

# Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1973

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

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[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1973 p1 in the printed version*]

## 1. English Boom: China Learning 2nd Language, by Robert S. Elegant, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

From *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 24, 1973.

HONG KONG – In times of internal crises, visitors to China were regularly awakened by loudspeakers booming political instructions to early rising workers.

Today, in a more tranquil period, foreign visitors are more likely to be aroused by radios blaring in English: "This is a pen." "This is a dog."

The People's Republic of China is in the grip of a new mass movement: an English boom is sweeping over the country.

From 6-year-olds to grandmothers, the nation has taken to the study of this language with zest. Hotel employees waylay foreigners to practice a cheery "good morning" or a "bye-bye." All students from the 8th grade upward are taking courses in English.

It is a far cry from the days when departments of English language were described as "cancers in China's universities."

### **Foreign Policy Shifts**

The men who govern China today have been preparing the nation for the major shifts in foreign policy just exemplified by agreement between Washington and Peking to exchange liaison missions. Even if there were not a host of other indications, the English boom alone would demonstrate Peking's determination to establish a relationship with the United States.

In addition, English is, as the Chinese authorities say, a most useful tool for "building up the country" and expanding contacts with the outside world.

Unlike the forced Russian language boom of the 1950's, the English campaign is largely spontaneous. As soon as the Government allowed it, students and their elders threw themselves into the study of the language.

The editor of one Chinese publication wrote: "For the Chinese people, English represents democracy and freedom, while compulsory Russian stood for dictatorship and repression."

All children now begin studying English about the age of 13. Through their university careers, they spend a minimum of four or five hours a week on English.

Peking is importing large quantities of English-language technical periodicals and books. They cover subjects from chemistry and engineering to agronomy and pharmacy

The single most extraordinary aspect of the English boom also tells a lot about the China of 1973. It is virtually nonpolitical in emphasis. When Russian was being pushed, largely against the will of the uninterested populace, extraordinary measures were necessary.

Every text stressed the "political significance" of studying Russian to "unite with the fraternal socialist countries." But the Chinese have not been forced to study English. Instead, they have behaved as if they were merely awaiting permission.

Peking has just published a Practical Daily English Vocabulary. The preface advises "Students who master this vocabulary will rapidly gain a good command of English and – either by using English or by teaching English – will be able to make great contributions to education and culture in our Socialist motherland."

Invariably and unavoidably new ideas are introduced by mass study of English. Though not endorsed, concepts of individual freedom which were only recently anathema are, at the very least, given much more exposure.

All is obviously not synchronized in China's English language boom, but the leaders are championing it with the same vigor they have shown in other enterprises.

*[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.5 pp283–286 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1973 pp2–5,18 in the printed version]*

## **2. Reading Failures, Dropouts, Delinquency & Crime, by Newell W. Tune**

### **Introduction**

Even tho the education of out children has been improved over the years, the quality of education in American schools is still inadequate. Too many pupils are not getting sufficient education. Bert Greene [\[23\]](#) states: Never before in our history have so many governmental community, social, and educational agencies been so concerned over the problems of youth who leave school before graduation – the dropout. And yet, for all the urgency and public concern, the dropout is not a new or rare problem. It has been, and is, one of the facts of our educational process and it will undoubtedly continue to be a fact until high school graduation becomes compulsory." But forcing students to remain in school when they can't learn anything or keep up with the learning rate of their fellow students is not a proper solution to the problem.

The school dropout problem has been said to be, "The nation's number one headache." Certainly it is the concern of every educator. Even our legislators seem worried about it. Senator Edward Kennedy [\[36b\]](#) writes: "325 years ago, the Colony of Massachusetts mandated the establishment of the first public schools in this country and ordered these schools 'to teach such children as shall report ... to write and read.'

"Yet today, our educational system has so badly failed us that more than 18 million American adults cannot read a newspaper.

"The cost of this failure is not solely personal. It is tallied on the nation's welfare rolls, prison logs, and unemployment files. Studies reveal that more than half of the welfare recipients in Chicago cannot read. In New Jersey, more than half of the prison inmates cannot read. In our largest cities, more than half of the young people under 21 who are unemployed cannot read.

"Every taxpayer pays for our failure to teach children to read and write well enough to function as adults in our society. Yet the treadmill continues to send illiterates out of the schoolhouse door. One quarter of the children attending school today have serious reading disabilities, according to the late Dr. James E. Allen, former U. S. Commissioner of Education."

But let us go to the source for this information. Dr. James E. Allen [\[1\]](#) writes, "When I came to Washington a year ago I knew that our schools and their 45 million pupils were in trouble. Statistics on school dropouts, teacher strikes, rejected school-bond issues and assaults on teachers spelled out the severity of the crisis. As I pored over reports from across the country, however, I began to realize that one of the most critical problems seldom made headlines: 25% of our pupils suffer from significant reading deficiencies; of these, 3 in 5 have problems so severe that they cannot be corrected in today's ordinary classroom.

"The shocking presence of 11 million crippled readers contaminates virtually every aspect of education. Quite obviously, it is at the heart of our nation's inability to educate the deeply deprived child of the ghetto, the backwoods or the isolated reservation. But it also strikes hard at children of our privileged middle class. Regardless of social or economic status, unless a child acquires essential reading skills by the end of the third grade, or is given intensive remedial reading instruction later, he is doomed to fall further and further behind his age group. The chances are that such a child will eventually either drop out to join the ranks of the under-21 unemployed (half of whom reportedly read at less than a fifth-grade level) or find some way to get into trouble (3/4 of all youngsters referred to juvenile court in New York City, for example, are two years or more below

grade level in reading)."

Byron Chapman [8] also calls attention to the need for reading skill, "The progressive refinement of our culture has brought reading skills into sharp focus. Once it was easy to earn a living by physical exertion alone. Today practically all jobs require the ability to read. Those adults who for one reason or another have not learned to read face almost unbelievable obstacles in making a living in our literate technological society."

William Armstrong [2] also continues along the same vein, "The most important thing happening in American education today is what is being done at school and in the home for the elementary school child. Upon this foundation the whole future of our education rests. It is becoming quite evident that the elementary school years can no longer be wasted. Today the child who finishes the eighth grade without intellectual stature and a good basic foundation in the primary subjects finds himself in serious trouble. If we, the school and the home, have required only 1/5 of capacity learning from our children in lower elementary school, we have demanded even less from the years which comprise the 5th, 6th and 7th grades. The qualities of the mind which develop during these years give lasting and enduring influences to 'the beginnings' which are sponsored, or should be sponsored, during the earlier years.

"The inability of American boys and girls to read, even when they have finished high school, had been made shockingly plain; first, by the great percentage of reading illiteracy uncovered by the examination of American youth during World War II; and secondly, by the fact that many colleges have had to introduce reading courses to save their freshmen classes. Tests have shown that although a person has been reading two or three hours a day for 12 years before he enters college, he simply does not know how to read well. The great majority of students entering college read too slowly, and still do not learn or understand as much as they should of what they read." It is precisely because they read so slow that they frequently fail to get much of the meaning. They forget what was at the beginning of the sentence.

We must get at the crux of the problem. New and better *methods* of teaching the same old status quo are not going to remove the basic cause of the trouble. Books, magazine and newspaper articles have been written by the hundreds – nay, thousands-about reading failures. One such book of 500 pages lists 538 references for its 29 authors, only one of which evinces any idea of the cause of reading failure. Most of these books seem to confine themselves largely to gathering endless statistics and making numerous tables of irrelevant data, most of which, instead of helping us to solve the problem, only create more confusion by its very ponderosity. How can one hunt thru the haystack to find the needle if one doesn't know what to look for? Very few worthwhile conclusions can be drawn from reading most of the books now in our libraries on reading failures and dropouts. (The two go hand in hand, yet you'd never guess it from most such books). And most of these conclusions are not clearly indicated because the authors themselves usually seem confused or do not have the power to analyze and logically deduce reasons for the causes.

Donald E. Smith [78] castigates those in the education field for not solving the problem of reading failures: "The nonreader has been with us since the dawn of literacy. No other educational problem has been so persistent, so frustrating, so rich in opportunity for scientific investigation, so prone to unscrupulous exploitation as reading disability.

"More than 15 thousand articles on the teaching of reading have appeared in professional journals in the last 40 years; failure in reading is the *largest single cause of school failure* during the grade-school years. With so much attention devoted to the teaching and learning of reading, it seems anomalous that the problem of the nonreader remains with us.

"It has been suggested by one investigator that clinicians are like a small group standing beside a river full of drowning people. The victims are being swept sea-ward by the current of time. The clinicians can pull out a few, but the rest are lost. Few of the group are willing to go upstream to find out how the victims got into the river in the first place.

"With respect to reading disability, many do go up the river to find the cause, but most get lost in the marshes of correlation."

Correlation – the bugaboo that is so invisible to most acceptors of the status quo of the irrational nature of our English spelling – the major cause of inability to learn how to read.

While it is true that there have been some improvements in teaching reading as evidenced by Eli Ginzberg and Douglas Bray [\[17\]](#), they wonder why our system of free education has not accomplished more: "In 1890 there were approximately 19 million gainfully occupied male workers. Approximately 14% of them, or one out of every seven, were unable to read and write in any language. These 2½ million illiterates were not distributed proportionally among the different regions and groups in the nation. As might be expected, the totals in the North and the South were strikingly different. Although the male labor forces of the North and the South were about equal in numbers, the South had 1.7 million illiterate workers as compared to only 370,000 in the Northeast. This made the illiteracy rate for gainfully employed males about one out of three in the South as compared to only one out of fifteen in the Northeast.

"It seems strange that the serious shortcomings inherent in the population revealed by these examinations had gone unnoticed in previous years, or if noticed, had failed to lead to remedial action. This question has particular pertinence with respect to the large number of young men in the country who were rejected for military service because they were adjudged to be mentally deficient. The United States has long been recognized as one of the richest countries in the world as well as one of the most democratic. One reflection of this economic well-being and democratic orientation has been the emphasis that has been placed for many generations on education, particularly free education, for every boy and girl in the country. Yet at the outbreak of World War II more than 4 million men on the labor force had less than five years of schooling; about 1½ million were totally illiterate.

"During World War II more than 5 million men liable for military service were rejected as unsuitable because of physical, emotional, mental, or moral disability. Since about 18 million men were examined, this implies that almost one out of every three young men was considered so handicapped that he could not serve his country in uniform during a major war. In the year following the outbreak of hostilities in Korea about a half million of the 1½ million men examined were rejected. Once again, the number and proportion of handicapped men were very large.

"Hidden within these startling figures is the still more startling fact that during World War II, 716,000 men were rejected on the grounds that they were mentally deficient: At the peak of mobilization the Army had 89 divisions. Those rejected for mental disabilities were the equivalent in manpower of more than 40 divisions. In the year following the outbreak of fighting in Korea, more than 300,000 were rejected on this same ground of 'mental deficiency.' Some were truly mentally deficient; many were only educationally deprived."

The facts about illiteracy should be upsetting to us. Harry Lindgren [\[47\]](#) writes from a British magazine, "An article on illiteracy in Britain in the October, 1972 *Nova* paints an appalling picture. According to it, one expert claims that of the 8½ million children in school today, half will never read well enough to enjoy a book, one in five will never be able to read more than comics, and one in ten will leave school virtually illiterate . . . After leaving school many people will lose what little

skill in reading and writing they do have. . After five years, up to 50% in some areas will be virtually illiterate."

This is also echoed by Hunter Diack [\[12\]](#), who quotes: "A member of Parliament, Mr. J. Pitman stated, 'Some 400 thousand to 500 thousand 5-year-olds begin their schooling every year, and some 120 thousand to 150 thousand are destined to come out of the school system unable to read properly. He referred to the Ministry of Education pamphlet (1947) entitled, *Reading Abilities*."

The very expressive team of Sibyl Terman & Chas. C. Walcutt [\[84\]](#) pose this challenging question: "Why is it that children find our English a difficult language to read?"

"Every fall millions of five- and six-year-olds go to school with sharp pencils and bright eyes – eager to learn to read. Three months later they are bored, frustrated, and either listless or disorderly, for they still have not started reading. Instead, they are being subjected to unnecessary exercises in hearing, noticing, and 'experiencing' which are presumed to ready them for reading but which in fact only tire, confuse, and disappoint. Three years later the majority of them still cannot read."

And Fred Schonell [\[73\]](#) continues: "Most children come to school eager to learn to read, but too many of them lose this initial enthusiasm through early failure and discouragement. Why is this so? The question can be largely answered in one sentence – because insufficient care is devoted to creating the correct type and amount of preparatory background for learning to read."

M. F. Pollack & Josephine Pierkarz [\[67\]](#) complain about the teaching of reading in English, "Teaching people how to read English is not easy. Even adults who are already fluent in reading another language often find written English arbitrary and baffling. And American children, when first faced with the necessity of associating the spoken with the written language, also find the task confusing and difficult. As a result, the teaching of reading has been a controversial issue in the United States ever since compulsory education became effective. Since that time, our schools have been expected to teach all of the children of all of the people how to read. This is a large undertaking." (Especially with such a capricious, unreliable spelling as a handicap.)

How the educators tried to accomplish this goal in the past is explained by Charles C. Walcutt [\[92\]](#), "There followed the reform movement, called progressive education, which accompanied, in the United States, a further enlargement of the public school system. The population was growing rapidly and the prosperity of the country inspired it to create the free public high school. The hope was that every citizen would be not merely literate but also educated.

"After a half century of this undertaking (p. e.), we who run businesses, carry on professions, work for the government, or engage in teaching itself are forced to admit that illiteracy is still with us. The Army and the draft uncovered an alarming percentage of genuine, Simon-pure illiterates, and the worlds of employment and of learning come upon a discouraging number of schooled illiterates – men and women, often greatly gifted, who have passed through the public school system and into college and yet who cannot read accurately or write intelligibly. Speaking for myself, I can say that among the highly selected graduate students in the university where I teach I find about one in ten who needs coaching in the elements of literacy – spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and diction. And these students cannot write because they cannot read. The origin of their plight is confirmed by the occasional would-be scholar who does not know the order of the letters of the alphabet and is unable to copy the title page of a book without error.

"The sheer inertia of a machine involving professional reputations, course offerings in colleges and universities – indeed whole curricula in schools of education – and great financial investments in textbooks is tremendous. Add to these the psychological resistance of people who have been

defending a system whose theory and justification they *do not themselves understand*, and you have perhaps identified the most important causes of our national plight: that considerably more than half (probably 75%) of our young people do not read as well as they could, and that at least 35% of them are very seriously retarded."

Just what proportion of our school children are retarded readers has been the subject of several researchers besides Walcutt. Florence Roswell & Gladys Natchez [72] say, "The number of children who cannot cope with school has been increasing. Authorities have variously estimated that children with inadequate reading skills measure as high as 33%, 28%, or as low as 11% of the school population. Whatever the percentage, most educators agree that the number of children who read less effectively than they should – and could – is far too high."

And Katherine de Hirsch [31] concurs with, "One of today's major social problems is the enormous number of children who, as a result of severe reading, writing, and spelling disabilities, are unable to realize their intellectual and educational potentials. The incidence of reading difficulties has been reported to be as high as 30% of the school population; more conservative estimates put the figure between 5% and 15%. According to the National Council of Teachers of English this would mean that *at least* 4 million elementary school children in the United States are disabled readers. 'The magnitude of the reading problem and the shattering impact of reading disability on personal and vocational adjustment should accord proposals for its correction a major position in mental hygiene programs,' states Leon Eisenberg, professor of child psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, in highlighting the urgency of the problem."

Some of our more logically minded teachers have drawn conclusions from these appalling statistics: for example, Arther Trace [86], "There are compelling reasons why the reading problem commands the attention of everyone who is interested in the future of our children and of the country. One of these reasons is the simple fact that reading is not merely a basic subject in school; it is *the* basic subject. If a student cannot read, he cannot learn history or literature or science or geography or any of the other basic subjects. He cannot even attempt to solve story problems in arithmetic if he cannot read. Upwards of 75% of what a good student learns in high school he learns through reading. It is estimated that a high school senior must read 42 million words a year merely to fulfill his assignments. So that if a student can read well, he can learn much, and if he reads badly he will learn very little." And if he is not learning, why should he want to stay in school?

Ruth C. Penty [65] in her book written in 1955, found among her 68 references, "Factual data relating to reading ability as a factor in the school dropouts are extremely limited. In fact, only four brief studies of this nature have been located." Most books do not even mention reading ability as a necessity for higher education and the lack of it as a possible cause of dropping out of school. But in the intervening years educators have gradually become aware of the correlation between reading retardation and dropping out of school.

Pearl Herlihy [29] writing in *Social Dynamite* from the Conference on Unemployed and Out of School Youth, brings up the importance of the dropout to society, "By 1960, public school authorities, guidance and employment service personnel, welfare agencies and informed citizens in general realized that school dropouts and unemployed youth constituted a problem of grave potential. Three-fifths of the state reports to the 1960 White House Conference treated the dropout question in some detail. Some state committees, such as Iowa's and the District of Columbia's, submitted special studies."

That we are aware of the dropout problem can be seen by the quantity of written material. Bert 1. Greene [23] says, "Published material on the dropout is voluminous. However, many articles which have been written merely exhort us to do something about the problem or tell us that there is a

problem, but add little to help us understand the problem." Most of these articles and books are devoted to gathering endless data about the characteristics of the dropout, interviewing him, trying to find out why he wanted to leave school when in fact he doesn't know himself. He is only unhappy with the situation. How can a person describe a color he has never seen? Or one he has seen, if he is not trained in color systems. It's another case of the blind interviewing the blind.

One such exhortation is worthy of note, T. J. Bond [\[3b\]](#) "The dropout problem is a crucial one for our country at a time when a more adequate supply of better educated and trained manpower is required. We can ill afford to lose the potential capacity possessed by the many students who withdraw from school before graduation. The failure of the dropout represents a failure of the American people. The primary function of the high school is no longer that of a college preparatory institution. More provision must be made to take care of those students whose completion of high school terminates their formal education." Quite true – but why not devote more effort to finding the cause of dropouts and eliminating it? (That is, assuming that there is one main cause).

That there is some relation between dropouts and delinquency and crime has not been ignored but yet not fully explored either. Bert I. Greene [\[23\]](#) says, "Part of our concern for the dropout is due to our uneasiness and inadequate methods of coping with the problem. We do not know what to do about a youth who wants to leave school before graduation. We have no place for these youths in our society. They are the 'tween agers,' between childhood and adulthood, between school and employment. Parents, educators, and employers find it difficult to cope with some of these youngsters. Thus, the feeling that these dropouts will become delinquents is frightening to us. Although these fears may be justified by our concern over the role of youth in our society and the fact that many delinquents are dropouts, we must not allow ourselves to make the assumption that all dropouts will be delinquents. By doing so, we do our youth a great injustice. In reality, only a small percentage of these youngsters get into trouble with the police." Or get caught. "Even if all delinquents are dropouts, the percentage would not even come close to the percentage of youth leaving school before graduation. If it were true that delinquents and dropouts are synonymous, we would not have enough law enforcement officers or jails to handle the problem. However, our apprehension that delinquency could increase is intensified because a greater number of young people are leaving school before graduation than in the past.

"It is somewhat ironic that those who are least ready to accept adult responsibility are the first to have this responsibility thrust upon them. The dropout, who leaves school at 16 or 17, is not prepared to meet the challenges of the world of work. He has demonstrated his inability to adjust to his school, his work, his teachers, and his peers. By the very act of dropping out of school he reveals his inability to cope with challenging situations."

And Judge Lester Loble [\[48\]](#) points out that there are more young criminals than ever before: He quotes J. Edgar Hoover, "It wasn't 1/10 of the crime in this country that was being committed by people under 20 – *half of this country's crimes were being committed by people under 19.* (And 90% or more of these J. D.'s are dropouts.)"

In August Kerber & Barbara Bommarito's book [\[37\]](#), there is a chapter by James B. Conant, which starts, "I submit that the existence in the slums of our large cities of thousands of youth ages 16-21 who are both out-of-school and out-of-work is an explosive situation. It is **Social Dynamite**.

"I do not have to remind this audience of the fact that the fate of freedom in the world hangs very much in the balance. Our success against the spread of Communism in no small measure depends upon the successful operation of our own free society. To my mind, there is no question that a healthy body politic necessitates a sound economy and high employment. The history of Communism shows that it feeds upon discontented, frustrated, unemployed people. The present



unemployment rate nationwide is roughly 7% for all age brackets, but the unemployment among youth under 20 years of age is 20%, or 3 times greater than the nationwide rate for all workers.

"In a slum area where over half the male youth are unemployed and out of school, we are allowing a grave danger to the stability of our society to develop. A youth who has dropped out of school and never has had a full-time job is not likely to become a constructive citizen of his community. Quite the contrary. As a frustrated individual he is likely to be anti-social and rebellious. Some of this group of youth will end up as juvenile delinquents.

No one would claim that providing full employment for youth in the large cities would automatically banish juvenile delinquency, for we all realize that the causes of this problem are complex and there is no one solution. However, I suggest that full employment would have a highly salutary effect."

Too few writers on the subjects of this thesis seem to have noticed any correlation between reading failure and juvenile delinquency and crime, but the few who did do not equivocate. Terman & Walcutt [84] said, "The idea that failure in reading is a contributing cause of juvenile delinquency is widely accepted. The school people agree but claim that they have tried their best to teach reading and that the delinquent boys are *incapable* of learning.

"To account for the greater number of boys than girls fail at reading, let us consider some findings about sex differences. They will explain also the tendency for the non-reading boy to become delinquent. It has been observed that, at primary-school age, girls are more docile, more willing to learn, less inclined to ask questions, more easily satisfied with purely formal activities. Boys are less docile; they are better than girls at problems that demand 'restructuring' rather than the application of simple techniques; they are more aggressive, less patient, more inclined to conduct that emphasizes their individuality. The brighter the boy, the less willing he will be to conform to a situation that does not appeal to him as reason- able." They are more logical in their thinking and resent being forced to accept as correct our illogical, irrational spelling. If you will notice, spelling errors among boys are often attempts to spell phonetically. But girls seem to be blessed with a photographic memory and usually do better with our erratic spelling.

Terman & Walcutt [84] quoted from Richmond Barbour in the Palo Alto *Times*, "A college professor studied the reading ability of successful men. Can you guess what he found? He found they almost all were very good readers. Doctors, lawyers, businessmen, engineers, scientists, teachers. They read rapidly. They comprehended what they had read.

"I've been comparing the reading ability of that successful group with the reading ability of a gang of unsuccessful adults – both men and women. They all are delinquent. Their crimes run from petty theft to murder.

"Can you guess what I've found about their reading? My group members are all poor readers. Some of them are bright, some are dull. Some are fat, some are lean. Some came from rich homes, some from poor ones. They have but one characteristic in common. They read slowly, stumblingly, without comprehension and without remembering what they've read. The difference between the groups is clear-cut and decisive. This does not mean that good readers don't ever become delinquent. A few do. And it doesn't mean poor readers are bound to become delinquent. Not that. Many poor readers are good citizens ' "

"But the comparison does point up the importance of reading. I am convinced that poor reading ability is one of the things that cause people to go bad. They fail at school. They get rebellious. They play hooky. They gang up. Then they turn to crime as their natural outlet. It's a cause-and-

effect relationship in many cases."

Again from Terman & Walcutt [84], "Juvenile delinquency has been receiving a good deal of attention in New York City, where the concentrated population has made its incidence more alarming than it is elsewhere in the country. Over and over again those in authority have pointed out that reading retardation goes hand in hand with truancy, school failure, and juvenile delinquency. A report to Mayor Wagner by Deputy Mayor Henry Epstein, 1955, says that 'failure in reading accounts more than any other single factor for behavior problems, truancy, and general school failure.

"To end this on a brighter note – all the teachers using the new and better methods of teaching reading, have made a special point of describing the happiness and good behavior, the alertness, respectfulness, and responsibility of children in their classes. It seems highly unlikely that such happy and productive children will become delinquents. They certainly will not become nonreaders, because they are reading in the first grade. It does not seem extravagant to expect that better teaching of reading will cause a substantial reduction of juvenile delinquency."

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### **3. Teaching Reading in English in India, by G. S. Mudambadithaya, MA, MEd, TESL\***

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English is taught as a library language in India today. It is taught and studied with a view to acquiring book knowledge. It is one of the languages in the three-language formula accepted by this country.

Whatever the future of English in India, one thing is certain, in our country English will maintain, quite probably increase, its immense usefulness as a library language. If an educated person wants to keep himself a-breast of the fantastic achievements in the field of science and technology and other fields of human experience, he has to cultivate the habit of reading pretty fast. More than half the number of books and periodicals on science and technology (58% according to the latest U.N. publication) are in English.

When there is little reading, there will be little learning. Reading should be the core of the syllabus. Only by reading can the pupils acquire the speed and skills he will need for practical purposes when he leaves school. In our literate society it is hard to imagine any skilled work that does not require the ability to read.

#### Reading

- a. Provides pupils with situations in which learning takes place.
- b. Professional competence depends upon reading.
- c. Further education depends upon the quality and quantity of reading.
- d. General knowledge depends upon reading.
- e. It is an essential part of education in providing useful experience and in forming healthy attitudes.
- f. Reading promotes international understanding.
- g. In India we have to develop our own languages and enrich them. Translations from other languages and production of original works are the needs of the day and reading is the royal road to reach this goal.

Therefore reading, in the Indian context, both in English and in the mother tongue, is the most important subject to be learnt by children. A child will learn little else in today's world if he does not first learn to read properly. It involves the whole personality, promising countless personal and social values. It is an entry into almost all vocations and is also one of life's inexhaustible pleasures and blessings.

Reading skill is dependent upon language facility, because reading is a language based process which is used for the transmission of meaning through the interpretation of printed symbols. Pupils learn to read in a communication context when reading occurs in conjunction with talking, listening and writing. Language and experience are two important cornerstones on which readiness for reading is built. Unfortunately many of our boys and girls do not master these pre-reading language skills before they start reading and consequently they become poor readers.

In our schools and colleges, students are expected to read a number of books in different subjects to pass their examinations. At the university level in particular, they are bogged down with reading. We know that their ability to read efficiently is appallingly low. Our university entrants are ill-

equipped to meet the challenge. Our examination-oriented system of education leaves them but one way, that is, to resort to 'simplified guides.' Students memorize answers to a few selected questions and somehow get through the examination, which ensures them their needed passport to employment.

It is high time we started thinking of ways and means of improving the reading ability of students. Reading is more than seeing words clearly, more than pronouncing printed words correctly, more than recognizing the meaning of isolated words. Reading requires one to think, feel and imagine. In any language, reading requires the child to see mentally the oral counterparts of the printed symbols. Only after he has done this does he respond with meaning to the printed symbols. It is a highly complicated skill and it needs careful teaching in the early stages.

When we start teaching English in Standard V, we introduce our children to all the four skills of language learning. Children start reading words and sentences off the blackboard and then they are introduced to reading in the prescribed textbooks, or readers. This much reading, however, is not sufficient to make our children efficient readers. Supplementary reading materials should be started by or before the end of the first year.

In the early stages, reading materials presented to the children should possess the following qualities:

- a. All the items in the books should be familiar to the children.
- b. They should be interesting and simple.
- c. They should be attractively illustrated.
- d. They should be in bold print.

As children move on to the high school, our approach needs certain changes. It should be the 'language experience approach' wherein teaching reading is integrated with the other three skills. Their ability to perceive, think and express has increased, and at this stage reading should include all perceptive observation of the real world around them. Their experience in L-1 has gone far ahead of their experience in L-2 and at this stage a really intelligent teacher should try to help the children to link their experience in the mother tongue to the new experience perceived through English. This will help them to understand better and quicker. As a practising psychologist, the teacher should bear in mind that there is no better motivation than success.

Apart from the prescribed supplementary readers, children should have access to as many useful books as possible during their secondary school years. Setting up class libraries is the best way to make the books available. The school library cannot cater to all the needs of individual children. Every class should have a library which contains books in L-1 and in English. The English books need not be strictly graded. Even if the language is slightly above the syllabus, children enjoy reading such books, provided the content of the books is interesting.

Each class library should contain about 100 carefully selected titles. Six of these should have multiple copies. These books can be used to give the children practice in silent reading in groups. The class leader should be in charge of the library, under the supervision of the class teacher. Books for class libraries can be selected from the following series:

1. Read and Tell Stories, Orient Longmans
2. Fables and Short Stories, Macmillan
3. Supplementary Readers, Oxford Univ. Press
4. Longman's Structural Readers, Longmans
5. They Were the First, Oliver and Boyd

## 6. Supplementary Readers, Children's Book Trust and Somayya Publications, Delhi.

The above series of books provide us with stories, fables, fairy tales, biographies, and books on science, inventions and discoveries. Many of them are beautifully illustrated. Apart from these books there should be a few dictionaries. Children should learn how to use dictionaries, atlases, timetables, and encyclopedias.

Before setting up class libraries, the following points should be borne in mind:

1. The ability of children to read in L-1 and L-2,
2. Their general academic achievement,
3. Their interests and aptitudes.

Children take abiding interest in reading, provided a proper environment is created in the class. The classroom should be a welcoming place where people are pleasant and helpful to one another. Instruction in reading should be integrated with the teaching of other subjects – the programme should aim at helping the children to

- a. increase their eye-span,
- b. comprehend and reproduce 'meaningful mouthfuls,'
- c. deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context,
- d. comprehend the material read at least at the first two levels, i.e.,
  1. understand the literal plain-sense meaning of the passage. (read the lines.)
  2. understand the author's intent and purpose: distinguish between facts and fiction. (read between the lines.)
- e. when the children have gone through the first two levels of reading, help them to read beyond the lines,
- f. handle books properly,
- g. use reference books correctly.

In order to stimulate growth in language abilities among children, it is advisable to have a 'sharing period' or 'telling time' at least once a fortnight. A few students in the class are asked to narrate the stories they have read, followed by a short discussion. This gives them a sense of achievement and the shy ones may come out of their shells and make an effort to participate in these discussions.

It is better to insist on each child keeping an individual record of what he has read. This may contain the title of the book, the author, the hero, and other characters in the story and so on. Brighter pupils can write their impressions of the book. If the child cannot express himself in English, his impressions of the book can be written in L-1.

We cannot hope to produce well-read young people from secondary schools. The most we can do is to make sure:

- a. we do not neglect any important skill,
- b. pupils find enjoyment in reading because, if they do not, they will stop reading when they leave school.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp6,7 in the printed version]

#### **4. Evidence Submitted to the Bullock Committee of Inquiry into Reading and the Use of English, by the i.t.a. Foundation, Dr. Douglas Pidgeon, Director\***

\*London, England.

In England the Secretary of State for Education and Science appointed the "Sir Allan Bullock Committee" to study the status of reading and English language instruction. Dr. Douglas Pidgeon, Director of The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, prepared a 25-page report which was submitted to Bullock's committee.

One of the main themes of this report is that *solutions to the major problems of beginning reading are already known*. What is now needed is *action* to achieve these solutions.

The first seven pages explain procedures to be used in making good the severe deficiencies in the development of language competence before children come to school. The next six pages explain the necessity for insuring that teachers receive better training in teaching beginners to read, and in knowing about the results that research has already supplied. The next section of 6 pages draws attention to the problems that are caused by continuing to use T.O. (Traditional Orthography) to teach beginners to read, and present a proven alternative.

The following are some excerpts from this report:

##### *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, it is argued that literacy (reading and writing) is primarily dependent upon oracy (listening and speaking). It is also argued that research over the past 10 to 20 years has indicated solutions to many of the obstacles to achieving full literacy, but that the dissemination of the results of this research has been slow and insufficient and little positive action has been taken to implement its recommendations.

The many factors which influence a child's learning to read in this country can be conveniently ordered into 3 groups:

1. those concerned with the development of language competence in the child's home background;
2. those associated with the teacher and with teaching and learning in the classroom;
3. and those resulting from the irregularities and inconsistencies in the spelling and pronunciation of the English language. These three groups are not unrelated, but much existing confusion can be dispersed with by considering them as separate issues.

##### **1. Development of Language Competence**

The word "oracy" in this paper is used to have an analogous meaning for listening and speaking that literacy has for reading and writing. Like literacy – the ability to read and write, oracy – the ability to listen (with, of course, understanding) and speak implies a continuum from no ability at one end to high ability at the other, and, as with literacy, the point at which oracy may be said to be achieved is purely arbitrary.

The lack of oracy in children from linguistically disadvantaged homes is a problem which demands attention in its own right. The fact that oracy is a necessary prerequisite of literacy both magnifies the problem and adds a sense of urgency to it. That little action has been taken to overcome the problem would appear to stem from the fact that, even where there has been an awareness of it, it has been regarded purely in educational terms and therefore to be solved within the main school system. Indeed, until very recently, any attempt to introduce cognitive learning into Nursery schools and classes has been met with stout resistance. Even in Infant schools, there are many teachers who, not having been trained to any awareness of the problem, have not appreciated that children with a linguistic deficiency are largely unable to learn language simply by listening to others. Such teachers have made no conscious effort to help them, and indeed, they may well have tried to teach them to read and perhaps been disheartened by their failure to succeed.

Oracy is an educational problem; but it is also a social one. Moreover, since learning to speak should normally occur before the age of three or four, it is one requiring action before the majority of children ever get to school. This means that the first priority ought to be directed at the child in his home, and that, in default, special efforts should be made during the first years at school to remedy the deficiencies as far as possible. [9]

## 2. The Role of the Teacher

If oracy is a necessary prerequisite of literacy, it is certainly not a sufficient one. Achieving a reasonable level of language competence does not mean that the skills of reading and writing will automatically be acquired. There are, of course, a number of children who will learn to read even before they start school, and others who will learn in school almost despite the efforts of the teacher; but for the vast majority, even when they have achieved the necessary degree of understanding of language structure, the skills and enthusiasm of the teachers play an indispensable part.

The importance of the teacher in teaching children to read has never been questioned. Yet, surprisingly enough, the vast majority of researches carried out on children's reading have been mainly concerned with the ways in which the methods, materials and procedures employed have influenced reading performance, and the teacher has only entered into the studies as a variable it has been necessary to control. Even accepting the fact that teachers varied in their ability to teach, few investigators have attempted to examine for possible interaction effects between teacher and method or material, and even fewer have sought to study those specific activities of the teacher which may have contributed to their pupils learning to read, irrespective of method or procedure. [11]

Specific research into teacher behaviour has also as yet been singularly lacking in demonstrating *how* teachers make a difference. While experimental research aimed at studying the act of teaching, and classroom investigations directed at improving the efficiency of teachers, are both giving promising leads for future work, no single factor has as yet been isolated of which it could be said that it was clearly and directly associated with improvement in pupil learning. [16 & 17]

On the more positive side, however, a number of research studies have been carried out in recent years which have supported the view that the attitudes of teachers – and the classroom practices they adopt as a result – are more important in determining pupil outcomes than the more material factors such as school buildings, size of class and the textbooks or apparatus provided. It was the teachers in *non-streamed* schools holding *streaming* attitudes whose pupils came out worst in the Barker-Lunn

Studies [18]: similarly, failure was the greatest for those pupils in the Burstall study [19] whose teachers believed that they were incapable of learning French.

These and other studies [20] have demonstrated that the beliefs and attitudes of teachers can exert a profound influence on the kind and level of performance they are led to expect from their pupils.

The more permissive attitudes in the unsuccessful schools appeared ambiguous; while showing more "sympathy" for the children, some teachers tended to be condescending in their attitudes and underestimated their pupils' abilities, thus depressing achievement.

The need for the active involvement of teachers is supported by Southgate. Accepting the fact that the brighter and more advantaged children will learn to read anyway, she says: "Yet I am certain that many other children will fail to learn to read in infant classes unless a great deal of guidance and instruction is undertaken by the teacher. There are some children who would be neither 'motivated' nor 'ready' by the time they were eight or nine or ten, if someone did not do something about it" [26] The danger is not that children will develop an aversion to reading if they learn too soon, but that delay will not only deny for them the sheer enjoyment that reading can bring and close the doors to other learning, but that it must create such permanent damage to their own self-image that their chances of future success diminish rapidly and they are often forced to choose the only alternative known to them to opt out of the learning situation, and possibly out of society itself.

The importance of the teacher in teaching children to read can hardly be denied. What is perhaps extraordinary about the situation is that the results of research and the proclamations of experts have largely been ignored for almost two decades. Summarising Joyce Morris' work in the mid-fifties, Cox [27] says:

". . . 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 at present." "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."

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. There are undoubtedly many teachers performing near miracles with the most unpromising of material, but there are also many others so completely ignorant of even the basic findings of research or the publications of experienced teachers, that some surprise might be expressed that the amount of reading failure in schools is not greater. Some teachers will have received bad or indifferent initial training; others, having had the task of teaching beginners thrust upon them, may have had no training at all; [28] certainly very few will have taken any worthwhile in-service course in recent years.

The implications are clear; more and better training in the teaching of reading is required-and not only for those teachers destined for infant schools. While research will continue and the possibility that some new idea for teaching reading may yet appear, it is more likely that knowledge of the media, methods, materials and procedures required for teaching even the most difficult or backward child is already available. But this knowledge alone is not enough. Training – whether initial or in-service – should emphasise the importance of teacher attitudes and how they can influence pupil motivation.

### **3. The Medium Through Which Reading is Taught**

It is a well-known fact that English is a comparatively easy language to learn, at least as far as the everyday *spoken form* of it is concerned. This is largely because, in comparison with such languages as French, German, Russian, Greek, and many others, it has a relatively simple



grammatical structure. There is no inflection for gender, case or number on the articles; there is a lack of gender, apart from that which is natural, in nouns and, with few exceptions, the plural is very simply formed; there is an absence of inflection on adjectives, and the verbal forms in different tenses are, for the most part, relatively simple.

In view of this, it is surprising that, compared with children in many other countries, such a high proportion in England have difficulties in learning to read. Wijk [\[30\]](#) says:

"It has been estimated that it takes an English-speaking child from one to two years longer to learn to read and write his language than it takes the children of other nations to achieve similar results in their language."

He refers to the relatively large numbers of backward readers quoted in England [\[31\]](#) and America, [\[32\]](#) and continues:

"There can be no doubt whatever that this regrettable state of affairs is mainly due to the confused and antiquated spelling system and not, for example, to unsuitable methods of teaching. [\[33\]](#)

In view of what has been said in the previous two sections of this paper, this is somewhat of an over-statement. Nevertheless, it emphasises a difficulty that English children have in learning to read and write that is apparently not present in many other countries.

Possibly because of the difficulties involved, it would seem that no *empirical* studies comparing children's learning to read in different languages have been carried out. Lee [\[34\]](#) contacted more than 30 countries, chiefly European, but was unable to compare the "**regularity**" of a language and reading success, nor could he establish any close association between "regularity" and the methods used to teach reading. This was largely because the few names of reading-instruction methods were variously used, there was little agreement as to what constituted good or bad reading, achievement (however defined) was not measured and spelling regularity had never been the subject of reading research. He was able to conclude, however, that "by comparison with English, the languages of the countries mentioned are regularly spelt."

In languages in which there is a reasonable correspondence between the printed word and the spoken word, the spelling of the printed word does not seem to constitute a serious problem to the learner of reading, and it would appear that children learn to read more quickly than they do in England. In Italian, for example, the Director General de Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione is quoted as saying [\[35\]](#).

"We do not have the problem to which you refer, because the rules for pronouncing the Italian language are simple and easily learned. Therefore, children who are not disturbed in mind and/or character learn to read correctly during the first year of school."

Again, in the debate on the second reading of the Spelling Reform Bill [\[36\]](#), Prof. Savory (Queen's University, Belfast) said:

"The young Spaniard who is learning his mother tongue, once he knows the significance of each letter and what sound each letter indicates, can read and write the language with the utmost facility, and I strongly believe the calculations that have been made that the Spanish child has a gain over the unfortunate English child, condemned to the torture of this illogical spelling, of at least two years."

Evidence that the irregularities and inconsistencies in the spelling and pronunciation of the English language is a major cause of reading (and writing) difficulties, is not confined to comparisons with

other languages. Concern with the limitations of the 26-letter roman alphabet to represent the 40 or so sounds of English, has been expressed by many people. Pitman and St. John [37] review four centuries of proposed innovations directed at improving the learning of reading in English by reforming the spelling of the printed word, although the attempt to introduce reform for the sole purpose of initial learning, with the intention that the proposed changes should be abandoned once the child had attained an appropriate degree of reading fluency, is relatively recent. Schemes recently suggested for this purpose have either retained the existing alphabet unchanged, but have introduced aids to a reliable system of word decoding and encoding through the addition of diacritical marks (e.g. Fry, [38] Johnson [39]) or the use of colour in some form (e.g. Gattegno, [40] Jones [41] and Bleasdale [42]), or they have augmented the existing Latin Alphabet by adding new characters in order to regularise the spelling rules (e.g. i.t.a.), or they have employed a system of 18 digraphs made up from 23 lower-case letters retained from the present alphabet to form discrete symbols for the 18 sounds not covered by the 23 letters. [43]

The advantages and disadvantages of using some form of regularised medium for the beginning stages of learning to read have been summarised by Southgate and Roberts. [44] Like many of the suggested schemes themselves, their summary consists largely of a set of unverified hypotheses, since, with the exception of i.t.a., [45] few empirical studies have been carried out to test the efficiency of the innovations. The studies that have been carried out show unequivocally that learning to read in Traditional Orthography is not the best way to learn to read Traditional Orthography. [46] Southgate has undertaken a comparative analysis of colour codes with i.t.a., [47] reaching the conclusion:

"This brief appraisal of four new media, three colour codes and i.t.a., shows that each has certain advantages over the use of ordinary T.O., although the advantages vary between the media. Any teacher who is convinced that the irregularities of the traditional spelling system of English are a hinderance to children who are learning to read and write would be failing in his professional capacity if he omitted to examine these approaches carefully. If the teacher also considers it important to find a simplified encoding system for children, if he wishes to encourage children's free writing from the beginning and to provide opportunities for individualised discovery methods of learning, he cannot fail to note that i.t.a. fulfills those criteria while the *colour codes do not set out to do this*.

There are three points arising from this quotation which deserve further comment. Firstly, it is interesting to observe that Southgate finds it necessary to qualify her own initial conclusion about the disadvantages of T.O. by giving deference to the beliefs of teachers. It was stressed in the previous section that teachers will be most successful in doing what they believe is right for them. It would seem regrettable, however; that there must be many of tens of thousands of teachers still teaching beginners to read through the medium of T.O. simply because they are not aware of the difficulties and problems it can bring to many children.

The second point worthy of note is that Southgate makes a separate and distinct reference to encoding or writing. Whether reading and writing should be taught together from the beginning, or whether reading should precede writing by some specified period of time would seem to depend upon the views of the teacher and the requirements of the individual child-research results are not very forthcoming on this issue. But Southgate is emphatic about the relationship between free writing and i.t.a. Elsewhere, [48] commenting on a class that had been using i.t.a. she says: "Free writing in the class appeared more spontaneous, prolific and correctly spelt than is usual with such young children." This last conclusion has been amply confirmed by other research evidence. [49]

The final point is one of great significance. Informal, child-centered, individualised discovery methods are increasingly being used in infant and primary schools today, and may well be

successful with mathematics and science where there are many regular rules to be discovered by the eager highly-motivated child. But what "regular rules" are there to be learned in reading and writing the English language? Again, Southgate drives the point home: "If the written form of our language represented a one-to-one relationship between written symbol and spoken sound, we might have a reasonable basis for hoping that, by heuristic methods, children could be encouraged to discover these relationships and so form generalisations. But our spelling system actually *prevents children from making generalisations*." [50] Southgate, in fact, demonstrates just how discouraging and frustrating it must be for children who attempt to form "rules" or mental concepts when learning in T.O. Merritt [51] takes this idea even further and suggests there is a relationship between the difficulties that many children must have, and the experimental neurosis which can be induced in animals. "In both cases," he says, "there has been some initial learning and this has broken down when the discriminations have proved too difficult, too confusing." He also gives some examples of the illogicalities of T.O. and adds: "If one were deliberately to design a situation for trying to induce experimental neurosis one could scarcely do better than use the beginning reading situation as a model." In his view, the only consolation is that "the presence of a teacher who is warm in manner and methodical in approach makes an appreciable difference."

The case against the use of T.O. for teaching beginners to read would seem to be irrefutable. And once again the solution is already available. Almost any change in the present orthography would be better than none, and without doubt the sooner the change is made the better for all children concerned. Some of the advantages of i.t.a. over other schemes for improving T.O. for the beginning of reading, mentioned by Southgate, have already been quoted. The Schools Council's *Independent Evaluation of i.t.a.* [52] listed other advantages and some disadvantages. Most of the latter, however, must also be listed as shortcomings of any scheme to improve T.O., and the fact that in any case they can be overcome has been proved by the many thousands of teachers at present using i.t.a. [53] One listed disadvantage needs specific mention. No changed medium can work without a sufficiency of books and materials in that medium for the teacher to use. In this respect, there is considerable difference between the media using colour and/or diacritical marks and i.t.a. The former have only a limited range of materials available, mostly related specifically to their own particular scheme; i.t.a., however, is applicable to any beginning reading scheme and a vast range of supplementary books and materials is now available in that medium.

The possibility that at some future time an even more advantageous medium than i.t.a. might be invented, cannot of course be ruled out. Warburton and Southgate [54] were aware of this point. Having reviewed both research and verbal evidence, they conclude:

"Although the two kinds of evidence on which this report was based were evaluated by means of different techniques, by two people whose backgrounds, interests and beliefs were far from identical, the conclusions proved to be fairly consistent and to lead broadly in the same direction – that is, towards a favourable impression of i.t.a. as a means of beginning reading with infants."

They then continue:

"However, the authors considered that it would be unfortunate if the generally favourable tone of their report were taken to imply that the use of i.t.a. for beginning reading with infants was the final and only solution. They were conscious that only one new medium had been compared with certain traditional ways of using T.O., and that other media or other ways of using T.O. might be found to be equally or even more effective than i.t.a."

This last reference to "other ways of using T.O." partially negates their own very thorough and painstaking work. It also ignores the conclusions drawn by Southgate quoted above and the results of other comparative studies that have been carried out. Nevertheless, their main point is a sound

one, and worthy to be considered, although their only recommendation was a plea for yet, more research.

What they have overlooked is the fact that during the years while the "large scale" and "fundamental" research they recommend must first be financed and then carried out [55], and while the world awaits the conclusion whether any improvement has been found and whether it is *significantly more effective*, there are hundreds of thousands of children in each yearly age group who now pass through the English education system still emerging as very poor or non-readers. This threatens the general educational level of a very large number of the future citizens of this country.

## References

[The first 8 references were not included.]

9. Dr. Kellmer Pringle reports in *Ten Thousand Seven-year Olds* that 21.4% of her sample were deficient in "oral ability," unable to "use simple word grouping."
10. In these words *Methods* largely distinguishes "look & say" from "phonic," *Materials* describes supplementary books, apparatus, games, pictures, charts, etc, and *Procedures* includes types of pupil grouping, formality of pupil/teacher relationship, degree of emphasis on additional activities and use made of materials. As will be mentioned later, the *Medium* which these three must necessarily employ is essentially different.
11. Morris, J. M., in *Standards and Progress in Reading*, NFER, 1966, did attempt to obtain measures of the "teachers' contribution." Subjective assessments of such attributes as "effort made to improve material classroom conditions:" "beliefs about the acquisition of reading skills" and "suitability of reading practice" were made. Her analyses showed that a clear association existed between "good" and "bad" teachers and [\[41\]](#) "good" and "bad" schools and pupils.
16. Rosenshine, B. *Teacher Behaviour and Student Achievement*. Slough, NFER. 1971, and "New Directions for Research on Teaching" in *How Teachers Make a Difference*. U.S. Gov't. Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1971.
17. The nearest approach to any indication of such a factor for improving the efficiency of teachers is supplied by No. 12 of *The Main Advantages of i.t.a.* given on page 153 of Warburton, F. W. and Southgate, V., *The i.t.a. – An independent Evaluation*. John Murray and W.& R. Chambers, London, 1969: "Teachers also rated it as an advantage that the introduction of i.t.a. has stirred up a great interest in reading among ourselves; attendances at lectures and conferences, as well as staffroom discussions have contributed to an increase in teachers' own understanding of children's learning, with a consequent increase in their teaching proficiency. This view was supported by head-teachers, local advisers and other visitors to schools, who also noted particularly an improvement in the proficiency of less able and less experienced teachers when they used i.t.a. rather than T.O."
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19. Burstall, C. *French in the Primary School*, Slough, NFER, '70
20. Pidgeon, D.A. *Expectation and Pupil Performance*, Slough, NFER, 1970.
26. Southgate, V. "The Importance of Structure in Beginning Reading" in *Reading Skills: Theory and Practice*. Gardner, K. (ed.) Warde Locke. 1970.
27. Cox, M. *The Challenge of Reading Failure*, NFER, Slough, 1968.
28. It is interesting to note that in her Kent Studies carried out in 1954-57, Joyce Morris, *Reading in the Primary School*, Newnes London, 1959, found about 45% of children entering junior schools at 7 "still needed the kind of teaching associated with the infant school"; yet 75% of first-year junior teachers had no training in infant methods and 52% had no infant school

experience. Now, more than 15 years later, because no *action* was taken, the position would seem to be very little different.

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33. Wijk, A., op. cit.
34. Lee, W.R., *Spelling Irregularity and Reading Difficulty in English*. NFER, London, 1960.
35. Quoted in *Optional Spellings*, Spring, 1972 issue. Palm Springs, Cal. U.S.A.
36. Hansard, 11th March, 1949.
37. Pitman, Sir James and St. John, J. *Alphabets & Reading*. Pitmans. London, 1969.
38. Fry, E.B. "A Diacritical Marking System to Aid Beginning Reading Instruction." *Elementary English* v. 41, 5th May, 1964.
39. Johnson, H. *The Sound Way to Correct Spelling*. (Three graded spelling books based on a phonic approach), Longman. London.
40. Gattegno, C. "Words in Colour System." *Forward Trends*, VII, 4, The Guild of Teachers of Backward Children, London. 1964.
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42. Bleasdale, E & W. *Reading by Rainbow*. Moor Platt Press. Bolton, 1966.
43. Phonemic Spelling Council (formerly Simplified Spelling Association of America). *World English Spelling*. Lake Placid Club, N.Y. 1971.
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45. Up to the present time over 80 studies using control groups have compared i.t.a. and T.O.-taught children. Over two-thirds have demonstrated the superiority of i.t.a. on a variety of measures. None has produced consistent results in favour of T.O. See Block, J.R., *i.t.a. Status Report*. The i.t.a. Foundation, Inc., Hofstra Univ. New York, 1971.
46. The one possible exception is Brimer, M.A., "An Experimental Evaluation of Coded Scripts in Initial Reading," in *New Research in Education*, NFER, 1967. This was a rather artificially conducted experiment concentrating on word recognition only.
47. Southgate, V. "Comparing colour codes with i.t.a." in *Reading & the Curriculum*. Merritt, J.E. Ward Lock, London, 1971.
48. Southgate, V. "Augmented Roman Alphabet Experiment. An Outsider's Report." *Educational Reaw.* 16, 1, 1963.
49. Block, J.R. "But Will They ever Learn to Spell Correctly?" *Educational Research*, 14, 3, 1972.
50. Southgate, V. "The Importance of Structure in Beginning Reading" in *Reading Skills: Theory and Practice*. Gardner, K. (ed.) Ward Lock, London, 1970.
51. Merritt, J.E. "Reading Failure." (Paper read at U.K.R.A. Conference, 1971).
52. Warburton, F.W. and Southgate, V. *i.t.a.: An Independent Evaluation*. John Murray and W. & R. Chambers, London, 1969.
53. The i.t.a. Foundation has received many letters from teachers giving evidence of their outstanding success with i.t.a. The Appendix quotes, with permission, a letter written by a Headmistress to the Secretary of State, D.E.S.
54. Warburton, F.W. and Southgate, V. *i.t.a.: An Independent Evaluation*. John Murray and W. & R. Chambers, London, 1969
55. Like other research recommendations, no action to implement this has yet been taken.

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp11–13 in the printed version*]

Those readers of the *Spelling Progress Bulletin* summer issue who studied Henry Fiske's speech and Exhibits B and C will recognize the value of the merge dictionary for any new spelling system.

This uses the reform alphabet not only as the pronunciation key for T.O. words, but also combines it with T.O. for the left-hand entries. In this merger the child may seek definitions for the words he sees in both his reformed spelling and T.O. books. Further, when he writes, the child will be allowed to spell words in accordance with either the Reformed spelling or T.O. entries. Either spelling will be acceptable, and will be used interchangeably. As far as the child is concerned, his reformed spellings are on the same level as the T.O. spellings. This will be like the present practice of some teachers to accept the form *thru* as readily as *through*. Eventually the child will favor, and wish to write, only the consistent forms such as WES *fizics* instead of *physics*.

When using the merged dictionary, a pupil who has heard the word /thie' sis/ can find it spelled as it sounds, with the meaning "pulmonary tuberculosis". He will see no cross-reference information that the T.O. spelling is *phthisis*. That form can die the natural death it deserves. (Fortunately, even in Denver – former haven for sufferers from /thie' sis/ – modern medicine has practically eliminated the need for using the word in any form.)

## **5. HOMONYMS IN WEBSTER – DEWEY DYNAMIC DICTIONARY\* HENRY FISKE**

At the International Reading Association convention, Denver, Colorado, May 1973, in a panel discussion sponsored jointly by the I.R.A. and the Phonemic Spelling Council, Henry Flake, panel member, introduced a proposed merging of the Webster Elementary Dictionary and the World English Spelling Dictionary (Dewey) in such a manner that the resultant dynamic dictionary could be used as a handbook in transliterating traditional orthography into World English Spelling.

This concept was relayed by Dr. John Downing, president of England's Simplified Spelling Society, who attended the convention, to his friend Bruce Kemble, Education Reporter of the London Daily Express. Mr. Kemble appeared very much interested in Henry Flake's speech which subsequently was printed as an article in the summer issue of *Spelling Progress Bulletin*.

Mr. Kemble was particularly interested in how the author would handle the sticky problem of homonyms such as *rain, reign, rein*. Exhibit A is Mr. Kemble's letter to PSC Co-ordinator, Helen Bonnema, inquiring about this matter.

Expanding on the original premise that the publication of a Webster-Dewey Dynamic Dictionary would be valuable, the author now submits this article and Exhibit B to show specifically how the *rain, reign, rein* homonyms might appear. Coincidentally, the *ray, ray*, and the *rail, rail* homonyms are included on the same page. As can be seen, a refined use of Arabic digits extrapolated from the sister science of mathematics further reveals keys to following WES orthography back thru the corridors of traditional orthography without eliminating any T.O. words.

It is recognized that if WES becomes the accepted initial learning medium, and the dictionary is consulted constantly, the further disuse of some of the more difficult T.O. words might result. An accelerated spelling reform would take place purely on an evolutionary basis.

Incidentally, the author has used *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* in his exhibits merely because a copy was readily available, but this does not preclude the use of any wall-structured dictionary. The

author thanks the G. & C. Merriam Company for providing a launching pad for the concept but in no way implies that any contact has been made with any dictionary publisher.

Credit for accurate transliteration from T.O. to WES goes to Helen Bonnema, coordinator for associates of the Phonemic Spelling Council.

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May 10 1973

BK/BRS

Dr Helen Bonnema  
Education Department  
Temple Buehl College  
Denver  
Colorado

Dear Dr Bonnema

I am the Education Correspondent of the Daily Express. I have been working with a mutual friend, Professor John Downing, for the past 6 years trying to arouse interest in Britain in the problem of illiteracy.

I met him yesterday and he said that you might be able to help as to trace an engineer who has an interesting suggestion for solving the difficulties of traditional orthography in the English language.

Dr Downing said that this man wants to produce what he calls "THE WEBSTER/DEWEY DYNAMIC DICTIONARY" and he suggests, as I understand it, that each word should have an alternative spelling printed underneath it in the dictionary to get round the eccentric and illogical spelling system now used in Britain. I do not understand how this man copes with the problem of words which sound the same but have different meanings e.g. rein, rain and reign.

Perhaps you could tell me his name and address so that I could find out more about this fascinating idea and explain it to my readers.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Yours sincerely**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Bruce Kemple', written below the typed name.

BRUCE KEMBLE  
EDUCATION REPORTER

Exhibit A

Registered in London No 141748. Registered Office: 121 Fleet St London EC4A 2NJ





## 6. Spelling Reforms in Dutch, by Jan A.L. Vaernewijck\*

Under the title *Language Reform in the Netherlande* Helen Bonnema commented in Volume XII, No. 3 of this Bulletin a report in the Rotterdam newspaper *Handeleblad* on a public opinion survey concerning spelling reform. Bonnema's title seems an expression of the current failure to distinguish between *language* and *spelling*. However, by carefully reading the article one can see that Bonnema is also handling about the *evolution* of the dutch language itself. But the article is mainly dealing with spelling, so *Spelling Reform* would have been a more adequate title.

The editor of this bulletin invited me to write a more elaborate article about this matter. With great pleasure I accept this invitation, for the readers of this Bulletin need some more information on Dutch spelling and possible reforms out of the first hand. As secretary of the ten years old *Vereneging voor wetenschappelijke spelling* (Association for scientific Spelling) in the Netherlands, I think I can do the job.

In the first place I wish to stress the fact that there is only one Dutch language: a Flemish language does not exist! Since the creation of the Belgian State in 1830 with French as official language the Dutch dialects in Belgium were referred to as Flemish. Modern linguists use now the term *Netherlandic* for the common language of the Dutch and Flemish peoples. Of course there are some differences in the use of words, conditioned by the fact of living in two states; there are marked differences in pronunciation between the north and the south, separated not by the state frontier but by the big rivers. One can compare this with the differences between the North and the South in France. Of course the separation in 1830 and the French-minded Belgian State over a century provoked a disparate evolution among the Dutch and the Flemings; education, Dutch as vehicular language in the Flemish universities and in the last decennium the influence of Dutch television in Flanders are flattening the minor differences that existed in the time Adriaan Barnouw wrote his book (1940).

It is true that in the southern dialects the three genders are a living fact, while this is no more true in Holland (the region called Bandetad, about the two provinces North- and South-Holland, with Amsterdam and Rotterdam). The pronomial indication for masculine and feminine, included in spelling rules of De Vries and Te Winkel, became too difficult for a great part of the Dutch speaking people, and it was very natural that many teachers adhered to the association of Kollewijn. It is insane to base spelling rules on extinct linguistic facts.

Let us now review the orthography of Dutch during the centuries. In middle Dutch the spellings were rather phonemic, but differed from writer to writer. Later on, in the Golden Century, when cultural life was moved to Holland, some writers and grammarians tried to fix an orthography, sometimes based on the standard pronunciation, but also on classical grammar (artificial plural of imperative). There was no official spelling.

The first regulation of the spelling in the Netherlands is certainly the project of Matthijs Siegenbeek, published in 1604. There were objections against it, among others by Bilderdijk, but his spelling was after some time rather generally adopted in the Netherlands. The Siegenbeek spelling was however never adopted in Belgium. Even religious objections were used: the Siegenbeek spelling (aa instead of ae etc.) was the spelling of the Dutch Calvinists! The Flemish continued to use older spellings. At the first Congresses of Language and Literature (1849-1850) the desirability of a dictionary of the Dutch language was uttered. A commission consisting of North- and South Netherlanders conducted by professor Mattijs de Vries was preparing the project; the project of De Vries was generally accepted at a Congres in Brussels in 1851. For the purpose of

the dictionary a Leiden teacher was asked to regulate the spelling on a firm and more scientific base. As a result: the *Grondbeginselen der Nederlandeche Spelling* (Basic Principles of the Dutch Spelling) by De Vries and Te Winkel, 1863. The difficult rules of it are the beginning of "100 years spelling struggle." [1] The spelling of De Vries and Te Winkel was soon adopted in Belgium; in Holland after some time the Royal Speech at the opening of the Session of the Parliament was written in this spelling, and so it became the official orthography.

As Bonnema pointed out this spelling was too difficult for children (and even for the largest part of all adults) by the multiplicity of rules. The basic idea is a very sound one: it is the phonemic rule, the rule of the cultivated pronunciation. But unfortunately this good rule is in many cases suppressed by three other rules: conformity, analogy, derivation (etymology). Te Winkel made a "scientific" spelling, in the sense of an etymological one: for the spelling of the phoneme [ɛi] one had to know middle Dutch (or an archaistic dialect) and modern and even older French to make the right choice between *ei* and *ij*; for the *oo* versus *o* and *ee* versus *e* spellings for the phonemes [o] and [e] in the so called "open" syllables the requirements were still further going: one had to know Gothic! Te Winkel used the double spellings in those cases where the Gothic word had a diphthong (some people speaking certain dialects of knowing German could have less trouble in finding the required spelling). For the four spellings of the phoneme [ɔu] : *ou*, *ouw*, *au*, *auw*, he could only give some imperfect rules. Although the old Germanic *sk*, changed to *sch*, had become since centuries *s* at the end of words and syllables in general Dutch, De Vries and Te Winkel maintained *sch*.

It is not surprising that a lot of teachers felt unhappy with those spelling rules. The first step towards simplification was the article of Dr. R.A. Kollewijn in 1891 *Onze lastige spelling* (Our troublesome spelling), that got much resonance and led to the foundation of the *Vereniging tot vereenvoudiging van onze schrijftaal*, the last word being changed later correctly into spelling (Association for the simplification of our spelling), in 1893. Many teachers became member of the association, and also a lot of writers, who used in their books the simplified spelling of Kollewijn. After about four decennia most of Kollewijns proposals were allowed in the schools by the minister of Education, Mr. Marchant. However many firms their clerks to use the "old" spelling, and the so-called Marchant-spelling was not adopted in Belgium. Just before World War II negotiations had started between the governments of the Netherlands and Belgium about the simplification of the spelling. In the meanwhile the ambiguous situation in Holland and the actions of the conservatives led to the suppression of the Marchant-spelling. The most silly arguments, well known to the readers of this bulletin, were put forward by the opponents; during the war some of the Dutch Nazis didn't hesitate to compare the Marchant-spelling with the joint evils of plutocrats, socialists and Jews!

But finally the simplification was inevitable: the "new" spelling (about the Marchant version of Kollewijns) was introduced in education and administration in Belgium in 1946 by Royal Decree, and in the Netherlands in 1947 even by law! (This seems a rather unique fact – the consequences are that any change in the spelling of Dutch words needs a revision of the Spelling Law in Holland!). We got rid of the *e/ee*-alternations, *o/oo*, *s/sch* (except in the suffix *-isch* (pronounced as [is] – Kollewijn wrote *-ies*) and the old masculine case-endings became facultative. The association of Kollewijn was dissolved. The problem of foreign loanwords (called "bastard words"), the pronomial indication and some minor problems should be solved by a special commission, that had to provide a new word list of the Dutch language, to replace the old list of De Vries and Te Winkel. After seven years the list was finally published. It provoked much displeasure among Dutch teachers, especially for the words of Greek or Latin origin with Latin *c* the list presented so many alternative forms (sometimes six different spellings were allowed!) that it became useless for schools. The Dutch Teachers Associations began to use a much more simplified spelling in their own publications. The Dutch minister of Education promised a soon revision of the list. In the meanwhile the two governments tried to get rid of the multiple forms by decreeing that the so-called "preference spelling" of the list should be used in administration and in the schools, in this way

forbidding allowed forms! The worst was that the preference of the commission was extremely inconsistent: the commission consisted of progressive and conservative members, and the "green booklet" is an example of the funest consequences of a silly compromise. The commission only could agree for two radical changes: *rh* is always replaced by *r*, and *ph* always by *f*. For the *th* of Greek origin only at the end of a word and following another consonant it was replaced by *t*, in the other cases *th* was retained next to *t*, with mostly preference for *th*. For the *c/k* the list is a complete chaos: sometimes only *k* allowed (kapitaal), sometimes only *c* (*complex*), in most cases both spellings, with a few times no preference at all, in others with preference for *k* (*produkt, vakantie*) and in many cases with preference for *c* (*cultuur*); even the preference of the commission was inconsistent with itself: *massaproduct* versus *produkt* (about fifty of those "mistakes" may be found in the list!) The "solution" for Latin *qu* and *x* is analogous: preference spellings are: *kwestie, quaestor; seksueel, examen*. Any knowledge of Latin and Greek is useless: of all the words with Greek *κατα* about half are with *c*, the others with *k*. Nobody can write correctly without the list!

There was one good effect of the list: quite nobody was satisfied, newspapers use different spellings, children and also adults (and even writers and journalists) care less and less for spellings especially for verb forms. The interest for a better simplification grew January the 3rd 1963 a new association was founded: the *Vereniging voor wetenschappelijke spelling* (Association for scientific Spelling – the adjective "scientific" stands for phonological, a term, being unknown to most people). The association has members in the whole Dutch speaking area, and a direction board of Dutchmen and Flemings.

In March 1963 the Dutch minister of Education and the Belgian minister for Dutch Culture installed a joint Dutch-Flemish commission for the "bastard words", that had to advise on short term about the ways of arriving at *one* spelling without alternatives, in a *phonological* sense and trying to make it as Dutch as possible. This charge was clearly in a progressive direction, and the Belgian minister was optimistically declaring this. The "short term" became four years: in 1967 the report of the commission was published. In a certain way it was progressive, with phonological spellings as *odeklonje* for the French *eau de Cologne* (which in the phonological spelling of prof. Martinet becomes *o d Colony!*), that provoked a violent reaction of the conservatives with all the well known arguments. A lot of articles and letters were published in the newspapers. In a TV-debate in Holland some conservative writers made a poor figure against some teachers. The Dutch teachers associations got again more interested in a more radical simplification of the spellings not only the spelling of "bastard words", but in the first place a drastic change in the spelling of verb forms and some other unphonological things as the *ei/ij* and *ou/au*.

The minister of Education asked the commission to review the question of the bastard words, and to consider the verb forms and the phonemes with double spellings. As a matter of fact the Dutch spelling is in a certain sense more difficult as the English one, how strange this may seem to the readers of this bulletin. Let me explain: in English one has to learn the way of writing a certain word, the English spelling is for a great part quite ideographic. This makes learning for children very difficult, but once you know a word in written form, it remains always the same. This is not true in Dutch: at a first glance its spelling is quite phonological (except for the difficult and silly system of "open" and "closed" syllables); but soon one encounters two ways of representing the phoneme /ei/ and even four of /ou/; and the worst of all are then the verb forms: for just one pronunciation (*wort, verdient* [wɔrt, vɛrdint) – become, earn) one has to write *ik word* (I become), *jij wordt* (you become), but *word je?* (do you become?) and *hij verdient* (he earns) but *hij heeft verdiend* (he has earned). It has to be mentioned that in Dutch, unlike in English, words can never end (in speech) on the voiced consonant *d, b, v, z* and *g* (= [ɣ]), instead we find *t, p, f, s* and *ch* (= [x]). The rule of similarity now requires writing *word* (because of *worden*) and *heb* (because of *hebben*). But inconsequently this rule only works for *d* and *b*, not for *z* and *v*: we may write (and nobody has any trouble with it) *dief* next to *dieven*, *vaas* next to *vazen*. And even *Brabant* next to

*Brabander!* Even the biggest Dutch newspapers and the Flemish as well are containing more and more "mistakes" that are not printing faults!

The new report of the commission, called "final" report, was a disillusion: no change for ei/ij and ou/au, a much more complicated new set of rules for the phoneme /i/, a half – and dangerous – solution for the verb forms (maintaining the similarity rule, just canceling the t in the dt-forms, thus letting *vardient/verdiend*), and for the "bastard words" still more exceptions, trying – in vane – to appease the conservatives and their leader, dr. Kruyskamp (the man who is working at the redaction of the Big Dictionary, started a century ago bij De Vries, and still unfinished – the old spelling of De Vries & Te Winkel being used!). Apart of the members of the commission nobody seems satisfied. The VWS (abbreviation of the Association for scientific Spelling) contacted other organizations; so the ANOF (General Federation of Dutch Teachers), the VON (Association for Teaching in Dutch) and the section "Dutch" of *Levende Taten* (Association for living Languages) agreed on several minimum claims: a radical simplification of verb forms by suppressing the whole similarity rule, one spelling for /ei/ and /ou/, just i instead of ie in "open" syllables, and the same spelling for bastard words as for the other words. The Dutch minister was prepared to put this claims in a note to the Parliament. But time went on and ministers had to make place for a successor. In 1972 a delegation of the 4 organizations were received by the Dutch ministers and their cooperators before they went to Belgium for deliberations with their Flemish colleagues. It seems now indeed that the Flemish statesmen are now more conservative than the Dutch. Several opinion surveys last year in Holland have indeed a majority towards a radical simplification. In Belgium no such surveys were made on a sufficient large and objective way. The 83% against spelling reform in Brussels, as mentioned by Bonnema is unknown to me; perhaps among the minority of Flemish in Brussels dr. Mark Galle, a friend of the mayor of Antwerp, who last year started a campaign against spelling reform (sending letters on official paper of the city!), has made such a survey on a reduced scale, I do not know. Surely as everywhere the broad mass of the population is quite indifferent. As former simplifications have shown, any simplification will give rise in the beginning to certain inconveniences, but after a very short time most people get accustomed and do no more want to go back to the former spelling. Wise ministers and members of parliament should dare to give us a better spelling. We are now waiting for new deliberations between the Dutch and Flemish ministers (in both countries new governments were installed last months). The action certainly will continue.

The propositions of the VWS are not very radical. They may even seem unscientific, as they don't change the unphonological system of open and closed syllables. The association has been aware of this: the proposed orthography is just not too drastic to make it possible that texts in the current spelling can be read by those who learn the new one. We call this spelling *doelmatiger spelling* (more appropriated spelling – the comparative indicating that in the future a still better spelling may be introduced). It seems not yet the moment to introduce a radical phonemic spelling with a lot of new signs, as the Dutch logopedist mr. Van Oosten wishes. If we decide to use new signs, then it would be unwise to not take the IPA signs. Perhaps we Dutch speaking can give the good example to others, but we believe that such a drastic change, requiring the IPA-alphabet or some modification of it (broad transcriptions may do) can only be undertaken on a worldwide scale. Of course any such change will cost a lot of money, but certainly less than the exaggerations of the conservatives, even less than the usefull switching to SI-units in the Anglo-Saxon countries (and decimal money in Great Britain). An easier way to write and read concerns the whole mankind. A uniform and adequate spelling for important languages as English, German, French, Russian a.s.o. may be a good task for UNESCO!

Note: [1] *J. Berits*: Honderd jaar Spellingstrijd – De Nederlandse spelling sinds 1863, J.W. Wolters, Groningen.

## **7. Spelling Reform in the Netherlands, by Wim Van Oosten**

Last year there was a movement for spelling reform in the Netherlands and Flanders (you know Dutch and Flemish are about the same), headed by Dr. Dalf Kohnstmn. All teaching institutions and confederations in the domain of education supported it. The Dutch press seemed very interested and in the section of Paragraph advertisements developed an animated discussion between advocates and opponents. I was one of the members of this movement and organized some meetings for parents of school-pupils. They were a great success! First I gave a talk. I told those present of the advantages of a spelling-simplification. After that, all got a form to fill out the squares in the sentences according to the present spelling. (It concerns the declension of verbs.) After 5 minutes the forms were collected and examined and the mistakes added up by some teachers. These parents, mostly common people, made many terrible mistakes. Unbelievable! After a pause, the nameless forms were distributed again. Then I told about the many mistakes and gave a short lesson about the new spelling: "Write what you are hearing when you pronounce the words." The further course you can guess, I suppose. Those present were again invited to fill up the squares, but now according to the reformed spelling. In the first test, 100 people made about 700 mistakes in 16 sentences using present spelling. The same number of people made about 10 mistakes in the same sentences – using the simplified spellings, after a lesson of 5 minutes! The new spelling is so much easier to use!

You can fancy the enthusiasm of the audience. In every afterthought bring into discussion the question, "For what are we waiting to have the new spelling in use?" Some of them decided to write in the new spelling in the future.

What has happened? In Belgium the Press is censored. The editors refuse any article in favor of spelling reform. The Flemish population could not be informed about the advantages. They read the contestable disadvantages only. Mr. Vaernewijck must fight without any help of the publicity organs.

A Dutch and a Belgium committee of the two governments came together in Brussels to talk about spelling. Belgium spoiled the game. They decided to meet again after some months, but meanwhile the Dutch government fell and for some months we had no government. Now we have a socialist government. It is too busy with other affairs, but to top all, Dr. Dolf Kohnstamm decided to cancel the movement for spelling reform. The Dutch press was quick to mention that and now it is very difficult to start something without the help of the publicity organs. But we do not despair. The Association for Scientific Dutch Spelling publishes a quarterly "WVS-News". Besides this I publish "The Newsseeker." Half is in Dutch and half English. It promotes friendship all over the world & tries to join persons with similar interests. It has readers in over 100 countries. In every issue I write on spelling reform. Also I publish a Dutch bulletin: "Spellingvereenvoudiging" (translated: Spelling- Simplification). It is read in all Dutch speaking countries. Because the Dutch and Belgian newspapers like to insert articles con spelling reform and usually refuse articles pro spelling reform, it was necessary to start publishing our own. It is a discussion-paper and the articles refused by other papers come to it. It is sent government agencies, all press bureaus, and boards of important unions and others interested.

I finish with a proposal. We (meaning all organizations in the world interested in spelling-simplification) should send a joint letter to the United Nations (UNESCO) for its section on illiteracy, which is one of the moat active groups. We must ask them to activate a committee to simplify all spellings, but especially Finnish, French and Dutch. No better way to eliminate illiteracy thruout the world.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 pp16,17 in the printed version]

**8. DROP THE DUMB /B/ by HELEN BONNEMA\*,  
Coordinator for Associates, Phonemic Spelling Council**

*\*Dr. Bonnema, Phi Beta Kappa, former elem. principal, prof. of educ., has spent 20 yrs. studying linguistics. Dissertation (1951): "Relationship between factors of intelligence and spelling disability."*

Supporters of this Bulletin hope to see spelling simplified, but they realize that a change will not take place as long as people in general are content with the present system. In spite of dissatisfaction with it, both the man on the street and the scholar in his study have resigned themselves to accepting traditional orthography (T.O.)

In his book, *English Spelling: roadblock to reading*, Godfrey Dewey counters the public's objections to reform with the arguments which have been repeatedly voiced during the past decades, but to which people seem to have closed their ears.

As an example of the apprehensions which are not easily removed, consider the statement in Frank Smith's 1971 psycholinguistic analysis entitled, *Understanding Reading*, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. (p.172): "Spelling reform might make words a little easier to pronounce, but only at the cost of other information about the way words are related to each other, so that rationalizing words at the phonological level might make reading more difficult at syntactic and semantic levels. As just one example, consider the "silent b" in words like *bomb*, *bombing*, *bombed*, which would be an almost certain candidate for extinction if spelling reformers had their way. But the b is something more than a pointless appendage; it relates the previous words to others like *bombardier*, *bombardment* where the b is pronounced. And if you save yourself the trouble of a special rule about why *b* is silent in words like *bomb*, at another level there would be a new problem of explaining why *b* suddenly appears in words like *bombard*."

The views of a man with Frank Smith's background are not to be regarded lightly. He writes in the preface, "My specific interest in reading occurred over several years and at a variety of locations: the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard, the United States Office of Education's Project Literacy at Cornell, and its Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development near Los Angeles, and presently at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at Toronto . . . . To Noam Chomsky, George A. Miller, Jerome S. Bruner, and other linguists and psychologists at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology I acknowledge an intellectual debt. . ."

With due respect for Smith's background, I offer this refutation to his defense of the "dumb /b/". If the *b* at the beginning of the second syllable in *bombard* shows the relationship to *bomb*, how shall we explain the presence of this *b* in words which are not related to the explosive shell?

*bombacaceous* – family of woody plants (Latin) *bombyx*

*bombast* – Speech padded with pomposity (Latin, cotton)

*bombazet* – thin woolen cloth

*bombazine* – twilled fabric  
*bombycid* – Chinese silkworm

What about the false relationship indicated by the retention of the silent *b* in *lamb*, *comb*, *tomb*, *numb*?

<i>lamb</i>	<i>tomb</i>
<i>lambaste</i>	<i>tombac</i> (jewelry)
<i>comb</i>	<i>numb</i>
<i>combat</i>	<i>number</i>
<i>combustion</i>	<i>numbat</i> (anteater)

On the other hand, the *b* of *numb* is omitted from *numskull* and *dummy* without leading to misunderstanding of its meaning.

What do we say about the many words which cannot depend upon identical spelling of first syllables to show the relationship which is there nonetheless, such as:

<i>eat</i> ,	<i>edible</i> ,	<i>appeal</i> ,	<i>appellate</i>
<i>appear</i> ,	<i>apparent</i> ,	<i>equaz</i> ,	<i>egalitarian</i> , etc.

Consider words which indicate a relationship which does not exist:

<i>best</i> –	superior	<i>war</i> –	battle
<i>bestial</i> –	inhuman	<i>warrant</i> –	guarantee
<i>male</i> -	man	<i>cause</i> -	reason
<i>malefactor</i> -	evil	<i>caustic</i> -	burning
<i>promise</i> -	assurance		
<i>promiscuous</i> -	indiscriminate		

Readers cannot guess the meaning of a polysyllabic word by looking at its beginning. In almost every one of the above pairs of words, the meanings of the items differ from each other because of diverse derivations. For example, *war* is from Old English-Scandinavian, while *warrant* from Anglo-French. There is no reason why the young child learning to read should understand this background. In order to avoid misinterpretation, he learns to not depend upon similarities in appearance. If, however, it is felt necessary for the child to know about the relationship in cases where it does indeed exist, he will have no difficulty in seeing the simplified spelling *bom* in the other words cited by Frank Smith: *The largest bom dropped during the bombardment was released by the enemy bombardier.*

## WHOSE PRONUNCIATION?

In pointing out "the cost of reform" Smith continues: "Another argument in favor of the present spelling system is that it is the most competent one to handle dialect differences – a matter relevant also to those who would want to change the alphabet . . . . If the spelling of words is to be changed so that they reflect the way they are pronounced, then the question has to be asked: 'pronounced by whom?'. . . It is very difficult to argue that a particular alternative spelling system is preferable to any other when so many differences in speech exist."

To answer Smith's question about Jose pronunciation is to be used, let us first consider how the present so-called "competent" spelling system handles dialect differences.

We know that the dialect it spells was used in former times, and that it no longer exists. Alongside this historical dialect, the dictionary transliterates each word into the modern dialect considered "standard" today. For example: *choir* (kwī'ər). The dictionary respells the word in order to indicate the pronunciation of cultivated speakers, the norm for radio and television announcers which is acceptable to every class of society whether used by it or not. Each reader modifies the pronunciation slightly in conformity with his own dialect. The Easterner or Southerner may say /kwī'uh /.

The way in which a regularized or reformed orthographic system differs from traditional spelling is that it eliminates the "old English" first entry in the dictionary and uses only the respelling, which as indicated above, is the "standard" speech form.

The dictionary of the system called *World English Spelling "WES"* presents but one form of each word. The T.O. word *trough* appears only as *trof* which the reader pronounces /trof/, /trawf/, or possibly even as /trawth/ depending upon his own particular dialect.

Regardless of his local dialect, a young child using WES can learn to read very quickly. He soon recognizes the words upon a passing glance because of the consistency of representation of the sounds in his speaking vocabulary.

In order that reading will be easier for speakers of all English dialects, not only at the phonological but also at the semantic level, we trust that psycholinguists will become convinced that respellings now in the dictionary (with concessions for sake of practicability) should be established as the orthography for English.



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

## 9. Book Review by Newell W. Tune

Laurita, Raymond E. *Reading, Writing and Creativity*. Bernie Straub & Special Child Pub., Seattle, Wash. 1973. pp 253. \$5.75.

No doubt you have heard librarians exclaim, "What, another book on reading?" But when a book such as this fills an important need, then its publication is not only justified, it is welcomed. This book is an in-depth study of the several problems of reading failure, dyslexia, perception, methodology, and motivation. "It is a book which questions many of the explanations given by the failure of so many millions to learn to read, while at the same time offering new and more humane solutions to the problems relating to reading failure."

When he was starting to teach, he asked his class to write on the topic, "Why I go to school." He wanted to discover their feelings about school but also to get a better idea of each student's ability to express himself. It was depressing to him "that he received not one essay expressing joy or delight either in the past or as a motivation for continuing to attend to a task which would continue to consume 1/3 of their daily lives." "More immediately pressing, but equally as depressing, was the broad range of capacities I observed in their externalized ability to express themselves in writing. The impact at this cognitive level was one of confusion as I began to analyze the extent and complexity of a task I had committed myself to perform. Their skills ran from an almost total inability to write a single intelligible, correctly spelled, grammatically accurate sentence, to a few examples of obviously gifted writing." At this time, he never realized how far this experience was to lead him into research for answers to what had appeared as an obvious contradiction. It simply did not seem plausible that so many apparently normal teenagers could have been exposed to a generally comparable school learning experience covering such a large portion of their lives and not have come away with either a better understanding of the essential purposes of education or a more complete ability to have profited from their experiences so they could at least express themselves clearly.

He then deplores the fact that we do not, either individually or collectively, know enough about learning to predict with any degree of certainty just how much any human being can learn. "Failure to learn in a child is only evidence that he has not learned, not that he cannot learn with proper instruction, properly paced." It is in this positive light that this book is offered. His 86 references attest to the fact that his research has been conducted in depth and his chapters show a lot of clear thinking about how a child does learn and what causes reading failure-frustration, for one thing, (aside from physical defects, which occur in only a small percentage of school children). His research goes back thru Piaget, Orton, Fernald, Hebb, Gillingham, Bloomfield and Barnhart, and is up to date with Durkin, Frostig, Bryant.

Leaving the field of psychology, he delves into perception. "Thus, in order to learn to read, an essential prerequisite must be a set of normally functioning sense systems which allow for the making of accurate and consistent perceptions." And "With regard to the relationship between reading problems and the irregular medium, I no longer have any personal doubt that the lack of a consistent one-to-one relationship between the sound and the graphic signal is a significant contributory factor. Happily this factor is being mitigated to some degree by the growing use of regularized and synthetic phonic instructional techniques, and also by attempts being made to regularize the medium itself by adapting it, such as the Initial Teaching Alphabet."

Following this he delves into some therapeutic techniques for use in the removal of frustration produced anxiety reactions in the area of reading.

The second part of the book is devoted to writing as a means of expressing thought. And part three is devoted to creativity, which of course, includes comprehension as well as original thinking.

I think high school teachers will welcome this book as an inspiration for them to get more out of their pupils. It is a very self-rewarding book.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 p19 in the printed version]

## 10. Letters to the Editor

### Spelling and Helth

Editor, *Canberra Times*,

Douglas Everingham, Minister for Helth\*  
Parliament House, Canberra.

Dear Sir:

In reference to your editorial of Jan. 24, spelling reform does concern my portfolio. It is preventive medicine. Between 5% and 20% of the English-speaking school leavers are largely illiterate.

They provide a disproportionate number of inhabitants in jails, children's institutions, mental hospitals, inebriates' institutions, and of patrons of doctors, chemists and publicans. This problem is less marked in countries with more logical spelling.

No one has yet complained to me of a headache from my use of SR-1 (spelling the vowel sound as in bet with e). I shall pay for or provide treatment for it if such a headache is brought to my attention.

-o0o-

### Sticking to the style

News report, *Canberra Times*, Mar. 9, 1973

Printing styles recommended by the Government Publishing Service were being adhered to by all government departments, the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Senator Murphy said yesterday.

He added, however, that there might be "a slight amount of cribbing" in one department in order to enlighten the public to the possibility of introducing a new system of spelling.

He said that the Minister for Health, Dr. Everingham, had long been interested in the subject of spelling reform.

Senator Murphy was replying to Senator Marriott (Lib., Tasmania) who had called for an assurance that "the efforts of one of the more eccentric Ministers to introduce a new and weird system of spelling in his department would stop forthwith."

Senator Murphy said that, in fact, the department was adhering to the requirements of style that applied to all other departments.

-o0o-

## On I.T.M.'s and Spelling Reform

Dear Mr. Tune.

Barnett Russell, M.D.

There seems to be financial support available for an itm (initial teaching medium) and none for complete reform. Hence we must evaluate spelling schemes on the basis of the probable and/or proven results of such schemes after the child has had time to convert to T.O.

An itm with the least effort of learning will probably require the most effort when the child has to convert to T.O.; whereas an itm with a minimum of change will require more effort in learning, but the least effort when the child has to convert to T.O. Somewhere in-between may be just the right scheme to yield the most practical itm.

In your questionnaire there are five principles or factors for the 'invention' of a new system of spelling. I use the word invention because it implies the concept of usefulness and practicality.

(1) Phonetic-ness: if English speech were uniform by area and by person, then phoneticness would be easy to achieve. But how can we achieve uniformity of speech when dialects are perpetuated from mother to child and go on forever? A preliminary conclusion is that we are going to try to force the newer generations into a standard of speech to conform to the phonetic spelling. And we must observe that the resultant variance in speech will make it difficult for the older generations to *use* the new phonetic spelling as he will now have to go back to the dictionary like a schoolboy to learn how to spell.

I have a suspicion that legislators who express an interest in reform, secretly know that reform has little chance of success, and so they can appease their constituents, or if they honestly favor reform, they know it will not affect their generation. Hence I rate phoneticness as less important than nearness to T.O.

(2) Simplicity: This is obviously desirable and in itself should yield "ease of learning." Obviously it is easier to have one rule that applies to five vowels than to have a different rule for every vowel. But again, the significance of "nearness to T.O." may be greater to one inventor than to another. To me, nearness to T.O. is more important than maximum ease of learning. And I think adults who are not especially interested in reform will agree.

(3) Ease of learning is largely a matter of simplicity, hence this principle may be redundant.

(4) Freedom from confusion to T.O. – if this refers to the avoidance of phonetic forms that look like T.O. but have non-T.O. sounds, then I agree. The number of such cases should be as few as is consistent with the rest of the phonetic system.

(5) Nearness to T.O.: This is the most important principle, because this will be the factor that will most appeal to legislators who are in any way in favor of reform.

It seems clear to me that W.E.S. could by retaining certain unphonetic devices such as single *e* for *ee*, *ck*, doubled consonants, etc. clearly recognize the importance of nearness to T.O., while also trying to remain simple by using one device to lengthen all 5 vowels.

I don't know if I could invent a satisfactory system with maximum nearness to T.O., but I feel that there are so many well established morpheme-phoneme patterns that they would be practical in a phonetic sense. If we could only eliminate the spelling difficulties, the anomalies of English, we might be able to achieve a reasonable, practical degree of phoneticness while still retaining a maximum degree of nearness to T.O.

There is one other thing: I have examined 44 different systems exemplified in the Gettysburg Address but not a single one of them provides a means of showing the stress location in polysyllabic words. It seems obvious to me that showing the location of the accent is an essential part of any successful reform of English.

We could take advantage of the rule that the accent usually falls on the first syllable of a word and merely invent a device to indicate the exceptions. Such a device should be one that can be used on any standard typewriter without adding any new type faces. In my own system of spelling, I use a hyphen, which also serves at times to indicate a long vowel, or to separate two letters not a digraph, as *ng* in *ingrate*.

The showing of accent can be gradually eliminated from the system as the child gradually converts from an i.l.m. (initial learning medium) to T.O.

I should like to read the opinions of other readers and inventors on this subject.

yours, Bart. Plainview, N.Y.

-o0o-

**Dear Bart:** If you had done a lot of research on the subject or read the back issues of our magazine, you would already know that more than one such system as you describe has been discussed on our pages. Dr. Axel Wijk's *Regularized English*, (pub. Almqvist & Wiksell, Stockholm, Sweden, 1959) and his other book, *Rules of Pronunciation for the English Language*, Oxford U. Press, 1966, were reviewed in our Oct. '61 and Fall, '66 issues.

Yours sincerely, N. W. Tune.

-o0o-

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1973 p20 in the printed version]

## 11. 'Sensubul Speling'

is the simplest possible complete speling system

because

it shows for the first time how to use our present alphabetic characters so that each symbol represents the most natural speech sound commonly attributed to it and never represents any other. It does this without any new characters or diacritics.

To fully understand the spelling problem you must appreciate what spelling *should be* and *can be* but *is not* and *never has* been. It is that correct speech sounds should give a definite identification of the alphabetic symbols that will form the written word. This is definitely "spell by the sound", but you must first know the sounds correctly. We can't do that now because there is no way to distinguish the long vowel symbol from the short vowel symbol.

Do you believe spelling should be reformed, i.e. made sensible? Or do you just like to talk about it theoretically? The latter is the easiest because everyone can just keep saying the same things over and over again, which has, been done for four hundred years without taking useful action.

It is more than likely that this full phonetic, logical, practical, one-sound-one-symbol spelling system is, in certain areas, so in conflict with your lifelong habits of sound perceptions that it will take some time and study to become reconciled to the truths that can free all English speaking people from the centuries old bondage to a terribly hard to learn spelling system..

For instance would you expect at first, that to be a one-sound-one-symbol spelling the following words would use the symbols as follows?

*poor* for poor, (yes), *indoor* for endure ?, *yoor* for your ?, *pyoor* for pure ?, or *sorry* for sorry (yes) *hort* for heart ?, *yord* for yard ? or *errand* for errand (yes) *er* for *air* ?, *sker* for scare ?,

You will never really understand our spelling problem until you become conscious of our present misperceptions of sounds as related to symbols.

This "Sensubul English Speling Dikshuneri" explains the problems of spelling in plain English that can be understood by all users of the language and for the first time actually shows the correct phonetic spelling of thirty thousand words.

This is the spelling of the future. You should know about it. We will make it easy with this FREE TRIAL OFFER.

Americans for 'Sensubul Speling', Inc.

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Occupation

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