's *Oh, What Nonsense* and *Oh, How Silly*, John Ciardi's *I Met a Man*, and Richard Lewis's *Miracles*.

Above all else, make sure the various activities are fun. Use natural family situations and avoid formalized special sessions. Learning should never be made a chore, and the sessions should never last more than 30 minutes. When interest lags, don't get irritated. And don't try to pound into your child's head how necessary reading is. If you tell him that he must read to survive in today's world, he could decide he's already a failure, or develop stubborn resistance.

### **Where should you look for help?**

Don't bypass your community's major resource for reading outside the school—the public library. Regular weekly or biweekly visits to the children's section of the library should be a family affair. In addition to providing books, many local libraries sponsor story hours, films, and puppet shows for young children. While you're there, let your child choose a few books to take home. Guide him to the appropriate book sections, but be sure to let him make his own choices.

And there is another important resource at your fingertips. Millions of dollars have been invested by the federal government in two television programs designed to help children learn to read. The results of these efforts, available with the click of a TV dial, are the Electric Company (for ages 7-10) and Sesame Street (for ages 3-5), both produced by the Children's Television Workshop. Your preschool and primary grade child should watch these daily programs regularly.

If all your efforts and those of your child's school fail to make headway against reading deficiencies, you should consider sending him to a diagnostic reading center. These centers usually are operated by a school district or are related to university schools of education. But don't make this move without first consulting with school officials. Ask for their view of your child's reading problem. The school's reading specialist can be helpful in referring you to the center that can best meet your child's needs.

The parents' role in helping the child become a good reader doesn't end in the home. Parentschool collaboration is essential – and schools with exemplary reading programs encourage it. The first contact is your child's reading teacher. Ask her what you can do to supplement what she's doing in the classroom. Some schools give parents "read aloud" kits to show them what and how to read to their children. Others provide flash cards for home use. Many schools have developed complete programs to teach parents how to help their children.

### **How can you help your school?**

You might be able to help the reading program by volunteering as a reading tutor, or as an aide to help teachers provide more individualized attention and instruction. These are just a few of the many ways you and the schools can work together. The school might have more ideas, but it may need your help to implement them. Your interest could stimulate the school to go ahead.

Another way is to join forces with other parents. Concerned parents, well informed about the ingredients necessary for a good school reading program and organized to bring intelligent pressure on a school board, can accomplish minor miracles. They can work through existing organizations, such as the PTA, or they can form a new one. Their goal: to educate the community on the shortcomings of the present program and to suggest answers.

Careful evaluation of the existing reading program is the first step. Find out how well the children are learning to read. In most cases, there'll be plenty of room for improvement.

Here are some of the questions you should ask:

- Is each child given a specific diagnosis of his reading ability at regular intervals?
- Is corrective action taken when problems are found? (This is probably the key factor in preventing as well as correcting reading difficulties.)
- Is a well-equipped reading clinic available for the severely handicapped reader – the one percent to five percent of the student body who suffer from impaired vision or hearing, speech defects, psychological problems, and nervous system malfunctions?
- Are summer programs provided to help children improve their reading?
- Are home tutoring programs provided to show youngsters and parents how they can reinforce classroom teaching?
- Does each school have a reading specialist who is especially trained in remedial reading?
- Are teacher aids available to assist teachers in instructional duties, including reading aloud to children?
- Does your elementary school have a well-stocked library or media center?
- Are reading test scores from each school released annually to the public – and do they show how much gain each class achieved during the school year?
- Is the school providing individualized instruction?
- Are volunteers encouraged to assist in the reading program?
- Do teachers use a variety of techniques to teach reading?

Negative answers to these questions pinpoint potential weaknesses in the school program that can be targets for organized pressure. Arm yourself with facts to support your plea for action. Pres. Nixon has formed the National Reading Center, Washington, D.C. to help you. Ask the center for help; that's what it's for. It will even supply you with 12 articles on developing an effective reading program that can be submitted to your local newspaper. They'll help start a community-wide discussion on the reading program in your schools.

If you're going to become an activist for better reading in your community, you should be a constructive critic and avoid simplistic answers. Your armor, for example, should include these two basic facts about school reading programs, learned after years of research in reading: the *classroom teacher is* the single most important factor in whether, and how well, a child learns to read; most of the present methods and material for teaching reading work for some children, but *no one method* works for all children.

### 3. A Tragic Tale, by David Donaldson\*

\*Galleywood, Nr Chelmsford, Essex, Eng.

Reprinted from *Riemag*, Sept, 1972, Regional Inst. of English, Bangalore, So. India.

Trainees occasionally complain that English Language Teaching has become far too technical, that it has lost its human touch. To redress the balance, we present:

**The tragic tale of /ed/ the Morpheme, and how, by not listening to his parents' advice, he was led to an early grave.**

There was once a lonely Morpheme,  
Who went by the name of /ed/,  
Though rich, and in the prime of life,  
He still had not got wed.

His parents hunted far and wide,  
But /ed/ refused quite meekly;  
They even put a full-page ad  
In the "*Illustrated Weekly*."

But all in vain! For one day he  
Cried, "Buy a double bed!  
I've met a girl called /wa wa/,  
And she's the one I'll wed!"

His mother gave a mighty scream,  
And then a plaintive howl,  
"But, Babu, you're a Morpheme,  
And she's a Semi-vowel."

But /ed/ just gave a dental smile.  
And said he'd /wa wa/ marry.  
His mother pleaded, "Wait a while."  
But /ed/ refused to tarry.

And so the old priest came next day,  
With labial Sanskrit splutters.  
His parents offered coconuts  
With some fricativel mutters.

Their days at first were blissful,  
Their talk pure chorus drilling,  
Their nights, in brief, were plosive,  
/ed/'s usage /wa wa/ thrilling.

But /ed/ soon tired of /wa wa/,  
Her structured prattling blurb.  
His feelings are best expressed  
By a non-conclusive verb.

He daily left his native place  
As soon as he was able,

And lay inert in a toddy shop  
On a substitution table.

/ed/'s drinking led him far astray,  
Into much greater wrong,  
For staggering home one drunken day  
He saw a fair diphthong.

Her eyes were situational,  
And stranger than fiction.  
/ed/ leered, and murmured, "Time for  
Some phonetical transcription."

His cheeks grew bright and shiny  
(They did in times of Stress).  
"Oh, diphthong, do you love me?"  
The diphthong answered, "Yes."

"Oh, meet me in the marsh tonight  
By the strange and muddy bogs  
Where no-one comes, for there we two  
Can practise Dialogues."

Cried /ed/; and so it came that night,  
Two figures met by stream,  
And would have orally avowed  
Had not a mighty scream

Disturbed their guilty passion;  
For present there stood /wa wa/,  
A dagger in her trembling hand.  
But all she said was, "Ha, ha!

I've got you now, you faithless /ed/,  
I've got you now at last!  
Your Present may be Perfect,  
But I'll make you a Simple Past! "

And so in one grave lie these two,  
Enclosed by nail and hammar,  
Felled by /wa wa/'s vengful hand  
For *not observing grammar!*



[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp5,6 in the printed version*]

#### **4. Causes for the Common Mistakes in English, by K. Pushpanadham, B.A., (Litt), B.Ed.\***

\*Reprinted from *Riemag*, Sept. 1972, Regional Inst. of Eng.

Influence of the Mother-Tongue and imperfect teaching result in usage errors and faulty pronunciation.

##### **1. Influence of the Mother-Tongue**

There is an old saying, "The first language interferes with the smooth acquisition of the second language." Pupils first think in their mother-tongue and then try to translate what they have thought into English. In almost all South Indian languages, the word order and the sentence pattern are the same, unlike in English. In the mother-tongue verbs can be omitted, but in English they can't be. The verb in an English sentence plays the role of a housewife in a family. No verb, no sentence in English.

Different languages have different word-orders in a sentence, which may be due to cultural barriers. In So. Ind. languages, it is Subject+Object+Verb. But in English, S+V+O (The teacher taught English). So translation directly from the mother-tongue leads pupils to the path to bad English. Environment too, comes in his way of learning a foreign language.

The child is largely exposed to its Mother Tongue in and outside the house. He thus lacks opportunity to use the language he has learnt at school. Even if he himself tries to use it, there's none to correct his faulty pronunciation and mistakes in English usage.

##### **2. Imperfect Teaching**

###### **1) Indistinct Speech of the teacher**

Language teachers are concerned with clarity and precision of speech. Indistinct pronunciation of the teacher may cause pupil to make mistakes in speech and in writing because the child begins to learn a language by sound, not by sight. The child may learn "I seen" for 'I've seen' if the teacher's speech is not clear.

**2) Translation Method** used by the teacher in the class can't expose the students to proper English structure.

###### **3) The Same Method in Teaching**

Sameness is boring to a child and variety is interesting to everyone. Change is the spice of life and so methods should be changed from time to time. The teacher will then make his work interesting both to himself and to his pupils.

###### **4) Lack of Motivation**

The teacher must arouse enthusiasm in pupils and be a source of inspiration to put new life and energy into pupils who follow him blindly. He should work with them helping, guiding, and encouraging them to use the language to express their ideas.

"To learn a language is to learn how to use it-respond to situations by saying appropriate things in it, to understand what others say in it and ultimately, to read and write in it."

### **5) Teaching about the Facts and Telling the Facts**

The teacher is expected to teach pupils the language, not about the language nor merely the facts. He is to teach (not to tell the child). Proper everyday usage must be taught to pupils.

### **6) Inadequate Situations**

He should teach a language in useful and meaningful situations and provide pupils with as many well designed situations as possible to make them use the language through them.

### **7) Lack of Pupil Participation**

If the language activities are enjoyable, the teaching will be enjoyable. And enjoyment is one of the foremost aims and effects of education. The teacher should take his pupils into his confidence. There will be good pupil participation if the pupils find a true friend, a good guide and a kind man in the teacher. Unless pupils are made active to take part in teaching by switching over roles and by asking and answering questions, the teaching will be ineffective.

### **8) Lack of Drills**

Good patterns in usage should be drilled in, and bad English, drilled out. Make the students listen and repeat, read and write as often as possible in order to drive home the good English usage to them.

### **9) Lack of Practice**

Learning a language is a skill and skills can be acquired only through practice, which is vital. The pupils have got to do it. Practice, drill and use are the habit-forming agencies. Constant practice is necessary because it forces a student to produce and understand a language at normal speed.

### **10) Inadequate Use of the Language**

The teacher should use the language in his speech, expose children to it often and make them use it themselves. Otherwise learning and acquiring and retaining a mastery will be rather difficult.

### **11) Lack of Proper Pupil-Teacher Relationship**

There should be a healthy and friendly relationship between the teacher and the pupils. Both should understand and confide in each other. The teacher should show appreciation for the pupil's work and encourage them. He should never try to be a tyrant.

### **12) Lack of Wide Reading Experience**

'Wide reading sets a pupil on the road to education.'

The teacher himself should be a voracious reader to set a good example to them. Education is trying to make pupils ask for more literature. The teacher should create a desire in them for wide reading and make them hanker after good books, speakers and English films. Open the class libraries and make each pupil read at least ten books a year.

### **13) Little or no Review**

Unless a pattern is often reviewed, it can't be effectively learnt and retained. The teacher should review periodically what he taught already to pupils in order to make it a part of their language.

### **14) Lack of Activity and Dramatisation**

Children imitate teachers. The teachers should dramatise stories whenever possible and make their teaching interesting, to keep pupils lively. They should whet the appetites by good speech and dramatisation.

### **15) Improper Questioning**

Questions of fact-finding type cant make teaching fruitful. They must interpret both quantity and quality. Wise questioning makes pupils think well and be active and lively throughout the teaching.

### **16) Little or Improper Testing**

Day-by-day testing keeps pupils in touch with the subject and enables them to be up-to-date. Teacher's sympathy, encouragement and appreciation before and after the testing will go a long way to helping pupils.

### **17) No Assignments**

A lack of assignments means a lack of progress. Regular assignments should be given to pupils to make them use properly the time they have outside the school hours, and avoid picking up bad study habits, and also to consolidate what was taught to them.

### **18) Reckless Checking of Home Work**

It often discourages bright pupils and deceives the dunces. The teacher should carefully correct home work and suggest improvements.

### **19) Teacher's Incompetence in Teaching the Subject**

A teacher is always a student. He should keep himself abreast of the times and modern techniques in teaching. Above all, he should teach himself first.

### **20) Lack of Regular Remedial Teaching**

Without remedial teaching, pupils continue to make the same mistakes and are handicapped in future learning. Remedial teaching should begin as soon as the teacher sees faults needing correction.

*Dear Teacher: A tree is known by its fruit; so is a teacher by his pupils. Integrity and industry will fetch good rewards. Be good and the world will be good to you. If you work hard, putting your heart and soul in it, you will make a better world and you can be proud of it, and it of you.*

## 5. The Summer Reading Course, by G. S. Mudambadithaya\*

\*Reprinted from *Riemag*, Sept. 1972, Regional Inst. of Eng.

Of the four skills involved in language learning, reading is the most essential for students and educated people. To read is to grasp the meaning of language patterns from their written representation. Reading is essential for success in all academic subjects. In modern life learning depends largely upon one's ability to interpret the printed page accurately and fully.

In order to keep pace with the growth of knowledge in every field of life, one must be an efficient reader. About 58% of the world's knowledge is to be found in English. But unfortunately reading is the most neglected skill in teaching English in our schools. Most of our students in secondary schools and colleges are poor readers. A child will learn little if he does not first learn to read well.

During May of this year the Regional Institute of English (Bangalore) conducted a short course on reading for two groups of children who had appeared for the Standard VII Examination. Children in both these groups had some of the common reading difficulties such as finger tracing, vocalizing, sub-vocalizing.

One group was introduced to the techniques of silent reading before they were given books to read. These were very simple and nicely illustrated books to start with. Though they could understand the content of these books, they were unable to tell us in English what they read. Therefore in the early stages, discussion on these books was done in the mother tongue. During the second and weeks this group was given books with less illustration and more textual matter. They were able to read these books and by the end of the second week, more than half the number of children in this group were able to say a few sentences in English about the books they had read.

Most of the children came from a background where they had no access to English books apart from the prescribed readers. After initial guidance, they were given the responsibility of taking books from the library, displaying them and making sure the books are well cared for. Eventually they were able to use the dictionary and choose books with minimal guidance from the teacher. They were allowed to take books home with them. The tutors made checks on whether they had been read by using question cards and discussion.

In both the groups, absence tended to adversely affect the results of tests. But it was observed that usually those children with the highest level of comprehension were the fastest readers. Two factors prevented us from attempting to increase speed. Firstly the language ability of the children was too low, and secondly many of them had little or no practice in silent reading.

In an evaluation of this kind, the attitude of the children is also very important. They were enthusiastic throughout the Course and with a little supervision, they were content to read quietly during the daily reading period. What was especially pleasing was their genuine interest and the obvious enjoyment in reading. We hope that many more schools will be able to provide carefully selected and well graded books for their children and so help them to become efficient readers.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 p6 in the printed version]*

From *Los Angeles Eve. Herald*, Jan. 15, 1973.

## **6. Electronic Mail Begins**

Willimantic, Conn. (UPI) – The telephone has replaced the mailman in an experiment being conducted today.

The experiment, which began Monday, is part of the new Rural Society Project, funded by the Federal Government.

Both the main office of the Connecticut Bank and Trust Co. in Hartford and the office of the Windham Regional Planning Agency in Willimantic house electronic transmission terminals.

Dr. Peter C. Goldmark, project director and president of Goldmark Communications in Stamford, said that anything usually sent by mail can be sent electronically, including newspaper pictures.

The advantages should be obvious: not only will the communication, document, replica, be received in a matter of a minute, but an answer or confirmation returned as quickly. Compare this with the days needed for a letter to be received across town, and the unreliability of the mails, necessitating certified mail for anything of real importance, and one can see why big business is anxious to see the success of this experiment.

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**Spelling is learning all the inconsistencies  
our language wouldn't have  
if it was written phonemically**

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*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp5,6 in the printed version]*

## **7. Shall we teach skills to embrace rather than to attack words?, by Helen Bonnema**

*An interview with Dr. Arnold Burron, Univ. of Northern Colorado*

Question: Your demonstration, "Strategy of Word Attack Skills" for the recent International Reading Assoc. Denver Council meeting was interesting and comprehensive. You explained seven skills, didn't you?

Answer: Yes, the use of picture clues, sight words, context clues, phonics, structural analysis, syllabication, and dictionary. The thrust of the presentation was directed toward how to use the skills in sequence: when to begin the use of a skill, and at which stage to place less emphasis on it. For example, more emphasis on picture clues is needed in the beginning than in advanced reading.

Q: We hear rumors that computer companies are working on the invention of a voice-activated typewriter which will automatically print a message spoken into its receiver. The communication comes out spelled according to a dictionary key. For example, the sentence, "A rough cough ploughed him though" may appear as: /a ruff coff ploud him throo/. "daughter" and "laughter" become: /dauter/ and /lafter/.

If such a change in English spelling were to become standard for general use, might we change our strategy for teaching children to identify and recognize words?

A: That's a very thought-provoking question because at present we're faced with a lack of consistent sound-symbol relationships, so we do all sorts of things to circumvent the problem.

Q: As a professor of young people wishing to, become teachers, do you draw upon experiences you yourself had as an instructor?

A: Continually.

Q: Where were you brought up and educated?

A: I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I attended Canadian schools thru high school, then Concordia Teachers College in Illinois; taught several years, attended Ball State Univ. to earn Masters and Doctors degrees, then came to Colorado.

Q: At what levels did you teach?

A: Grades two thru eight at various times. The first class I taught had grades three and four. This was in St. Louis, Missouri. Next I taught the combined grades two and three. After that I went to Minnesota, in a two-room country school which had forty pupils in grades five thru eight. I was the principal and coach, and sometimes emergency cook.

Q: Weren't those wonderful experiences for really understanding education?

A: Just tremendous. I wouldn't trade them for anything. You know, the only negative aspect is the low pay in a country school, but the experience is invaluable.

After that I taught fifth grade in North St. Paul, Minnesota; grades 3, 4, and 5 in Indiana, then went back to work on some graduate degrees. Upon receiving my doctorate from Ball State, I supervised student teachers in Indiana and Southern Colorado, thereby having a good opportunity to see a wide variety of classrooms.

That's my teaching career. It's so easy to say it, but it takes such a long time.

When teaching in a country school, you don't have a huge bureaucracy dictating what you must do. There is always some uncertainty. You are completely on your own – no wise old teacher to consult. You try all kinds of things which several years later may be either recommended by experts as meritorious innovations in education or held up as classic examples of what should *never* be done.

Q: To go back to my earlier question, if spelling were regularized so that each symbol represented only one sound, how would you change your strategy for teaching children to identify words?

### **PICTURE CLUES**

A: One well-known program heavily emphasizes picture clues at the beginning. The initial emphasis on pictures is the authors' solution to the problem of inconsistent sound-symbol relationships. For example, let's suppose the first real words the kids read in this approach are: /No Spot, No/. The teacher can't say, "Let's look at the sounds," because immediately some bright kid is going to ask, "Why does the /o/ make this sound here and some other sound there?" One way to avoid that is to have a picture and say to the child, "Look at the picture. What might the person in it be saying that begins with this particular letter?"

What the teacher really means is, "Kids, don't look at the other letters, because they are going to confuse you."

When spelling is consistent with sounds, the value of picture clues will be minimized significantly, for there won't be any irregularities to avoid. You might use pictures to get children into the habit of relying on context--the first kind of context that they can get an idea of. But you wouldn't need to have a picture on every page as we now do in many pre-primers.

### **SIGHT WORDS**

Q: You give sight *words* as your next step.

A: Currently, sight words are important. A number of authorities in reading recommend that the teacher begin by establishing a sight vocabulary from which to derive a context, from which the pronunciation of words which are familiar to children in their listening and speaking vocabulary can, in turn, be derived.

I make a differentiation between a "sight" word and an "acquired" word. The distinction being that the "sight word" is taught by a "look-say-remember" method, while the "acquired" is identified thru the use of phonics or other method, assimilated, and held in readiness for instant recognition.

Q: I think that distinction would be helpful to future teachers.

A: On the Dolch list of 220 words, I believe you checked 88 words which might be considered "regular" as to their spelling.

Q: Yes, the 88 loosely follow what might be considered a regular pattern.

A: That would be fewer than half of the 220, so that says that the rest of them can be learned only as "sight words," a process usually involving much drill, long lists to be memorized, many things to label, and uninteresting activities. The only feature that might keep the child somewhat attentive is his success in recognizing some words. In using the Dolch list, we are faced with the task of saying, this is a very important body of words but less than half may be acquired thru a child's independent application of decoding skills. The rest probably have to be taught as sight words unless the approach heavily emphasizes context – context strong enough to suggest the particular word. It is very, very difficult to get a context that is that strong. In fact, I have found thru repeated demonstrations with college students that it is almost impossible.

As to the "regular" words, it is difficult for the child to attack the 88 so-called, because he doesn't know which ones these are. What is to indicate to him that the /i/ in /wish/ is regular, but not the /i/ in /kind/?

Q: Of course, if the spelling system itself were regular, we wouldn't have to teach a single item as a sight word.

A: Yes, the pupil could build his sight vocabulary independently. Right now he needs us continually, but in the ideal situation he wouldn't need us after the first few lessons.

If one uses the individualized programmed reading approach in which the child responds to various stimuli, the presentation of letter-sound association still has to be controlled. This results in having children read such things as:

Is Ann a man?  
I am a man.  
This is a hat.

This really doesn't excite anyone. Another control may be the "word family" resulting in "stories" like this:

Pat is a cat. Pat is a fat cat. Pat can run. Run, Pat run. Run to the sun. Run to the red, red sun.

It is pretty apparent that this would turn off any intelligent kid. Yet the current spelling system necessitates some such pattern of carefully controlled vocabulary.

Since most children come to school with an awareness of natural expressions and an extensive listening and speaking vocabulary, they deserve to be initiated into reading with words which flow, are truly natural, and are of interest to them. This could be done easily if spelling were revised according to a consistent sound-symbol relationship.

Q: Such consistency is found in many non-English-speak countries. Any words within the child's experience are used. That's why pupils learn to read so quickly.

When I visited schools in Iran, Afganistan, Nepal, India, and Thailand, the teachers were shocked at my expression "word attack."

A: The first time I became acquainted with that term, it struck me, too. The reason was that "attack" has a pejorative connotation, that there is something inimical lurking on the horizon.

Q: There is!

A: So we're telling children, "We're going to teach you something that we really want you to love. First we're going to give you all of the weapons to attack it." I like your term "embrace" words rather than "attack" them.

Q: "Embrace" gives my meaning, but we associate it with "hug" rather than the dictionary definitions which I prefer in this case, such as "to take in with the mind," "to avail oneself of," "to receive gladly."

A: Yet "word attack" isn't too far off from the truth.

Q: As spelling is today.

A: Right. Because just stop for a minute and think about word pronunciation and comprehension, the two indices of the various levels at which a child can read as determined by the informal reading inventory. We identify one reading level as the "frustration level." But there are two indices, pronunciation and comprehension, identifying "frustration level."

Comprehension problems really don't seem to frustrate children too much because they are used to hearing a lot of things which they don't understand.

But pronunciation . . . If they answer a question and they give you the wrong answer, and you don't give them any response, they think it is the right answer and are not frustrated. But if you go to the other aspect of the informal reading inventory, they know whether they recognize a word, whether



they are messing it up. We've put a premium on correct pronunciation. You don't have to tell them "Now you know you did a very poor job on that. Because they know that. (Of course, you'd never say that anyway.")

I think the real frustration doesn't come from a lack of comprehension. It comes from *not being able to decode the word*. Therefore if those words are the chief source of frustration, the kids can justifiably feel that they would like to attack them. So I think the term is appropriate.

Q: Since you mentioned comprehension. In non-English speaking countries, I discovered also that they think of comprehension as one of the tasks of the content areas rather than of reading instruction. The subject-matter teachers assume the responsibility for teaching comprehension. They are concerned with having the child *understand*. They consider reading as simply the skill of being able to say the word which is written, and require proficiency of all children beyond the first grade. Then it is up to the teacher of each separate subject to make sure that the pupils understand the material presented in his discipline.

A: I would agree with that. I've conducted quite a few workshops because of my specialization on the campus of "Reading in the Content Fields." If I were to open a workshop with the cliché, "Every teacher, a teacher of reading," I would meet with immediate rejection by the content teachers. In the first place, they are not teachers of reading – as far as word-attack goes – ,in the second place, they don't want to be teachers of reading, and in the third place, they wouldn't know how to do it if you asked them to.

But if I begin by saying, "I don't expect every one of you to be a teacher of reading, but I think you all can use techniques from reading to enhance what you are doing," I get a favorable response. I help them to improve comprehension, study skills, appreciation, and critical reading. I do not say, "Here is a list of phonic generalizations which you might mention if one of your pupils stumbles on any of the words when you are teaching the Constitution of the United States.

So I would agree that the emphasis in the content areas should be on comprehension and not on word attack. When there is a child who can't attack words by the time he is in the content class, what can be done? The teacher either explains the content by means other than reading, such as T-V, or gives up.

In all of this struggle, we emphasize de-coding to such an extent that we inadvertently de-emphasize appreciation. Yesterday I had an interesting experience. I asked a graduate class whether we should have memory work. I requested the students to write down a significant piece of literature they had memorized. It had to be significant in that it meant something to them in their lives today. Then I asked them to share this with the rest of the class, telling what was significant, and why.

I couldn't get any volunteers. So I prodded and prodded until finally one student hesitantly quoted something from Shakespeare. The thought came to me: if these things are so significant in their lives, why are they so up-tight about admitting the significance, and expressing their love for something?

I believe the reason is that they had done little of this in their earlier school days. Appreciation, affective kinds of goals could have been emphasized in their earlier years if less time had been spent on all of the workbook monkey business necessitated by the difficult spelling system.

## CONTEXT

Q: How about the use of context if a new spelling were used?

A: I believe we would still use context because it is one of the strongest skills for comprehension.

## PHONICS

Q: How about the place of phonics?

A: Its necessity is self-evident, except it wouldn't be the the sort of arduous process where the teacher has to retract what she has said previously. We would not then have the example of the child encountering the words /stove/, /love/, and /move/ on a single page when he was trying to apply the rule, "If a single consonant and /e/ follow a single vowel in a short word, the vowel usually says its name."

## STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

A: Again that would be a useful skill. But you could emphasize it more as a comprehension skill.

Q: Rather than word attack?

A: Yes.

## SYLLABICATION

A: I don't think you would even have to use syllabication. I don't stress it now, even tho there is limited applicability of some of the rules. The question that bothers me is, How would you indicate accent in the new spelling?

Q: This is one of the much-debated points. How do you indicate it in the present spelling?

A: Touché.

Q: In many present dictionaries, the schwa is used to indicate the vowel of an unaccented syllable. Some people, therefore, favor the use of the schwa in the new system. This would be a marvelous help in the attack of new words, but the question is one which will be studied in the Reading/Writing Research Institute being promoted by the Phonemic Spelling Council.

## DICTIONARY

.: We spend a great deal of time teaching children how to use the dictionary for pronunciation. Think of all the time pupils spend in trying to learn the diacritical marks in one dictionary, and then finding that these diacritical marks are inconsistent with the ones shown in another dictionary. They spend additional time learning the second set. With new spelling they wouldn't have to bother with any of that at all.

Q: Wouldn't it be a boon if the dictionary didn't have to present anything but meanings?

A: Yes, think of all the things you take time with now, such as learning a lot of rules and generalizations and endless exceptions. We could eliminate the exceptions, that's one thing, as well as a lot of drill on dictionary spellings.

Then one could emphasize appreciation, which is so important. Instead of having workbook activities on long and short vowels, children could be doing creative writing, or better than that they could be *reading* something-which would really be quite an achievement!

Q: Creative writing would take on a new dimension. The child would not be hampered by thinking, "I don't know how to spell that word" as he substitutes a little synonym. He wouldn't be hampered by worrying about what the teacher is going to mark him off for misspellings.

A: That's right.

Q: And think of how the flow of their thoughts stop when they are trying to recall how to spell a word. With a more reliable system, they could go right on without stopping.

Yes. Teachers put emphasis upon correctness of spelling rather than on apt expression. They wield the strongest weapon against creativity that they could use. But what choice does a teacher have? In

Colorado's educational accountability, you must put down a long-term ob-<sup>9</sup>jective; "Given the spelling of words for third grade, 75% of the pupils will be able to spell correctly 85% of the words." So she has to emphasize it.

Q: And if she is going to meet that goal, how can she be concerned about creative writing which is so difficult to judge objectively?

A: Well, she might as well write a parallel objective which says: "Given the attaining of the preceding goal, 95% of the students will evince total lack of interest in writing:' Because, I think one is going to follow the other.

So there are lots of things you would have time to do in the way of comprehension and appreciation.

I think that today many people have a problem with critical reading and appreciation. It reminds me of some guy on a talk show here in Denver. He maintained that if you haven't been to the library, haven't read a novel lately or other good piece of literature within the last month, you have never learned how to read. He certainly got the comments!

Q: To summarize: If spelling were consistent, the seven skills now arduously and inadequately learned by beginning readers could be reduced to only two or three that are easily acquired. The pupil would embrace words instead of attacking them. This would lighten the teacher's task and increase the learner's ability.

*The goal of the PHONEMIC SPELLING COUNCIL is to effect a simplification of spelling. Persons interested in devoting time, effort, and/or money to reach this goal are invited to become Associates by paying annual dues of \$5, Associates receive a free copy of all publications of the Council.*

*Dr. Helen Bonnema, Coordinator, Phonemic Spelling Council, Denver, CO.*

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*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp10–12 in the printed version]*

## **8. What Reading is Primary in Secondary Schools? – a round table discussion by**

Frances Roome, Chairman of English Dept., and Reading Specialist at Denver Skinner Jr. High School

Eileen Allen, James Roome, Co-directors of Denver North High School reading laboratory.  
Helen Bonnema, Co-ordinator, Phonemic Spelling Council.

Helen: Highway chuckholes prod engineers to improve asphalt paving. What are the chuckholes in secondary reading instruction which impel teachers to remodel their courses?

James: We did a survey three years ago with a thousand kids in the sophomore class and there were about 800 who were not facile enough with the language to actually succeed in any course which we have. The number of students we deal with in the reading laboratory should be no more than one per cent, at the very most, but we have about 80% in our school. In addition, think of the number of kids who are absentees – we don't even get a chance at them.

H: Why don't they come? Frances: Boredom.

Eileen: They are unable to do something and so stay out of school several days as a kind of escape, you know. Then they come back and find that they are more inadequate.

J: And his self-image has been damaged. The kid knows he is a failure.

F: There are harmful opinions of others too. This afternoon a teacher said that if a child had not learned how to read by grade four, he's hopeless. Now this is an attitude toward reading which cuts it completely off.

H: The teacher felt that way?

F: Yes. The teacher said there is no sense even trying with him.

J: L. M. was here yesterday. His comment to me was, "I went to one of their schools for two weeks and I made it. I got thru it." (He's employed by the state training school).

I said, "I didn't have any doubt that you could."

He went on, "They want me to go to a four-and-a-half-month one now, and I don't think – My reading still ain't that good." And yet, his reading was not that bad. But it is his inherent belief in his inability to do it which creates tremendous problems.

How long did we have him? Wasn't it three years? We fought him down for one. It was almost a physical struggle the first year, and in the second year he began to loosen up, and by the third year, he really wanted to work. Look at all he had been put thru before he got to that place.

E: He had been a notorious juvenile delinquent before we got him.

H: How old was he at that time?

J: Fifteen. – had gone thru elementary school without learning to read.

H: Do I understand that he went out to work in the state institution after he had learned to read?

E: Yes. He is attempting to move up, – to get a better job.

J: Another boy comes to mind. K. K., a brilliant kid, but he just couldn't crack the system. And S. was the other one. He couldn't crack it, until finally we were able to help him. These people will be hampered much of their lives because of that initial problem. We get reports back from the court occasionally.

E: In fact an ex-student is now on trial for murder.

H: Some educationists have gone so far as to say that if the delinquent had been a reader he would have followed a different path. Is that too strong a statement?

E: Oh no, for had the delinquent been able to read, had teachers in junior and high school levels been able to concentrate on what literature says about life, and one's values and this kind of thing, another route would have been possible.

J: Because the way it is now, the teacher becomes so frustrated. They do one of two things. They either suddenly realize that the kid can't read and they go back and try to teach the elementary approach, or they take the "Well, I-don't-care-attitude -- He'll have to live up to my standards." It just goes over his head. Yet, you know, you can't really blame the teacher, who normally expects that the child should have had the training.

F: To say, tho, that making sure a child can read will stop juvenile delinquency is wrong. It's not that total. I think you could get certain kids out of it, but there are others who would not be affected just because they can read. Obviously, some juvenile delinquents can read.

H: Very true.

### **Goal of Secondary Reading Program**

H: What is the goal of secondary school reading?

J: Our purpose is to make the kids functional in the sophisticated use of language in society. They need the ability to communicate socially as well as economically.

Whereas the function of the elementary school is to establish a broad base of generalized knowledge, the secondary school is to pick up a highly specific set of subject matter areas and increase the student's understanding of these. The difference between the two is that the generalized *tells* them something, but the specific forces them into a thought process that *produces*. In reading, we want the pupil to follow a thought process and to make the manipulations necessary to produce what the words ask for.

E: The teaching of reading should be synonymous with the teaching of English because you essentially are trying to get kids to respond to language. That has been our tack. We decided that what we were going after was the thinking process which results in a sophisticated response to words.

We used to ask kids questions all of the time about stories, and ask them to make generalizations, yet never showed them the steps in this thinking process. We simply asked them to do it time after time after time. Bright kids generally worked out their own path and followed it eventually, but sometimes it took them into college to do so. Then we put ourselves on the line and said, "Now how did you get there?" We reproduced our own thinking for the kids. Now we work right with them until they get it.

F: At Skinner Junior High we have a 6-week program for every child in the school. Every 7th grade pupil goes thru the lab, not only learning reading but the persuing of the thought process.

### **Progress Toward the Goal**

H: To what extent is your goal for reading being reached?

J: One of the problems we are facing in secondary schools is that the emphasis is upon teaching the mechanical aspects of the skills required for recognizing words, upon the decoding of sounds.

This has become almost a fetish in our school system. The vagaries of language, all the borrowings of words from other languages with their attendant spellings has made decoding so difficult because 60% of the time the phonic base is not truly phonetic.

Many children see themselves as a failure because they cannot learn the extremely complex set of symbols. The psychological overtones are great by the time that we see them. We figured one time that it takes us about a year to change the child's poor image of himself, to make him believe that he *can* learn. It is extremely deleterious that this mechanical aspect of reading should stand in the way of learning.

E: We visited 8 or 9 elementary and junior high schools. They were all working at word recognition, sounds and phonics rather than teaching the denotation and connotation of words, and how to put them together.

J: Without this base they are sent to junior high school, and later to high school. With this reversion to the purely phonetic type of approach, we have a devastating experience when the child tries to read to us.

E: We try all sorts of things, always grasping for the answer. When we started the articulation of the reading departments of all the junior highs feeding into North -Skinner, Lake, and Horace Mann -- we had a class of all of the teachers. There was a rift. Some wanted to concentrate on sounds, but we tried to persuade them that if we are to get children ready to go out in the world, we must give them background knowledge.

H: Do you forsee that this would be different if our spelling system were to be changed to one which represents each speech sound with its own written symbol, the word /phone/ being spelled "f, long-o, n"?

F: I think about a man in our building, Jerry Austin, who constantly says that if we did like the Germans, every child in the first grade would learn to read. In Germany, sound is always spelled the same. But I wonder whether it would be of value to completely change the spelling structure of our language to do this.

J: To make it look like it sounds. I understand what Fran is disturbed with. You see i.t.a. (initial teaching alphabet) was used at some great length and we had books transliterated into it when I was working at Tucson under Ruth Strang earning a masters' degree in reading. She brought in a number of i.t.a. books to let us see them. Her comment was that children gained a great deal from it at first but then when they transferred to traditional orthography, there was a loss that made them come out about the same.

But my thought is that if the whole language were structured this way and you did not have to transfer back to traditional orthography then you could continue to progress without any loss of time.

F: It would also mean that everything in print would eventually be changed?

H: After one generation this would be true. The spelling habits of the older people would remain the same and the system would persist as long as they were alive, but as children came along, the new system would receive increased use.

When the computer is perfected into which people dictate their message and which turns out phonemically spelled printing, everyone will become accustomed to the new spelling. A machine would have to print exactly the same long /e/ for that vowel sound in /meat/, /feet/, /receive/, or /believe/. The machine would spell in a manner similar to the way the dictionary now shows pronunciations.

J: Wasn't it Gattegno, the *Words in Colour* man, who broke our system into 44 distinct sounds?

H: For a long time linguists have distinguished about 44 in common usage -- almost twice the number of the 26 letters we have.

F: Would the child have to learn 44 symbols? H: Yes, if that is the number settled on.

F: Would there be additional letters to the 26 now in our alphabet?

H: That depends upon what orthographic system is adopted. The Phonemic Spelling Council plans to establish a Reading/Writing Research Institute. One of its purposes will be to determine what would be the best system. A strong contender is *World English Spelling* which employs digraphs such as we now use: /oo/ in /moon/, /ch / in /chill/, /ou/ in /out/. New digraphs are used to make the total of 44 symbols. We are accustomed to using digraphs, and have found that children have little trouble in learning them. In *World English Spelling* if you wish to indicate the long sound of any vowel, you simply write an /e/ immediately after the vowel: /ae/, /ee/, /ie/, /oe/, /ue/ Have you seen that system?

J, F, E: No.

### **Writing Dialects**

F: How could you write a dialect in *World English spelling*?

H: To do so accurately, a person would have to use the *International Phonetic Alphabet* which has symbols for every speech sound in any language uttered by human beings. A playwright who

wishes to distinguish the speech of a Texan from a Kansan, or Virginian, uses some of the 55 I.P.A. symbols for English. To include all foreign languages, many more symbols are available. However, IPA is not efficient for use as a spelling system because its extremely accurate distinctions in sound are not needed. Only the generally accepted standard of speech needs to be recognized in an efficient orthography. Who cares whether the way you pronounce the preposition /on/ sounds like /awn/?

F: Would not a sound-based spelling confuse the child who speaks a dialect?

H: Not as much as the present spelling does. The new spelling would correspond closely with the speech used by national radio announcers.

F: How would you represent a dialect in a story? In popular fiction?

J: Mark Twain comes to mind. And there are others, like Joel Chandler Harris, author of the Uncle Remus stories.

F: I would hate to lose those things out of the language.

H: You really wouldn't, for dialect would be spelled differently from the accepted standard, "misspelled" so to speak. Eh, Br'er Jim?

J: If the kid could more easily learn the mechanics of reading in the new system in elementary school, you could get on with the sophistication of ideas in secondary, and would have time to explain such subjects as the use of dialects in literature.

F: Another form of dialect is the mispronunciation learned at home. This is hard to break at school.

J: What was the word that came up the other day? Oh, I remember. I was working at Merrill -- you know they have a tremendous problem with low economic kids -- and I talked about the Dolch list, and this guy asked me, "What is this dolt's list you are talking about?"

H: In some dialects they drop the endings. This is especially true among Blacks in some sections of the South. You can see how much easier it would be for a child to become aware of the endings he drops if everything he reads is spelled accurately according to the standard pronunciation. Some educationists say that if we had a system like W.E.S. you should start the beginners in reading exactly what they are saying. That is, you would leave off the endings that he omits, and he would see only the symbols which correspond with his speech sounds. He would quickly learn that a printed message is "talk" put on paper.

E: I wonder how this would work with our Hispanic students who come from homes where Spanish is spoken -- or with any person of foreign background.

H: I believe it would help them to read more quickly.

J: A. S. is a perfect example. He was so wrapped up in his mislearning over the past 11 years, over the sounds of the Spanish language, that he is at sea. He has a good, solid mind -- creative -- but he can't seem to translate and then encode into English spelling.



E: It would certainly make it simpler.

J: The thing that impresses me the most is that we could get away from an almost fanatic belief in the mechanical processes of phonics when teaching reading, to the exclusion of the broad areas of the communication process.

### Etymology

F: I'm concerned about the derivation of words. Part of the interest of the French word is the Frenchman who is behind it in a particular situation. You would take this out of the literature if all words followed the new sound system. – But if children could read better, I suppose you could get into the business of learning the meanings.

J: European languages still take in new words from other countries and convert them into their own symbol system. H: In all countries they do this.

J: So they still refer in essence to the place that the word came from. They are actually pronouncing the sounds used in the original country.

H: Yes, here are a few examples:

Turkish *futbol* is pronounced like and came from English /football/

Turkish *kolej* is pronounced like and came from English /college/

Russian *coyc* is pronounced like and came from English /sauce/

English *igloo* is pronounced like and came from Eskimo,

French *rosbif* is pronounced /rōs beef/ and came from English /roast beef/.

F: Certain borrowed words, especially those applying to food, carry an exotic connotation, and I think some of that may be lost if the foreign spelling were changed to the English sound system.

H: Out of the 600,000 words in our dictionary, there aren't very many having exotic foreign spellings. When we are talking, it really doesn't matter to the hearer where that word originated, do you think? It's important to remember that true language is the spoken tongue. The symbols used to write it are not the true language. Take the word *manufacture*, which originally meant "made by hand" (manu-hand, fact-make). That is exactly what it does *not* mean now, and it wouldn't help me a bit to know the derivation.

J: Isn't it in Denmark where they update the dictionary every ten years?

H: They do in most European countries. But their changes are minimal compared with what would be necessary here.

However, even so great a modification as *World English Spelling* could take place if people realized its benefits. By accelerating the attainment of reading skills in the elementary school, the secondary school could reach its primary goal of teaching highly specific thought processes.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 p12 in the printed version]

## 9. Reading: Interpreting Graphic Signals, by Emmett A. Betts\*

\*From The Reading Teacher, p.230, December 1971

PARENTS OF disabled readers often say, "My Charlie learned to talk without difficulty. Why can't he learn to read as easily as he learned to talk?" This attitude is reinforced by advertisers who say they have published materials that will teach children to read as easily as they learned to talk. Some children do take to reading like a bird takes to the air. But this is an argument without reason, as we shall see.

First, speech is a sequence of noises for symbolizing or representing personal experience. Parents usually forget the struggle their children had in learning the labels of things and grammar; for example, in saying *dog* for all four-legged animals, *wabbit* for *rabbit*, *pushy* for *cat*, *maked* (by analogy with *baked*) for *made*, and so on. So, speech is a sequence of symbols for experience.

Second, writing represents speech -although rather imperfectly. For example, the spoken word /'kat/ is represented by the written word *cat*. So *cat* symbolizes /'kat/ which symbolizes a certain kind of animal. The spoken word /'kat/ is one step away from experience (the class of animals). The written word *cat* is two steps away from experience). And so reading becomes a more complex process than speaking which is far from being a simple process.

The beginner in reading is presented with a mixed-up mix, because of the irregularity of spellings for sounds. He may be able to reason by analogy the relating of letters to sounds as in *at-tap-act* or *it-lip-sit*. But he will find the sound-letter analogies elusive in dealing with the common words *one*, *you*, *once*, and *mother*. Unfortunately, the commonest words tend to have the most irregular spellings.

Parenthetically, the above irregularly spelled words are commonly used and, therefore, appear in beginning reading books. So are *said*, *come*, *are*, *any*, *done*, *eye*, *friend*, *have*, *shoe*, *who*, and a significant number of other words in beginning reading materials. Since sounds are not faithfully represented by spellings, how can Charlie be expected to break the spelling code? Why doesn't he learn to read as easily as he learned to talk?

**Melody: clues to grammatical meaning.** Of course, writing also represents the melody of a sentence, although it gives too few clues to it. Consider how these two sentences, with different meanings but the same words, are said:

*John is here.* John is here?

So the pupil has to decode the sentence melody, which carries a heavy burden of meaning, as well as to decode letters into sounds.

**Reading processes.** Reading requires 1) decoding writing into the sounds of speech and 2) decoding the message. Hence, it is a complex of processes which have been neither identified nor understood. In the meantime, however, professional understandings of reading processes exceed, to an uncomfortable degree, classroom practices.

**One of many reasons.** And so we have some easy explanations of why Charlie learned to talk readily, but is all fogged up when he tries to read. Additional explanations will be given in follow-up articles. The statement that reading is decoding writing into speech is more easily said than done – a vicious "myth-nomer!"

Hence, a beginner in reading must deal with imperfect symbols for speech by learning to use a complex of processes which are speculated about rather than understood by scientists. Learning to read is still some kind of a miracle, achieved by no other animal. It is easy to understand, however, why some beginners are bewitched, benumbed, beset, bedeviled, and bewhethered!

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp13,14 in the printed version*]

## **10. The Early to Read – i. t. a. program; Effects and Aftermath, by Albert J. Mazurkiewicz\* A Six Year Longitudinal Study.[1]**

\*Prof. of Reading Education, Chairman, Dept. of Communication Sciences, Newark State College, New Jersey.

Though it has been argued that only longitudinal studies of some duration can truly answer questions of interest on the effects of a given procedure on reading achievement, few such studies have been undertaken. Fewer studies have been replicated. The studies reported here *have* followed the course of achievement with two populations from the first through the sixth year of school. The design of the overall study allowed replication with a second population in the first and second grade years as well as studies to determine the effects of curriculum modifications on the achievement of additional populations from the second through sixth grade years.

The design of the study, taking cognizance of research to the date of beginning, used a program for both i.t.a. and T.O. populations which emphasized identical methodology and a sequencing of the grapheme-phoneme relationships with didactic methodology to maximize instruction with T.O. The procedures used were designed from a knowledge of the strengths of instruction using the regularity of English in i.t.a. The study was undertaken to determine whether, in fact, i.t.a. was a potent factor or whether maximized instructional considerations with T.O. could produce similar skill. Based on the utility of symbol-sound correspondences for writing, a sequencing of spelling patterns for decoding-encoding skills was established. The use of a language experience approach solely for a minimal three-month period was followed by the introduction of texts for directed and self-determined activities. [1] In the case of the i.t.a. population, transfer based on competence from i.t.a. print was in the initial studies to the materials being used by the T.O. population without skills curriculum changes based on population achievement and needs.

Thus, the first question about the value of i.t.a. could be studied at the end of the third month of instruction without reference to difference in text materials. The control of readability levels of materials being used next permitted a study of variable achievements at the fifth month and later periods in terms of reader levels, while achievements in skill areas could be tested at the 3rd, 6th, and 8th month points, and at the end/or beginning of each school year. While a variety of questions could be examined, I do not mean to suggest that all questions were studied in this design. Nor do I suggest that these studies were attempting to duplicate the ongoing work of Dr. John Downing and associates in the Reading Research Unit whose initial design controlled materials but allowed methods to vary or the work of Barbara Jones whose later design controlled method and materials, or Beatrix Tudor-Hart whose work with i.t.a. compared two methods.

The populations were normal in intelligence, of similar socio-economic status and had similar pre-school experience. They were instructed by teachers of similar age, experience and training backgrounds. In-school time factors, availability of materials and resource persons, special instructional activities, etc., were rigorously controlled.

A continuous comparison of results in the 2nd thru 6th grade years on standardized measures of reading achievement were supplemented by studies of characteristics of writing and spelling behaviors, and creativity measures to determine longitudinal effects of the differentiated beginning. In the second and subsequent years, both populations followed identical instructional programs in the T.O. medium with children from either population becoming mixed by normal grouping and movement characteristics. Coding procedures permitted us to recapture the populations to study

differences. Cumulative records on such characteristics as retention in a grade, remedial reading, etc., were kept for later study.

The *Metropolitan Achievement Tests* results, obtained in the 10th week of the first year of school, established the level of achievement and is indicative of the educationally significant differences being developed by the language-experience program phase of the *Early to Read – i.t.a. series* as compared to the same procedures in T.O. In comparison with the T.O. achievement of the grade equivalent score of 1.3 on *Word Discrimination*, the i.t.a. population mean achievement was 2.2, while *Word Knowledge* scores at this early point were 1.2 and 1.8 respectively. It is a reasonable inference that the consistency of the i.t.a. as opposed to the inconsistency of the T.O. spelling-pattern-sound relationships permitted easier and more rapid acquisition of skills for the children using i.t.a. in a structured language-experience program. The fact that a marked reduction in typical b-d and other letter confusions was noted when the populations were compared suggests that the design of Pitman's i.t.a. characters contained additional discriminative features which were perceptually significant in the learning process.

Following the introduction and use of readers and supplementary texts, an assessment at the beginning of the sixth month using the *Botel Reading Inventory* indicated that the median achievement of the i.t.a. population was at the first reader level while the T.O. population was at the pre-primer level. Almost 43% of the i.t.a. population were found at instructional levels from 2.1 to 4th reader as compared with 3% of the T.O. population. The data on this test were confirmed by the results of the *Metropolitan Achievement Tests* also administered in this sixth month – the i.t.a. population achieving 2.9 on *Word Discrimination* and 2.7 on *Word Knowledge*, as opposed to the T.O. achievement of 1.7 and 1.5 on the same measures.

Achievements in the 8th month were also markedly different. While the T.O. population achieved *Word Discrimination & Word Knowledge* scores of 2.1 and 1.9, the i.t.a. population demonstrated scores of 3.6 and 2.9 – one to 1½ years ahead of the T.O. group. Standardized test results indicated that, from the 2nd thru the 6th grade years, mean differences in favor of the i.t.a. population existed on almost all subtests at all end of year points. These differences were statistically significant on Spelling and Language Skill subtests in the 2nd grade, on Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Knowledge and Use of References in the 3rd grade, on every subtest of the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* in the 4th grade, and on punctuation (5th & 6th grade), capitalization and use of references in the 6th grade. Altho the populations maintained their equivalency in IQ, the T. O. population was at no point able to overcome the inhibitor characteristics of T.O. in the first year of school so as to achieve significantly better on any subtest of the variety of standardized measures used.

Spelling achievement is measured normally in two ways: as a proofreading-recognition exercise or as a response to dictation. Spelling when measured as encoding in i.t.a. in the first year was significantly and markedly better than the control population's skill. When measured by T.O. standardized tests while children were still reading and writing i.t.a., the T.O. population was significantly better. Tho such testing is necessary for research, it is obviously unfair to the child who has not studied T.O. spelling. However, it should be noted that at no point in the next 5 years was the T.O. population able to demonstrate anything comparable to this first year achievement. In the 2nd thru 6th years, the i.t.a. population achieved spelling ability on standardized tests which was significantly better, thus suggesting positive effects of the i.t.a. beginning on a perceptual (proof reading-recognition) task.

The i.t.a. population also demonstrated, at the end of the 2nd thru 6th years, that their ability to spell under dictation constraints was statistically significantly better and that this educationally superior ability was of high significance as late as the end of the 6th year when catching up by the T.O. population should have occurred.

Tables I and II report data on random sample populations which are of high interest since early reports of i.t.a. progress indicated an observed high creativity or creative outpouring. The "Thinking Creatively With Words," form A of the *Torrance Test of Creativity* was administered to the entire 4th grade, scoring procedures precluded obtaining results for the total population. Thus, results of random samples were studied as being representative of the whole.

**Table I**

"Thinking Creatively With Words," Form A, results from the Random Samples of the 1964-5 i.t.a. and T.O. populations, May, 1968.

i.t.a., N=61 I.Q. =109.96 (difference is non-significant)			T.O., N =61 I.Q. = 110.63		
Subtests	M	S. D.	M.	S.D.	t t
Fluency	45.95	5.79	47.16	21.59	- .40
Flexibility	23.47	7.29	21.67	8.31	1.27
Originality	9.96	4.91	6.90	4.71	3.38‡

‡ Significant below the 1% level.

The results suggest that the i.t.a. and T.O. populations do not differ markedly in the factors of verbal fluency or flexibility but differ significantly on the factor of originality. As confirmation, the *Carlson Analytical Scale* for measuring the originality of children's writing was utilized to study the compositions of the children. These responses were obtained by using a picture as a stimulus. Table II reports these findings, and the results permit the conclusion that the i.t.a. taught child in the 4th year of school is significantly more original in his writing, confirming the finding of the *Torrance Test, Verbal Form A*. The difference is also educationally significant since on the *Carlson Scale* the i.t.a. result is rated as *excellent*, the T.O. result, as *good*. It would appear that the language-experience elements of the *Early to Read i.t.a. Series* which programmed and encouraged written expression by the child almost from the first day of school, in combination with i.t.a. which released him from the inhibitions of traditional spelling, has a long-lasting positive effect on the child's ability to approach tasks with originality.

**Table II**

*Carlson Analytical Originality Scale* results on the Written Responses of the Random Samples of the i.t.a. and T.O. 1964-5 populations.

i.t.a., N=61 I.Q. =109.96 (difference is non-significant)		T.O., N =61 I.Q. = 110.63			
	M	S. D.	M.	S.D.	t t
Originality Scale Scores	36.63	17.52	31.48	10.38	2.16 ‡

‡ Significant below the 50 level.

While the above data are important to any study of i.t.a. versus T.O., the effects of such a differentiated beginning should also be studied in respect to other educational advantages and disadvantages. If i.t.a. is of value in allowing children to learn to read more easily and rapidly, as we have seen here, do children post-i.t.a. have a lesser or greater need for remedial reading? If so,

what aspect of reading needs attention? Is there a higher or lower degree of failure as measured by the repetition of a grade? If effects in these areas were negatively different it could be argued that i.t.a. should be rejected as a valid basis for instruction tho results of testing were better. If results were no better, positive differences on such questions could still provide arguable bases for the use of i.t.a.

In 1963, when i.t.a. was introduced into the Bethlehem City School District first grade program, a study of the number of children who were in need of remedial reading instruction in the third grade (all having started in T.O.) was 154. This compares with 39 who were in need of remedial instruction in 1968 when all children entering the 3rd grade year had started their 1st year in i.t.a. A 75% *reduction* in the need for remedial reading post-i.t.a. is a major, significant, educational benefit for a school district--in terms of benefit to the child who has not had to suffer failure and ego-damage, and in terms of economic benefit when reorientation and use of staff released from remedial work is possible.

While it is of some interest to note that a large portion (35%) of the original i.t.a.-T.O. 1964-5 population has moved out of the district by the 6th grade of school, it was more interesting to discover that the failure rate over this six year period, as evidenced by the number of children who repeated grades, has been three times higher for the T.O. group (29.6% to 9.1%). This significantly high failure rate in the T.O. population was traceable to the effects of an inadequate beginning in the learning experience (in reading primarily) which apparently affected the total skills-behavior of the child.

Additional data indicated that twice as many T.O. pupils (14.6% to 7.1%) received remedial reading as did i.t.a. pupils during this period. Of interest, too, was the discovery that the type of remedial reading needed by the two groups of pupils differed. The T.O. pupil needed help on word recognition – a basic reading skill – and comprehension – a basic intelligence skill – while the i.t.a. child, who had mastered basic reading skills, needed additional help only in the comprehension area.

In summary, the use of i.t.a. with a language arts oriented program which emphasizes a didactic multi-sensory methodology for instruction, produced a highly significant development of auditory perception and encouraged a rationality of approach to T.O. spelling based on grapheme-phoneme correspondence. The facile skill in encoding sound developed by the i.t.a. beginning had a positive and long-lasting effect, thru the increased opportunity for practice, on writing skills. The results in the first and subsequent years showed that i.t.a. was a highly potent factor in reading, writing, spelling and creativity achievements. The use of i.t.a. has had a significantly beneficial and lasting effect in developing those characteristics (ego-strength, skills development, and learning behavior) which combine to produce a higher success rate among children somewhat less able or equal in other aspects to T.O. trained children.

[1] The several studies, including the replications, were initially undertaken under TFAE-Ford Foundation sponsorship, and later the U.S. Office of Education under Cooperative Research and Title III Funding.

[2] The program design as suggested here was incorporated into teacher guides and children's materials of *The Early to Read – i.t.a series* which were the basis for the studies described here.

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 p15 in the printed version*]

## 11. Book Reviews, by Newell W. Tune

Downing, John et al, *Comparative Reading, Cross-National Studies of Behavior and Processes in Reading and Writing*, Macmillan Co, N.Y., 1973, pp 595+xii \$16.95

On first reading about half of this book, I started to write a Hollywood review full of stupendous adulations, but on reading it back, I realized that such would be inappropriate for an educational magazine. However, the thoughts still persist.

*Comparative Reading* is an outstanding book for several reasons. It shows a very good understanding of the subject and the huge amount of research justifies praise of its work.

The book is divided into two parts: the first half is devoted to the Rationale and Scope of Comparative Reading. This book represents a new species in comparisons of methodology of teaching reading. Ambitious hopes for improvement are based on the relationships that exist between theory and practice in other fields of human endeavor. In medicine, agriculture, engineering, transport, and all fields of technology, theory has proved to be the spur to practical invention. It has reduced the waste of human and material resources that occur when haphazard individual efforts repeat the same errors of others.

The teaching of reading is particularly prone to such waste. Methods of teaching literacy are subject to fashions of educational opinion both within a single country and from one country to another as such fashions spread. What is needed is to anchor the technology of reading more firmly in theory and experimental proof.

This book is based on the hope that the methods of cross-national research and comparative studies, which have proved to be of such great theoretical and practical value in other fields, will lead to a better understanding also of the fundamental psychological processes of literacy behavior, both in their learning and teaching applicability.

One can get some idea of the vast amount of research undertaken by the main author, John Downing, when one can see a total of 553 references in the first half – all but 21 of which were found by Downing.

A perusal of the chapter headings will give us some idea of the scope of the first half: 1. Rationale and scope of comparative reading, 2. Methodological problems of research, 3. Cross-national comparisons of reading achievement, 4. Bases for comparison, 5. Attitude content in reading primers, 6. Cultural expectations, 7. The teacher variable, 8. Other extraneous factors, 9 & 10. Linguistic environments, 11. The future of comparative reading. Each of these chapters explores the subject fully and leaves the reader with a much fuller understanding.

Part two consists of chapters by well-known and competent writers about the methodologies used in a dozen foreign countries and a large chapter on the United States. Again, the amount of references is impressive – 662 in this second half. We can all learn a great deal about our own educational system in comparison with these 12 foreign countries. Some of them do not have the vast range of problems we have--and this is clearly brought out in some of these chapters. The reasons why are not dodged or equivocated but expressed in terms of theory and such actual practice as is available. Additional research is suggested to get at the basic causes of reading failures.

All in all, this book will likely be recommended as a required reading for all prospective reading teachers. A more thoro education about reading has so far not been published.

Pidgeon, D. A., *Evidence Submitted to the Bullock Committee of Inquiry into Reading and the Use of English*. pp 25, 1973, (no price), The i.t.a. Foundation publication no. 16, (154, Southampton Row, London WC 1, Eng.)

The best way to begin this review is to quote from its introduction, "In the evidence submitted here it is taken as axiomatic that a child's learning to speak, read, and write in his own mother-tongue is the most important element in his education. It is considered the right of every child that he should learn to read at an early age and that the obstacles which now prevent this from happening should be removed. While the aim, therefore, is 100% literacy (reading and writing) is primarily dependent on oracy (listening and speaking). It is also argued that research over the past 10 to 20 years has indicated solutions to the many obstacles to achieving literacy, but that the dissemination of the results of this research has been slow and insufficient, and little positive action taken to implement its recommendations."

"The many factors which influence a child's learning to read in this country can be conveniently ordered into three groups: those concerned with the development of language competence in the child's home background; those associated with the teacher and with teaching and with learning in the classroom; and those resulting from the irregularities and inconsistencies in the spelling and pronunciation of the English language. These groups are not unrelated, but much existing confusion can be dispersed by considering them as separate issues."

Each of these groups is discussed more fully in the report. The order chosen is deliberate. The development of oracy and the factors associated with it almost certainly are first in importance, for without a reasonable competency in the understanding and use of speech, no child can learn to read. And children with minimum oracy are the ones having the most difficult time in learning to read. This has been discussed many times before in many books but seldom as clearly and explicitly as here.

The advent of Sesame Street and its impact on the aiding of small disadvantaged (as well as advantaged) children is brought out.

The role of the teacher and the adequate training of teachers is stressed. Margaret Cox says, in the *Challenge of Reading Failure*, "it seems reasonable to predict with some certainty that there would be far fewer backward readers in our junior schools if teachers tackled reading difficulties more systematically than they do now. This is not to decry the work done by teachers throughout the country in alleviating the reading problem. But it is a startling fact that backward readers are a sadly underprivileged group, and that, by and large, their problems receive scant attention and their teachers are ill-equipped by their training or circumstances to deal with them." That is, to deal with the most modern of methods and materials with their more efficient usage and effective results.

One of the most important points in conclusion is: "The truth would seem to be that *there really is no reading problem* – only, regrettably, **a lack of willingness, enterprise or enthusiasm on the part of those in authority to put into effect the known solutions**" to the problems.

Let the N.E.A., the P.T.A., the U.K.R.A., the A.E.R.A. take heed and join the battle for our helpless children.



## 12. Our Readers Write Us

### Problems in reforming our spelling

Dear Mr. Tune:

by Barnett Russell, M.D.

I am now busier than ever, but my interest in spelling reform is still present.

It seems to me that politicians will not readily see the value of spelling reform, rho they will quickly see the opponents' point of view when shown a phonetically spelled text and are dismayed at the "distortion" that results.

There is no question of the ultimate benefits of spelling reform, just as there can be no question as to the benefit of a stenographic script to replace our antiquated script, but only those who have learned to use shorthand can really appreciate its real advantages.

The problem is *what* type of solution will be acceptable to government? Perhaps one could win government approval to a limited and minimal change plan, with the hidden idea that the government will at least start the project, and authorize a spelling reform commission to propagate the *few* reforms adopted.

Eventually, this commission in its revisions of the *authorized* dictionary will sneak in a few more changes. Then by constant referral to said dictionaries, the correct (new) spellings will become accepted and universal.

What changes of reform have been introduced in the standard British English dictionaries? Are these changes compatible with a phonetic spelling?

There are quite a few rules in normal English spelling that can gradually be extended to cover more and more exceptions. Perhaps the way of: *nite* for *night* may be a way to achieve a simplified spelling. Common words such as: *the, to, of, on,* may perhaps be retained till later on in the game.

I disagree that one should develop two different schemes for the government to choose from. The Commission should develop only one scheme that is perfected and acceptable and then present it to the governments for approval.

I can't read very much as my only eye is rather weak,

Yours sincerely, B. R., Plainview, N.Y.

## Venezky's research in symbol-sound correspondence

Dear Mr. Tune:

Dean: Prof. O. K. Kyöstiö

I am gratified to know that *Comparative Reading* has come to the notice of specialists in reading. I would like to say that the value of my article in it was seriously diminished because of the abbreviated form of its presentation, and because the publisher omitted all illustrations of early primers.

The most interesting part of your letter was that concerning Venezky's research, because there seems to be a misunderstanding involved here, either by Niensted or by Venezky. The material Venezky received from us *does not predicate* "that it is not the regularity or lack of regularity in symbol sound correspondence that determines the quality of reading performance." The problem his research attempted to clarify concerned the Letter-Sound Generalizations of Finnish children. He writes in his conclusion: "Mean correct was almost 80% in grade 1, indicating a surprisingly high level of letter-sound mastery. But the correlation of letter-sound ability with reading ability were only moderately high, ranging from .528 (grade 2) to .457 (grade 3). This result indicates that high letter-sound ability by itself does not guarantee high ability in reading."

When I returned Venezky's manuscript, I pointed out two possible sources of error which may have been included in his research:

- 1) the ceiling of the letter-sound test was too low, interfering with variation in this technical way,
- 2) some 'words' in the test were so similar to 'meaningful words' that they attracted children to read them wrongly. The first point meant that the correlation between the two tests (letter-sound and reading) could not be high, technically. The second point caused an error variance which did not correspond with the reading test, (i.e. a child with a low result in the Letter-sound test may not be necessarily of low standard in reading).

Because the sample taken was also rather small and not randomly taken, Venezky's conclusion might be quite erroneous.

There aren't any state-wide investigations indicating the real situation of failures in reading and writing in Finland. On the basis of some smaller studies, a State Committee on Special Education estimated (1970) that about 5-10% of all elementary school children have problems in reading or writing and need some kind of extra help. The % is in grades II-V, between 10-14%, and in grades VI-IX, 2-5%. As far as this estimation is right, the number of reading difficulties is proportionally only about half the corresponding number in the USA. The most important single factor in reading has been shown to be intelligence. What part the reading textbooks play in learning to read (cf. Gaston Blom et al's results) is now under investigation in Finland.

\*Dean: Teachers College, Univ. of Oulu, Oulu, Finland.

## Public lethargy and lack of publicity

Dear Sir:

by Arnold Rupert

I got the package of SPB back issues yesterday and just can't leave them alone. I have read back to the Fall, '70 issue; it's a humdinger. I can't express adequately my admiration for the job done by Betty A. Iles in the pithy summary of the history of spelling reform therein. If that issue were sent to all libraries and schools, your circulation might leap out of control.

Despite all the pessimism about public lethargy that I note from some of your writers, I think the public is a lot more ready to support your cause than you think. It's just that they never hear about it. Literature about spelling reform is spread so very thinly everywhere I've been: books, magazines, newspapers, etc. If I hadn't made a determined effort to make contact with the movement, I would not have known it ever existed. Publication is expensive but my mail box is full of junk mail on every other subject. But I have yet to be canvased for the sale of a book or magazine on spelling reform or anything of the like. I live only a few miles from Lake Placid and I have been here for 40 years without suspecting what has been going on there, and I was keenly interested.

When I question school teachers hereabout, they haven't the faintest idea of what is being done to develop better language and speech notations. Letters to most politicians merit only a condescending, if polite, brush off. Not enuf votes there! And yet my local school taxes are \$400.00 to teach 1000 year-old rubbish. We had a 2 or 3 million dollar bilingualism commission here and more millions are now being spent to teach public employees a bit of French in a form as archaic as our English spelling. A bilingual and phonetic notation for the two languages could make the both much easier to learn and remove some of the distrust between peoples, but I have never heard the possibility mentioned, rho our T-V has several programs to teach French.

Well, having read a lot more of my back issues, I noted a comment in the obituary to Helen Bowyer giving her the high distinction of being the only spelling reformer who wasn't pushing a system of her own. If I may be allowed a faint smile on such an occasion, it is only from memory the cruel jibes so often directed at defensless and vulnerable alfabetees whose motives are often suspect. However, if I may make a suggestion, I think that a paper like yours can be more useful (to us) by printing all the actual systems, which takes only a page or two, instead of favouring all the arguments for reform itself, on which any clear thinker must be agreed. These articles would do more good in publications for the general public, even if they had to be paid advertisements (like mine), directing open-minded readers to a paper like yours. Another place where such ads would be noted is in our educational tax slips. With this sample ad, I hope to stir up a lot of too quiet oddballs, like myself, who have far-out spelling reform systems that you can hardly publish free, if you are to stay in business with your very useful service.

Minimal change systems that may(?)be cheaper to apply seem to be the most popular, or at least the most numerous in your paper. In so far as they repeat a few shopworn methods, they are a bit monotonous tho. In your issue for March, '63, you compare 37 all-Romanic reform systems, but to me, the numerous exceptions that could not fit into such a consensus study were far more interesting. Some of them have been mentioned, reviewed or *advertized* in other issues and I would like to give full praise to some like Leo Davis who has been quite lavish with his ad's, but where are the host of others that were mentioned then and the many more who must have arisen since. It takes thousands of dollars of time at today's rates to devise a system and develop it fully. A page or two of ads is rather little in comparison. How about it, fellow alfabetees? Can we get together and get a little more exposure for the more striking examples of our art? A few more colorful ads (like Ali's) could do no harm to the SPB's circulation either?

Thanks, A. R, KOC IRO, R. 2, Lunenburg, Ont. Canada

## Basic Problems in Education

**Dr. Helen Pollard, Reading Specialist,**

National Reading Center,  
1776 Massachusetts Ave,  
N. W. Washington, D. C. 20036

**by Harvie Barnard**

Dear Dr. Pollard:

Your letter with your remarks concerning "Basic Problems in Education" was certainly revealing.

Is the National Reading Center a part of a Federally funded program and precisely what is the function and purpose of the Center?

I have been conducting a program of basic research in the classroom rather than in the library to discover the p-root of the fundamental reasons why: 1) about 50% of our high school graduates cannot successfully do college work; 2) about 75% of our delinquents are illiterate; 3) why most of our illiterates are delinquent at the high school level; and 4) why a large proportion of our adult population is functionally illiterate; and also 5) why nearly all of our school dropouts are illiterate,- either functionally or literally.

In teaching and working with students in the Army G.E.D. program, those who were strictly delinquent (locked up in the stockade), the conclusions reached very quickly were so utterly obvious to even the most casual observer that an almost 100% correlation between delinquency and illiteracy (the absence of ability or desire to read) was established. The interesting truth was that these adults were not illiterate because they were sub-normal or stupid. But they were all thoroly convinced that the authorities, the administration *and the schools* were in total opposition to their security and their success.

Where did they get these ideas and this attitude? The answer is *in* and *at* about the first three grades of school, in the *primary classrooms!* Scholastically these children were *dead* (they would say "shot down") at about the third or fourth grade. By the time they had reached the fifth grade they had quit trying, and from that time on were virtually unreachable because of two interrelated factors: 1) inability to read at grade level, and 2) a conviction that the system to which they had been subjected had *deliberately* confused, frustrated, and failed them. *They were correct on all counts, except* that the confusion, frustration and failure were *not* deliberate on the part of their teachers. It was the system, the confusing inconsistencies of the so-called English spelling which had beaten them down, but of course they did not do this, and it is highly doubtful that their teachers suspected the truth any more than they did. I was, fortunately, able to convince these people that I was on their side, but I was never able to convince them that English was reasonable until I demonstrated thusly to them the simplicity of honest phonetic spelling. They ate it up! Yours hopefully for common sense and consistency in English spelling,

H. B., Tacoma, Wash.,

**Dear Dr. Pollard:**

Your GPO 922-651 answers my inquiries respecting your goals, purposes and procedures quite clearly, and I am indeed pleased to know that your overall plan envisions a 10-year program. However, as you doubtless realize, to succeed in your endeavors will require more than a decade, considering all the handicaps, roadblocks and built-in obstructions which may require more than a lifetime to correct.

You are quite correct in assuming that I refer to the irregularities and inconsistencies of the language itself. These impediments to communication, reading and learning cannot, of course, be changed, any more than you could change from the Olde Englishe non-systeme of phundamental weights, measures, volumes, and coinage to the "new" plan of Metric measurement.

Your memory may not go back as far as those "good, olde daze" when Englishe mathematicians were still struggling with the Roman non-system of numbers, but there was a time when our honorable Englishe-Dutch-French, etc. ancesters fought the Arabic system of number symbols like Theoprastus Bombastus Von Hoenheim fought the Black Plague, with everything at their command, except logic and common sense. It took Pasteur and his microscope to determine the real cause of disease, and it took a generation of determined scientific effort to persuade the doctors that there were "germs" rather than vapors, devils and witches which caused disease.

Your program for achieving the goal of 90% literacy by 1980 is well within the realm of possibility, and I certainly admire your 99% goal for everyone at their 16th year. But there are simply too many people with: 1) lack of memory training prior to attending school; 2) minds which reject illogical nonsense; and 3) too much muleish common sense and innate stubbornness to accept that which is patently illogical, contradictory and confusing.

Of course, you disagree. Those who are committed by "reason of reverence for the status quo," the establishment, the powers that be, "city hall," and the monthly pay cheque, cannot do otherwise. You have my deepest and most sincere sympathy – really you do! Until you achieve the beneficent state of retirement, you have absolutely no idea what a blessing it is to exorcise a mind of your own!

But on the other hand, there are some people with true courage and an honest judgement of what is right and what is good, – good, that is, for someone besides themselves, good too, for the new generation, for the children, – perhaps their own, – who will soon be injected into the unfortunate situation which we have bequeathed them; as so ably exprest by Andy (of Amos and Andy fame), "the Status Quo – that mess which we is all in."

Have you the courage to pass this letter on to your boss?

Yours sincerely,  
Harvie Barnard, Tacoma, Wn,

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 p18 in the printed version]*

*WHAT'S TO BE DONE?*

## **PHONEMIC SPELLING COUNCIL**

*SEEKS REMEDIES FOR SPELLING INFIRMITIES*

### *Officers*

*Honorary chairman:* Dr. Godfrey Dewey, Lake Placid, NY. Author, numerous books on speech sounds and spelling.

*President:* Dr. Emmett A. Betts, Univ. of Miami, Coral Gables, FL. Research professor, editor, author numerous books and articles on reading and related subjects.

*Vice presidents:* Dr. John Henry Martin, Chappaqua, NY. Professor of Humanities.  
Dr. Ben D. Wood, New York, NY, founder, Cooperative Test Service (Educational Testing Service), researcher, and innovator.

*Sec.-Treas.:* Katherine P. De Meo, Lindsey Hopkins, Miami, FL, Board of Public Instruction of Dade County: Consultant, special reading services.

*Co-ordinator for Associates:* Dr. Helen Bonnema, Denver, CO, Ass't Ed. Spelling Progress Bulletin

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S. Donald Melville, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ.

J. A. Reynolds, Dept. of English, Univ. of Miami, Coral Gables, FL 33124

E. Spyropoulos, Assoc. Director, Right-to-Read Program, Dept. of HEW, Maryland Av., Washington, DC.

Ralph Staiger, Executive Sec.-Treas., International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware.

A. Tannenbaum, Prof. of Education, Teachers College, Columbia Univ., New York, NY.

Abraham Tauber, Prof. of Speech, Yeshiva Univ., NY, Yonkers, NY.

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*Meeting co-sponsored with International Reading Association:* May 2, 3:45-4:45 p.m., Room 1D Convention Center, Denver. 1973 Convention of I.R.A.

*See program on [page 1 of this Bulletin](#).*

*For information write to President or Co-ordinator.*

### 13. RIT, a new Logical Spelling System for our Kids

**VOWELS:**

i a sit x, cheer y, yet r  
 e a seat x, cede de.  
 e a set x, care y.  
 a a save y, beta de.  
 a a cam u, car u, cat u.  
 ah a calm u (car u?)  
 o v not f, nor u, or v.  
 aw v fall u, pawl u, all v.  
 u v fun u, come y, does g.  
 o v phone u, (nor u?)  
 uu v full u, shirr u, we v.  
 oo v fool u, rule u, sure u.  
 ? v inhale u, data u, later u.  
 ü v pür u, mür u, (French)

**SEMI-VOWELS:**

r v row u or u, more u.  
 l v lame u, call u.

**NASALS:**

m v men x, exempt u.  
 n v net x, since u.  
 ng v sing x, think u.

**LISPS:**

f v feed u, cough u.  
 v v very u, salve u.  
 th v thin u, myth u.  
 dh v the u, rather u.  
 s v ass u, ask u, so u.  
 z v as u, zero u, mobs u.  
 sh v mash u, assure u.  
 zh v measure u, azure u.  
 h v he u, his u, inhale u.

**CHECKS:**

p v peat u, help u.  
 b v blade u, mob u.  
 t v tied u, wrapped u.  
 d v dead u, mobbed u.  
 ch v churn u, match u.  
 j v jar u, sergeant u.  
 k v can u, quick u, clique u.  
 g v give u, drogue u.

**CLICKS:**

tsk v tsk-tsk u.  
 kiss v inward lip lisp.  
 chirp v starts a horse, inward k.

**CONSONANT CLUSTERS: (Standard forms varied slightly for easy printing):**

	mz <u>v</u>	mp <u>v</u>	st ts <u>v</u>	zd <u>v</u>	mth <u>v</u>	(mths) <u>v</u>
<u>sm</u> (mps)	ms <u>v</u>	mf <u>v</u>	st <u>v</u>	dz <u>v</u>	nth <u>v</u>	nths <u>v</u>
(mbd)	md <u>v</u>	nj <u>v</u>	sp ps <u>v</u>	bz <u>v</u>	ngth <u>v</u>	ngths <u>v</u>
(mpt)	mt <u>v</u>	nch <u>v</u>	sp <u>v</u>	bd <u>v</u>	"rth" <u>v</u>	ths <u>v</u>
	nd <u>v</u>	njd <u>v</u>	sk ks <u>v</u>	pt <u>v</u>	"lth" <u>v</u>	dhz <u>v</u>
(ndz)	nz <u>v</u>	ncht <u>v</u>	sk <u>v</u>	jd <u>v</u>	tth <u>v</u>	tths <u>v</u>
	nt <u>v</u>	ngz <u>v</u>	sts <u>v</u>	cht <u>v</u>	ddh <u>v</u>	ddhz <u>v</u>
<u>sn</u> (nts)	ns <u>v</u>	ngd <u>v</u>	sps <u>v</u>	gz <u>v</u>	fth <u>v</u>	fths <u>v</u>
	ngk <u>v</u>	nst <u>v</u>	sks <u>v</u>	gd <u>v</u>	kth <u>v</u>	kths <u>v</u>
(ngks)	ngs <u>v</u>	sht <u>v</u>	spt <u>v</u>	kt <u>v</u>	pth <u>v</u>	pths <u>v</u>
(ngkt)	ngt <u>v</u>	shm <u>v</u>	skt <u>v</u>	vd <u>v</u>		
(fts)	fs <u>v</u>	shn <u>v</u>	ft <u>v</u>	vz <u>v</u>		

**FRENCH NASAL VOWELS:** Martin u (English Martin u)  
 Arnold Rupert 72. coin u.

SCALE COMPARISON OF RIT WITH ROMAN PRINTING

A new spelling for the kids,  
saving half in space & effort.

A new spelling for the kids,  
saving half in space & effort.

Capitals are an extra alphabet. W & Y are vowel parts

W E O A A A W N Y A K O H

of diphthongs that act and sound like consonants. This

W E O A A A W N Y A K O H

attitude avoids two symbols and lots of confusion with all

W E O A A A W N Y A K O H

vowels; if they don't blend to form diphthongs, disjoin them.

W E O A A A W N Y A K O H


Electronic composition and offset printing make digraphs

W E O A A A W N Y A K O H

obsolete and a single form feasible, even for numbers.

W E O A A A W N Y A K O H

Are you willing to pay \$2.00 for the full story in a 40 page book? But don't send money yet, till printing seems justified. Or are you content to settle for some reform that saves no paper or pollution and little work, making 3 to 5 separate forms still necessary?

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