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*[Spelling Reform Anthology §4.4 pp63–68 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp2–7 in the printed version]*

## 1. Special Problem is of the Hebrew, by Werner Weinberg\*

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The reform of Hebrew orthography, which is a live issue in Israel, faces all the problems the orthographies of other languages have plus some knotty ones of its own.

### History of the Hebrew Script

In order to present here these problems, as well as the attempts that have been made to solve them, a review of the history of the Hebrew script is called for together with a characterization of the orthography up to the time when the need for a reform was first pronounced.

Three languages, Phoenician, Hebrew, and Moabite, only slightly different from each other lexically and grammatically, were using the same alphabet in epigraphic monuments, dating back to

the Tenth Century B.C. Of Moabite, we possess mainly the famous Stele of King Mesha (Ninth Century, cf. II Kings, 3:4 ff.), which can be admired in the Louvre in Paris. Phoenician is rich in inscriptions, many on stone sarcophagi unearthed at the sites of Byblos, Tyre and Sidon. (The Phoenician alphabet served as a model for the Greek, and all Western alphabets go back to this source.) Hebrew inscriptions, finally, are either carved in stone, written with black ink on potsherds or pressed into soft clay, which was then baked.

There are, of course, paleological differences, depending on the time and also on the method of writing (e.g., the ink script on potsherds tends to be cursive). But this "North-West Canaanite" script had in common for all languages that it was an alphabetical script (rather than a syllabic or logographic one), that the basic shape of the characters was the same in all the inscriptions, that it consisted of twenty-two characters, and that these were consonantal. Two of them, /y/ and /w/ inclined toward the vocalic and are sometimes referred to as "semi-vowels" or "consonantal vowels." At any rate, the script recorded no purely vocalic phonemes at all. For the small caste of scribes and priests, the consonantal skeleton of words sufficed for reading. (The Greeks later transformed Semitic characters for consonants not in their inventory into vowel signs.)

In Hebrew, the use of some of the 22 signs as vowel letters came into being through a change in pronunciation. Diphthongs formed with /y/ and /w/ "straightened out" to monophthongs as follows: ay/>/e:/, /iy/>/i:/, /aw/>/o:/ and /uw/>/u:/. When the process of monophthongization was completed, /y/ and /w/ (their names are *yod* and *vav*, i.e. /w/ has changed to /v/ in modern pronunciation) were not dropped from the script; rather, they came to stand for the new monophthongs. In places where they had not been a part of a diphthong, they continued to serve as consonants so that each of the two now had three values: *yod*= /y, e, i/ and *vav*=/w,o,u/.

As reading spread to wider circles, the need for greater vowel differentiation in the script became apparent. In answer to this need, the vowel letters *yod* and *vav*, found their way into words where they had not before served as consonants, in order to express /e/ or /i/ and /u/ or /o/ respectively. In a separate linguistic development, the letters *alef* (glottal stop) and *he* (which in Greek had become the vowels *alpha* and *epsilon*) weakened in Hebrew, losing their consonantal values altogether at the end of a word or syllable. They were added to the inventory of Hebrew vowel letters, but were inferior to *yod* and *vav* because they occurred in their new function only in those places where they formerly had expressed consonants, they could not be freely inserted (there are a few exceptions for *alef*: *he* remained confined to the end of a word). Furthermore, due to their specific development, *alef* could stand for each of the vowels /a, e, i, o, u/ and *he* for /a, e, o/; they were therefore no great help toward an exact vocalization.

These four alphabet letters, *yod*, *vav*, *alef*, and *he*, called *matres lectionis* by the grammarians, thus acquired several vocalic values each, while retaining their consonantal value. During this period of development in the Hebrew script, the Bible was written down. In the Hebrew *textus receptus*, we can still observe that the earlier parts, dating approximately from the Ninth to the Sixth Century B.C. show considerably fewer vowel letters than the latest books from about the Second Century, B.C. The "filling" of the consonantal script with vowel letters is called *scriptio plena* or *plene* script, its opposite, *scriptio defectiva* or defective script. Both terms are relative, i.e., they render no exact quantitative account of the vowel letters contained or lacking in a word. Since the completion of the biblical canon, the text has been copied countless times. Even though the scribes doubtlessly took pains to avoid copying mistakes, there are indications in the Talmud and opinions among the medieval grammarians that they were not bound by strict rules when it came to questions of *plene* or defective. [1] Thus the spelling became irregular and contradictory (i.e., there are different spellings of the same word as far as number and place of *matres lectionis* are concerned).

From the Sixth to the Ninth Centuries, A.D., generations of sages, called the Masoretes (from Heb.

*masoret, mesorah* "tradition"), occupied themselves with the biblical books in order to establish a pure and unified text and develop a method that practically guaranteed faultless copying. They faced a double challenge: the text which they had received with its inconsistencies of defective and *plene* script was sacred and, therefore, could not be changed; secondly, they wanted to assure that in the future every word in the Bible should be read in an unambiguous way. They solved the first problem by "freezing" the mixed *plene* and defective script in status quo. From this time on, copyists could not add or omit a *mater lectionis* in the text. With regard to the second problem, they developed a system of vocalization, known as "pointing," which consisted of dots and lines and combinations of them placed below, above, and inside the alphabet letters in such a way that they could be lifted off again, if so desired, whereby the "unpointed script" was restored.

Several masoretic pointing systems were developed in Palestine and Babylonia. The system of the Masoretes of Tiberias found widest acceptance and is in general use to this day.

In a move from one extreme to the other, the Masoretes created a vocalization system so exact that it records no less than the seventeen vowel notations. This was achieved by varying the combinations of dots and lines and sometimes adding the *matres lectionis yod* and *vav* to them. Beyond the vocalic notations, it also split one of the consonants into an *s*, and a /š/ sound, differentiated silent from sounded *he* and plosive /b, g, d, k, p, t/ from their spirant counterparts (the total system, furthermore, provided for word and sentence stress, pitch, intonation, and phrasing!).

Originally, the masoretic pointing system was designed only for the Bible. But as the centuries passed, it was applied to certain other texts where the exact pronunciation of each word was deemed important. Thus it was expanded to the Prayerbook, to poetry, to grammatical treatises, dictionaries and -- in modern times -- to children's literature and reading matter for new immigrants to Israel.

The pointing system for vocalization might well have replaced that of vocalization by the four *matres lectionis*, but as we have seen, the *matres lectionis* were not dropped from the biblical text that was now vocalized by the vowel points. Since the time of the Masoretes, Hebrew has had *de facto* two vocalization systems, a very ambiguous one by vowel *letters* without pointing, and an exceedingly detailed one by vowel *points*, in which *matres lectionis* play only a small role.

After the Babylonian exile, when Hebrew, as a spoken language had largely been replaced by Aramaic (and the invention of the pointing system still lay in the far future), some scribes tried to make the vocalization of Hebrew as clear as possible by using a great deal of *matres lectionis*. It also became customary to double *yod* and *vav*, when they stood for consonants. Copies of certain biblical books found among the Dead Sea Scrolls display a great abundance of *matres lectionis*. But also non-biblical books -- the beginnings of rabbinic literature, Midrash and Mishnah, which fall in this time, display a much more generous use of *matres lectionis* than does the Masoretic (biblical) Text (MT). Therefore, the script of the latter is usually designated as "defective" in spite of the *matres lectionis* which it does contain. The proliferation of *matres lectionis* continued in other areas of writing even while the Masoretes applied their vowel points to the Bible text. Manuscripts from the Cairo *Genizah*, [\[2\]](#) originating in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D., especially liturgic-poetic works, show an even greater proportion of *matres lectionis* in their words than do the Dead Sea Scrolls.

During the latter part of the Middle Ages the use of *matres lectionis* in unpointed texts (which was 90% or more of the large *corpus* of mostly rabbinic writing at that time) receded, settling slowly to some kind of average, generally called *plene* script. In the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, a Hebrew renaissance took place in the wake of the Enlightenment. The language entered modern times (although only as a *written* language for the time being). During that period, a further shrinkage of *matres lectionis* in prose fiction and essays can be observed. It was a conscious return

to the "defective" spelling of the great classical book, the Hebrew Bible. But, in contrast, this modern writing was unpointed and, therefore, of use only to those who knew Hebrew well. In the 1860's, the cultural and social enlightenment and the emancipation of the Jews in Europe began to awaken their national consciousness, leading to the beginnings of Zionism. Consequently, Hebrew books, periodicals and, finally, even daily newspapers (all unpointed) began to appear and the steadily growing readership brought with it the necessity to increase the number of *matres lectionis*. For the next several decades, Hebrew again showed a higher degree of *plene* script.

### Problems about pointing

The reader may have asked himself by now why all Hebrew was not written in and printed with the Masoretic vowel points. This would have obviated the constant fluctuating between an increase and decrease of *matres lectionis*: in fact, they could have been discarded altogether and the vowel points applied to the original, purely consonantal script. The answer to this question must be given on several levels, and it is still valid for the present time.

(1) The pointing system requires a high degree of specialized knowledge by the writer. It cannot be applied mechanically; the pointer must thoroughly know normative grammar (the reader does not have to know the full theory behind the vowel points).

(2) The system was designed exclusively for the Bible. Even early post-biblical (rabbinic) Hebrew already showed considerable lexical and morphological differences, and modern Hebrew still more (aside from neologisms based on old words, modern Hebrew has thousands of foreign, i.e., international words such as *telefon* or *universita*). We thus face the facts that (a) the pointing of words for which there exist no exact biblical patterns is uncertain, and that (b) the Masoretic vocalization system doesn't fit post biblical, and certainly not modern, Hebrew phonology. [\[3\]](#)

(3) In longhand and typewriting use, the writer will simply not point because he would have to interrupt the hand stroke or the typing rhythm. [\[4\]](#) When a person is engaged in writing Hebrew, unpointed script seems sufficient for communication, especially when he adds an occasional vowel point in a place where a mix-up could occur (when the writer becomes a reader who is not aware of the context, the matter is different).

(4) It is difficult and expensive to produce pointed script in print. [\[5\]](#) Therefore, common reading matter, books, periodicals and newspapers must be produced in unpointed script. Pointed printed books (see above) as well as pointed newspapers for immigrants are either subsidized, very expensive, or poorly produced from worn-out plates.

To point Hebrew script for general use is, therefore, forbidding, and the estimated proportion for an earlier time of at least 9:1 of unpointed to pointed script in use is probably still valid. Pointed and unpointed scripts virtually became two different orthographies of Hebrew. It also became an accepted fact that pointed script was defective and unpointed, *plene*. Without any clear definition of how defective the one and how *plene* the other was supposed to be, a few spelling patterns emerged on either side as more or less established.

### Handicaps for the spelling reformer

These, then, are the *special* handicaps which Hebrew places in the path of the spelling reformer: the question of defective vs. *plene*, and of pointed vs. unpointed. When we consider that these are not mutually exclusive pairs but do indeed appear in intermingled states, we have actually four, not two, existing orthographies: (1) defective-pointed, (2) defective-unpointed, (3) *plene*-unpointed, and (4) *plene*-pointed. When one further considers (and the matter here becomes somewhat mind-boggling) that none of the four terms is quantitatively defined, that, for instance, "pointed" may well mean "partially pointed" and that "unpointed" does not exclude the use of certain diacritic points, that

"defective" seldom means the total lack of *matres lectionis*, and that "*plene*" has practically no limits as to the amount of *matres lectionis* one might as well say that Hebrew has no definite orthography at all.

There are a few more "extras," but they are of minor importance compared to the others. I refer here to the fact that the letter signs are so forbiddingly different from the Western alphabets and that the direction of writing is from right to left.

But does Hebrew also share the classical problem of the orthographic reforms of other languages, namely the phonetic problem which always emerges because a writing system is by nature more conservative than the spoken language, and a gap between the two is bound to appear? The answer yes: Hebrew also has a phonetic problem with regard to its spelling.

It has already been mentioned that the Masoretic vowel-points do not fit the modern Hebrew vocalic system. Modern Hebrew has five or six vocalic phonemes, i.e., it has for certain /a, e, i, o, u/; and according to some linguists the diphthong /ey/ is a separate phoneme rather than an allophone of /e/. Consequently the Israeli reads three different Masoretic combination vowel points as /a/, four others as /o/, six as /e/, and two each as /i/ and /u/ respectively. He has no trouble equalising those vowel points in reading, but if he is called upon to produce a pointed text featuring the original differentiations, which to his ear and speech are non-existent, he has great trouble indeed. Fully pointed writing is for the average Israeli limited to school exercises and examinations. In "real life," pointing is done by specialists.

Regarding consonants, great changes have taken place since the original twenty-two characters expressed as many consonantal phonemes of the language. As was shown above, the Masoretes had already registered the split of one grapheme into /s/ and /š/ and of six others into plosive and spirant allophones. Actually, the Masoretic Text has thus twenty-nine different consonantal graphemes (eight of them set apart by a diacritical dot). But there is no saying whether some of them had not already then fallen together in pronunciation. As far back as tradition reaches, the pronunciation of several consonantal graphemes had fallen together both in the Ashkenazic and the Sephardic traditions (although Sephardic has kept more of them differentiated). In general Israeli pronunciation which is far from being a pure Sephardic, [6] no less than twelve of the twenty-nine consonants are pairs of homophones, viz: the letters *alef* and *ayin* (their common value varying from glottal stop to zero), *vet* and *vav*, *chet* and *chaf* (*ch* to be pronounced like in German *ach*), [7] *tet* and *tav*, *kaf* and *kuf* (pronounced /kuf/), and *samech* and *sin*. Furthermore, three of the six letters which could appear either as plosive or as spirant have lost spirant variant (but the difference is still shown by the dot in the pointed script); they are *eivel*, *dalet* and *tav*. In total, we find that nine of the twenty-nine Hebrew consonantal graphemes, almost a third are carried in the script (that uses the diacritical dots) as doublettes, at least phonetically. The first six still fulfill a role by identifying words in the written language; e.g., the word *kol* with the letter *kaf* means *all*, and with *kuf* it means *voice*, *kara* with *alef* is *to call*, with *ayin*, *to tear*. But these homophonous letters greatly aggravate the learning orthographic writing. (It should be said here, in anticipation, that the reform attempts described below will concentrate on the vocalization and hardly ever touch the consonants; the idea of dropping one member of the pairs of doublettes is practically unthinkable.) When reading completely unpointed script -- i.e., script which also lacks the one dot that differentiates consonants *vet* from *bet*, *kaf* from *chaf*, *pe* from *fe*, *sin* from *shin*; and silent from spoken *he* -- these five alphabet letters remain ambiguous, a difficulty added to that of the lacking of vocalization.

### **The idea of reform**

The idea of a reform of the Hebrew orthography came up first as the consequence of the rebirth of Hebrew as a spoken language and the manifold increased need of reading and writing the language. During the 1880's, the first Zionists (almost all Russian Jews) settled in Palestine. It took the action

of one man, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a scholar, patriot, and fanatic in matters Hebrew to accomplish the language of the Jews in their old-new homeland becoming indeed Hebrew, even though that language had existed for 2000 years only as a written and prayer language. [8] Soon children were growing up whose native Hebrew became the language of instruction in the schools of the Jewish settlements.

Chronologically, the first spelling reform proposal was published in Vienna in 1898 [9] in a Hebrew grammar by Isaac Rosenberg. Perhaps, typically, this first proposal belongs to the most radical strain of proposals in the inventory of the reformers still to come -- namely, the Latinization of the Hebrew script.

In order to appreciate the implications of this kind of proposal for Hebrew, another glance back into history is necessary. As part of translating the Bible, Hebrew words were already early *transcribed* into other alphabets. In the Greek translations, begun in the Third Century B.C. (The *Septuagint*, later Origen's *Hexapla*), all proper nouns, personal and geographical, as well as certain other words, e.g., *halleluja*, [10] were transcribed in Greek letters. Transcriptions into Latin must be assumed to have begun in the First Century B.C. They culminated in Jerome's *Vulgate* in the Fourth Century A.D.; thus the "romanization" of Hebrew is very old. This process of transposing Hebrew words into the Latin alphabet never stopped. After the Bible translations, it was continued in the textbooks for teaching the Hebrew language, beginning with those of the humanists in the Sixteenth Century (e.g., the Hebrew Grammar by Reuchlin, 1506). It is important to understand that the purpose of these romanizations was to render the sound of Hebrew, during the beginning steps, in the alphabet familiar to the learner. After the first dozen or so lessons, romanization usually ceased, and Hebrew took over fully. Thus, transcription was never intended to *replace* the Hebrew script, but rather, to *render the sound* of the Hebrew language by means of a familiar script. A great number of systems and non-systems of transcription and transliteration came into being, none of them official or binding. They coexist to this day, and are themselves badly in need of a "spelling reform," i.e., of standardization. [11]

What Rosenberg proposed in 1898, however, was not an intermediary transcription in Latin letters, but a scheme of transliteration designed to replace Hebrew letters permanently. He wanted to Latinize the Hebrew script.

### **The direction of reform**

Let us now leave the chronological order and report on this direction in the attempts to reform the orthography of Hebrew. Rosenberg was followed by others. It soon became apparent that the Latinization of the Hebrew script was full of thorny problems. There was, first of all, the question of transliteration vs. transcriptions, i.e., a transposition from letter to letter or from sound to letter. In either case, the degree of "narrowness" or "broadness" of the romanization had to be determined. Further, there were the questions of Hebrew letters/sounds for which there was no Latin equivalent and, vice versa, of "leftover" Latin letters (like *q* or *x*). Suffice it to say that new proposals of how to Latinize the Hebrew script have not ceased to come forth to this day. A high point of this movement was reached in the 1920's and 30's when two prominent Jewish personalities put themselves in its forefront: Ittamar Ben-Avi, the son of Eliezar Ben-Yehuda, and Zeev Jabotinsky, leader of the Zionists' right-wing. The former published two weeklies and a biography of his father in (changing) versions of Latinized Hebrew script; the other wrote a textbook in his own system of Latinization. In our days, for "Latinizers" have made a comeback; several professors at Israeli universities are counted among them.

Concerning Latinization as one of the avenues for a spelling reform, the following can be said: (1) All proposals have come from individuals; there has not been an organised popular movement, nor has it ever been backed by official bodies. (2) The aforementioned difficulties inherent in Latinizing

Hebrew script can be overcome, but they are diminutive compared to the emotional opposition from the past majority of Jews in Israel and all over the world. What was possible in Turkey in 1928, when the script was changed from Arabic to Latin, is anathema to the Jews.

When hearing about attempts to switch to the Latin alphabet, even the most secular-minded Jew will not hesitate to invoke the "holy language" and its "twenty-two sacred letters." Latinization will be shrugged off by most as a crazy idea of some fanatic, ignoramus or traitor. (Incidentally, the "Latinists" never fail to argue that the Latin letters are direct descendants of the old Canaanite ones, which Hebrew abandoned after the Babylonian Exile for the foreign Aramaic alphabet; ergo, they are only re-establishing the ancient alphabet!). This writer does not believe that the Latinization has any chance of success in the foreseeable future.

Before proceeding to the more realistic reform proposals made by representative groups and official bodies, I shall characterize some of the suggestions from individuals (many of whom are indeed fanatical about their particular ideas) that have kept turning up in the newspapers or in pamphlets which are usually produced in the proposed innovated script. The stream of such proposals has not dried up in some seventy years. [\[12\]](#)

As mentioned previously, most would-be reformers carefully steer clear of the problem of the homophonous consonants; rather, they direct their efforts towards designing new vocalization schemes. Scorning the Masoretic pointing system and aware of the pitfalls contained in, and the riddles posed by the unpointed script, they offer systems of vowel signs being of the same height as the Hebrew consonant letters and placed between them. Once this premise is established, there remains two considerations: the first is whether to leave the Tiberian differentiations intact by introducing new signs for all of them or to phonemicize the present Hebrew inventory of vowels and make do with five or six new signs. The second consideration is the *shape* of the new signs. It is in this area that one cannot help admiring the ingenuity contained in some of the proposals.

One recurring scheme that has been offered in numerous variations is blowing up the Masoretic points to full letter size and placing them (all, or the remaining five or six ) between the consonant letters, thereby solving the problems of linotype setting, while at the same time holding on to tradition.

Other schemes take their vowel signs from the Latin or the old Canaanite alphabets; or they consist either of characters put together from parts of alphabet letters, or of vowel points connected with lines; or they are freely invented. Interestingly, though, most "inventors" -- for all their revolutionary doings -- anxiously maintain and are willing to prove that their new schemes, in one way or another, are related to the traditional Hebrew vocalization.

In addition to introducing new vowel signs, some reformers propose to abolish certain elements of the historical ballast the script has perpetuated, especially the final letters (five Hebrew letters have different shapes at the end of a word), or completely quiesced letters, like *alef* and *yod* in certain positions.

The vast majority of would-be reformers, the "Latinists" included, will emphasize that their proposals are intended for modern use only and that all classical writings should remain and be reprinted in their respective traditional orthographies (thus the Bible and the Prayerbook defective-pointed, the Mishnah, Midrash and Talmud *plene*-unpointed).

Most Israelis, if they take notice of such reform proposals at all, write them off as folly. The inventors, on the other hand, may spend their lifetimes refining the systems and trying to win proselytes for it.

### Reform proposals by official bodies

The remainder of this paper will deal with reform endeavours by official bodies.

Around 1900, the teachers of the Jewish settlements schools brought the problem of their uncertain orthography into the open. They were simply at a loss as to the teaching of the spelling of the revived Hebrew language. For them, it was not so much a matter of *reform* but, rather, of teaching orthography according to an *authorized standard*.

In 1904, the educator, scholar, and president of the newly founded Hebrew Teachers Federation in Palestine, David Yellin, came forth with a proposal of a standardized Hebrew orthography along the following lines: (1) The irregular distribution of *matres lectionis* known from biblical orthography was to be fixed and regulated according to scientific-grammatical principles with heavy reliance on the orthography of Arabic. Where biblical orthography had both defective and *plene* writing of the same word, a decision in favour of *one* should be made (preferably, the defective one). (2) This regulated defective-*plene* orthography could be used *with* or *without* that Tiberian pointing. And in contrast to the age-old practice, unpointed forms could no longer get any extra *mater lectionis* to compensate for missing vowel points.

Yellin's system was endorsed by leading European Semitists and Orientalists, both Jewish and non-Jewish. It was published as a monograph the following year [\[13\]](#) and, without any official action, was introduced into the schools. This unusual speed was due to the teachers' clamouring for unity of spelling, their inclination as grammarians toward the defective mode of writing, and to the great personal prestige of Yellin. With some modifications, the "Yellin system" is still taught in the schools of Israel to this day.

The practical disadvantages soon became clear. On the one hand, schoolchildren continued to be taught the phonetically antiquated and complicated Tiberian pointing system. On the other hand, when the vowels were omitted, the result was and is a defective script that can be read correctly *only by those who know the language and its grammar perfectly*. Even they often have to read and reread a sentence to clear up ambiguities caused by homographs that can be read half a dozen ways. Consequently, the newspapers, periodicals and books (all unpointed) did not accept the Yellin system. On the contrary, as more Jews settled in Palestine and the printed word increased, more and more *matres lectionis* were once again inserted into the script as the only way of making unpointed Hebrew somewhat more readable. Thus, a gap developed between school and "real life" orthography.

As early as 1890, a Hebrew Language Council had been founded in Palestine. It always comprised the leading scholars, educators and writers and, in time, became the highest authority for the immense linguistic work required to fill the old language with new life. While the main burden was lexical -- thousands of new words had to be coined -- many other areas came under its jurisdiction, one of these being orthography. The Teachers Federation relinquished its authority in matters linguistic in favour of the Language Council, but in the realm of orthography the teachers never quite saw eye to eye with the Council when the latter began to move away from the Yellin principles.

In 1930, the Language Council appointed a special committee on orthography, charged with formulating positions that had developed in the discussions on this topic during the past years. By that time, the Yellin system was clearly obsolete outside the classroom, and the unpointed script used by newspapers, etc., varied from publishers to publisher (and often from word to identical word on the same page). But worse, while the language rejuvenated itself and blossomed, standing up beautifully and almost miraculously to the tasks of a modern age, it still had a primitive script,

consisting of consonants with an insufficient and ambiguous vocalization. The committee could not find its way out of a triple dilemma: should it aim at an orthography of (a) pointed script, (b) unpointed script ("pointed" and "unpointed" had by that time become more or less identified with "defective" and "*plene*," respectively), or (c) a dual spelling in which both methods were sanctioned.

In 1938, the Language Council appointed its second Spelling Committee, which agreed on a number of principles, [\[14\]](#) among which stand out that a spelling reform may not be brought about by "revolutionary" or "extremist" means, the *plene* script must not be considered ungrammatical, and -- most important of all -- that the pointed-defective and the unpointed-*plene* systems could well coexist, provided that each was assigned to different areas of writing and literature. The last principle constituted a victory for the "dualists".

The pointed-defective system and normative grammar were one and the same thing; therefore, the system was well-defined and no voice was raised in favour of *its* reform. But since the unpointed-plain system which had been given status in the principles was so obviously unregulated, the logical next step entailed giving it an orthography, i.e., setting up rules for the distribution of *matres lectionis* in unpointed script. When the committee published a set of such rules in 1942, [\[15\]](#) it was the most important step forward in the orthographic reform of Modern Hebrew.

These rules were phonetic in nature, i.e., they did not attempt to express Masoretic vowel points by means of *matres lectionis*; rather, they addressed themselves to the question of how to express vowels /u, o, i, e/ (about /a/, see below) by *matres lectionis* and, as the letters *vav* and *yod* had to be used for that purpose, how to distinguish them when they stood for the consonants /v/ and /y/.

The premise sounded simple enough, but a number of complex problems remained: (1) In the history of Hebrew writing, only *vav* and *yod* had been freely used, while the two other *matres lectionis*, *he* and *alef*, had been restricted to certain word patterns and places and had expressed three and five different vowels, respectively. Using them freely, now, and for definite vowels only, would constitute a "revolutionary and extremist" act, which was ruled out by the guidelines. Therefore only *vav* and *yod* could be used for a modern vocalisation by *matres lectionis*. (2) Making *vav* and *yod* do for the five Hebrew vowels was impossible, however. It was decided to waive the realization of the most frequent vowel, /a/, in the hope that absence of any vocalization would direct the reader toward supplying the vowel himself. (This was a misjudgment, since the absence of a *mater lectionis* could also mean actual vowellessness or any of the vowels /o, i, e/, as the rules allowed for quite a number of cases in which these were not expressed by *vav* or *yod* or anything else.) (3) Of the four remaining vowels to be realized, only /u/ offered no special problems and would always be expressed by *vav*. Each of the vowels /o, i, e/, however, had a long list of etymological and grammatical implications, which some members of the Committee were unwilling to ignore for the sake of phonetic expediency. As a result, remarks, exceptions, and subrules were introduced which specified exactly when /o/ could or could not be expressed by *vav* or /i/ and /e/ by *yod*. (4) While the question of the consonants /v/ and /y/ was, in principle, solved by doubling *vav* and *yod* to realize them, again historic-grammatical reservations interfered with a consistent application of such a rule. Consequently, /v/ and /y/ had to be indicated under various circumstances by the *single vav* and *yod*, and these circumstances were not the same for /v/ and /y/.

While the "1942 Rules" were thus rife with compromises, this was not enough for several committee members to appease their consciences. They had their individual opinions recorded separately in the body of the rules, adding options to ambiguities.

A further complicating factor was that the Language Council published at the same time, but separate from the Rules themselves, [\[16\]](#) the decision stipulating that certain letters should receive

the Masoretic dot which differentiates them from other letters, namely the consonants *bet* (*vet*), *kaf* (*chaf*), *pe* (*fe*), *sin* (*shin*), sounded *he* at the word end (unsounded *he*), and the vowel /u/ (*vav* with center dot, called *shuruk*). This last decision was even in direct contradiction to the main set of rules.

It seemed as though the valiant attempt of the Second Spelling Committee to formulate orthographic rules for *plene* script had only brought into sharper focus how hopelessly complicated a reform of this script actually was. However there was one positive side to it: the 1942 Rules established the *principle of phoneticity* in orthography, and they set the basic patterns and structure which could be emulated in the future.

Even with the serious threat to Jewish survival during the war years, and the uncertainty of a future for the Jewish population in British Mandate Palestine, the Hebrew Language Council carried on, organising two public hearings of the Rules in 1943 and 1944. At the end of the second hearing, the Council formed a new committee, its third, charged with formulating new rules based on those of 1942, together with the criticism and counter-proposals that had emerged in the hearings. [\[17\]](#)

In 1948, the committee published its proposals. [\[18\]](#) The "1948 Rules" deviated from the earlier ones mainly in that no individual opinions were recorded in them and that the following "alternate rules" were listed with regard to the vowels /u/ and /o/: /u/ was to be rendered by a *vav* with a center dot (*shuruk*), but "if there was no *shuruk* among the printing types," a plain *vav* could be used. Correspondingly, /o/ was to be rendered by a *vav* with an upper dot (*cholam*), or by plain *vav* "if there was no *cholam* among the printing types."

As a corollary, the rules for writing consonantal /v/ needed an alternative: if *vav* with center and upper dot were the "among the printing types," plain *vav* could be used for realising consonantal /v/. If not, double *vav* would have to be written in specified cases.

The introduction to the 1948 Rules contained a reminder of the separate decision of 1942 (now called "recommendation") concerning the differentiating dot for /b/ – /v/, /k/ – /x/, /p/ – /f/, /h/ – zero, /s/ – /š/. It, too, was not made part of the rules proper. [\[19\]](#)

Actually, the 1948 Rules did not signify much progress. Thus for instance, the letter *vav* still could express /v/, /u/ or /o/, the letter *yod*, /y/, /i/ or /e/, while all /a/'s and most /e/'s, which together form 70 to 80% of the Hebrew vocalization, went unrealized. Furthermore, the sub-rules and exceptions, stipulating when and when not to double *vav* and *yod* for realizing the consonants or when not to realize the vowels /o/ and /i/, required considerable grammatical expertise. But despite all drawbacks there was the obvious achievement that the Language Council had agreed on a system of orthography for unpointed Hebrew.

It will be remembered that the same year, 1948, saw the proclamation of the State of Israel. In due time (1953), the Language Council gave way to the Academy of the Hebrew Language, an official government agency. This new body saw itself faced with the fact that the 1948 rules had remained enshrined in the journal of the Language Council. They had not "conquered the market," be it in books and periodicals, in business or private correspondence, in State agencies and, most importantly, in the schools. They simply were too complicated, too ambiguous, and there had been no serious attempt to enforce them.

In the course of the years, three more new spelling committees were consecutively appointed by the Academy. They reported back to the plenum in 1962, 1964, and in 1967. [\[20\]](#)

## Conclusions

Upon studying these proposals, one arrives at the following conclusions: (1) All of them agreed that the 1948 Rules were inadequate; (2) all attempted ardently to find a better solution for the thorny problems; (3) none of them succeeded.

By now, twenty years had passed since the publication of the last Language Council Rules. At a historical plenum meeting on April 4, 1968, the Academy, facing up to its inability to accomplish a satisfactory reform of Hebrew orthography, pressurised by the Department of Education (instead of a handful of teachers from rural settlements) and by a small but militant citizens "Movement For an Unambiguous Hebrew Spelling," resolved to endorse the Language Council Rules of 1948 and to adopt them as the Academy's own. (Other parts of that resolution comprised *de jure* recognition of a dual orthography for Hebrew, one pointed, the other unpointed; the decision that the pointed orthography was to be the "traditional," i.e., Tiberian and Masoretic one; and finally, the formation of a special committee to oversee the practical application of all decisions and proposed adjustments where necessary. [\[21\]](#))

The following year, on May 27, 1969, the Secretary of Education and Culture, Mr. Zalman Aram, signed the Academy resolution into law. [\[22\]](#) With that, the 1948 Rules for the spelling of unpointed Hebrew became official for Israel.

## End of spelling reform?

One year after the Secretary's endorsement of the Academy's endorsement of the Council Rules, the Academy published those rules anew. [\[23\]](#) Only they did not read the same way as they had in 1948! The new version eliminated the alternate rules concerning /u/, /o/ and /v/ (apparently the *vav's* with center and upper dots were now considered to be "among the printing types"), and the "recommended" dotted letters for /b/, /k/, /p/, /s/ and audible /h/ were now taken up into the body of the rules, in fact they formed Rule #1.

At the time of this writing, five years after that publication, the rules are still not introduced into the school system, and writing and printing appear hardly aware of them (except for some, not all, of the publications of the Academy itself). It seems as if the Hebrew-writing world were holding its breath. More probably, though, it just keeps on writing and producing an amount of literature unparalleled in any language on a per capita basis, unmindful of the crying need for rules and reform of spelling.

The question of the spelling of Hebrew is so intricate, moves on so many different planes, and is so emotionally loaded that it cannot be solved by compromise. Some day, the appropriate government office will have to *decree* a mode of spelling, be it single or dual, pointed or unpointed, *plene* or defective, phonetic or etymological, simple or complicated, moderate or radical. In fact, the government will not only have to decree a reform but also to enforce it (possibly in steps) -- otherwise there will be no reform and no standard orthography.

## Footnotes

[1] A talmudic statement in the Tractate *Menachot* 29b-30a, that a *missing* letter rendered a Torah Scroll unfit, while an *extra* letter did not, has been interpreted as giving the scribe some leeway for an increased use of *matres lectionis*. Among the medieval grammarians, the Tenth Century Chayuj (*Two Treatises*, ed. John Nutt, London, 1870, p.26) was under the impression that "it is in order that the defective be written *plene* and the *plene* defective." Similarly, the Twelfth Century grammarian Abraham Ibn Ezra remarked in his book *Sajah Berurah* (Hebrew, ed. Lipmann, Fürth, 1839, p.7b) that the ancient scribes could write *plene* "when they wanted to make it explicit that the word must not be confused" or defectively "in order to take the short way."

- [2] Storage room of Hebrew books too old to be used. They may not be burned or otherwise destroyed for fear all desecrating the Devine Name contained in them. The Cairo Genizah was rediscovered in the last century. It contained a rich treasure of manuscripts.
- [3] The Tiberian Masorettes may have already tried to reconstruct an ancient pronunciation rather than render their contemporary ones through the pointing system. Moreover, their system referred to the solemn, high formal reading from the Bible in public worship. At any rate, many of their vowel signs have fallen together in today's pronunciation, while one of them has split into two vowels.
- [4] A Hebrew typewriter can be custom-equipped with the vowel signs as dead keys. In order to fit them on the keyboard, the owner has to sacrifice all non-essential symbols. But ordinarily, one would type the consonants and, in a second going over, fill in the vowel points by hand.
- [5] The consonant characters are of different widths. Therefore, the centering of vowel points below and inside the letter, as well as placing them closely to their upper right or left, is mechanically complicated. The inexpensive Linotype process can be applied to it only with complicated modifications. Most printers resort to the more expensive Monotype method or even to hand setting.
- [6] Cf. W. Weinberg, "Our Sephardic is no Sephardic...", *Central Conference of Amer. Rabbis Jour.* v.12, #4 (1965), pp. 43-50.
- [7] In the so-called "oriental" -- as differentiated from "general" -- Israeli pronunciation *ayin* and *chet* are differentiated from *alef* and *chet*, respectively.
- [8] Many books and countless articles have been written about Ben-Yehuda. The most recent book is Jack Fellman, *The Revival of a Classical Tongue: Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the Modern Hebrew Language*. The Hague, 1973.
- [9] *Hebräische Conversations Grammatik*. Vienna.
- [10] The Second Column of the *Hexapla* constitutes a transcription of the entire text, not only isolated words. Tradition has it that much older Greek transcriptions -- now lost -- preceded the first translations; they are said to have been used in the public Bible readings, just because the unpointed Hebrew text was ambiguous.
- [11] Some of the competing systems are those by the Royal Asiatic Soc., the Royal Geographic Soc., the American Board on Geographic Names, The Jewish Encyclopedia, The Library of Congress, The Encyclopedia Britannica, the Israeli Academy of the Hebrew Language, and the International Standard Organisation. Recently, a committee under the aegis of the American National Standard Institute (ANSI), which has already published Romanisation systems for Arabic and Japanese, has concluded work on a standard for Hebrew which is now being published by ANSI. This writer has been involved in its preparation.
- [12] I have collected a great number of these in my book *The Reform of Hebrew Orthography* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1972. Proposals containing *graphic* changes are contained in my English article "A Bibliography of Proposals to Reform the Hebrew Script," *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati), v. 10, (1972): 3-18.
- [13] David Yellin, *Pronunciation and Spelling in Hebrew* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1905.
- [14] *Leshonenu* 11 (1942): 233-34. Nine principles are enumerated there.
- [15] *Ibid.*, pp. 235-37. [16] *Ibid.*, p. 234.
- [17] *Leshonenu* 16 (1948): 82.
- [18] *Ibid.*, pp. 84-87. [19] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- [20] *Zichronot Ha'akademiah*, 9: 74: 10-11: 185-186: 14: 41-44.
- [21] *Zichronot Ha'akademiah*, 13: 65.
- [22] In the Government Gazette: *Reshumot: Yalkut Hapirsumirr* of 2 June, 1969, p. 1535.
- [23] *Lesbonenu La'am*, vol.21, no. 206, *April, 1970*.

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A wise man said: A reform will come only when the people concerned really want it.

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[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp8–10 in the printed version*]

## **2. Word Perception: Processes and Medium, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., L.L.D.\***

\*Presented at the IRA-PSC meeting, International Reading Assoc., 20th Annual Convention, New York City, May 15, 1975.

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In a 1975 issue of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, journalist Thomas H. Gammer led off with this headline: "Johnny Reads a Bit Better Here, U.S. Official says." Jack Kofoed, *Miami Herald* pundit, pokes this headline at his readers: "Remember When Students Learned the Three R's." In the same newspaper, columnist John Pennekamp headlines: "Reading Reformers Militant" and loses his readers in a verbal thicket on his incredible solution – old-fashioned phonics and the ABC'S.

### **Word Perception: Crucial Questions**

These and other journalists appear to be aware of general dissatisfaction with reading instruction. But like many of their predecessors, they come up with the wrong answers because they do not know the right questions. The chief purpose of this presentation is to raise two -- but only *two* of many--questions which appear to be relevant at this juncture:

1. What types of perceptual learning are required of beginners and of advanced pupils vis-a-vis the spellings of words, especially the commonest words? On the surface this question appears to be a bit naive to quixotic phonic zealots, who celebrate the halcyon days of pupil failures and dropouts. BUT perceptual learning plays a major, and little understood role, in effective reading instruction.
2. What obstacles are presented the child, motivated to learn to read and write, by a spelling system described by great scholars as obsolete and ridiculous? This archaic spelling system has been glossed over by those who offer contradictory, arbitrary, complex, complicated, arcane and, in the end, confusing rules and generalizations labled *phonics*. For example, what phonics rules apply to these common words: *one, you, said, of, here, was, come?*

By definition, phonics is the study of the relations between speech sounds and spellings. So where do the irregular spellings leave the hapless child? Or, for that matter, the teacher who may have had one *lecture* on reading instruction on top of another to obtain certification, without benefit of sound scholarship in perception, linguistics (phonemics and grammar), and orthography -- all these disciplines wedded to classroom application?

## Procedures: Word Perception

The massive amount of literature on perception has made possible:

1. The trichotomizing of perception of persons and things in the extensional world, perception of speech symbols (one step removed from the extensional world) and perception of words, or spellings, as symbols of speech (two steps removed from the extensional world).
2. The identification of different types of perceptual learning, complex processes embedded in linguistic-cognitive processes.
  - a. *Category learning* for too few (47%) patterned spellings of common words, as *at-cat, it-big, brave-cake*. But pupil attempts to use these category-learning skills is plagued by the rarity of sub-patterns (e.g., *use*), by the many exceptions (e.g., *have, are, come*), and by a paucity of words in a multiplicity of sub-patterns (e.g., *kind--find, all--wall, day--say*).
  - b. *Cue learning* for too few words, as *b(oo)k--l(oo)k, sp(oo)n--m(oo)n, bl(ow)--gr(ow), b(ir)d--f(ir)st*. Here again, the pupil is very likely to experience frustration in shifting from *book--look* to *soon--moon*, from *been* to *seen*, and from the common spelling *new-few* to the rare spelling *sew*.
  - c. *Probability learning* requires the automatic weighing of probabilities regarding different sounds for the same letters, and different letters for the same sounds in *s(ou)p--(ou)t, sh(oe)--t(oe), t(o)--g(o)*, and in *h(er)d--b(ir)d, bo(x)--loo(ks)*. Here again, phonic skills can be sound traps for guileless children, especially ones with rigid, rather than fluid, personalities.
  - d. *Alternation learning* enters into word perception, especially with multi-syllable words in which the vowel sound in the stressed syllable shifts from the base form of a word to a derived form, as in *n(a)tion--n(a)tional* and in a significant number of other words.

## Summary

The present spelling system requires versatility in using complicated, complex phonic rules which are self-defeating. To legitimize phonic instruction as a part of a word-perception program, there is an urgent need to assess irrational spellings and to offer, at least the beginner, regular spellings which will reliably signal pronunciations. When this important step is taken, the number of types of perceptual learning will be reduced, making phonics scientifically respectable and applicable.

## Factors

In addition to types of perceptual learning identified in the Reading Research Laboratory are crucial factors in perception: need recognized by the learner, perceptual *grouping* of letters (e.g., *-at* in *hat* or *pla-* in *play*), perceptual *closing* of a word following the identification of a phonogram, *meaning* (referential and structural), and so on -- a total of more than twenty factors.

## Options

Both publishers of materials for basic instruction and teachers have at least eight options regarding the development of word perception.

1. *Sight words*. The sight-word or look-say approach is a pseudo-method because it is merely tell-the-child-the-word, devised to cope with a host of irregularly spelled words and, therefore, automatically contains the seeds of other problems, yielding unforeseen results.
2. *Phonics*. This option is *numero uno* in the lexicon of parents and old-time educators, offering a melange of gimmickery to cope with both consistent and irregular spellings. This blunted tool

is a viable instrument only to the degree that traditional spellings are revised, in terms of perception, to insure more nearly sure-fire pronunciations, especially for beginners.

3. *Spelling patterns*. Spelling patterns, reified phonic rules, leave the learner with all the frustrations of phonics -- like pushing a string -- plus exacerbations resulting from inadequate understanding of the protagonists regarding Leonard Bloomfield's original contributions.
4. *V-A-K-T*. This option, emphasizing visual-auditory-kinesthetic-tactile modalities of learning, was published in 1920. Although this syllable-phonics procedure has been misused and misinterpreted by authors of textbooks, it has served learners with attention and/or concentration deficits.
5. *Rebus*. This typographical gimmick provides the learner with pictured content, not function, words within the line of type. What it contributes to the beginner's panoply of word-perception skills is yet to be discovered.
6. *Capital versus Small Letters*. The use of all capital letters or the use of all small letters with enlargements to signal capitalization merit study and some embroidering. Certainly different shapes of letters -- capital and lower case in print, manuscript and cursive writing -- often place the beginner between the proverbial rock and hard in word perception. Highly relevant to spelling signalling pronunciation is the shape of letters to represent speech sounds in manuscript or cursive writing and in print. This area of research pioneered by psychologist Miles Tinker is called *Graphic Articulation* by Frederick A. Richardson, developer of Storybook Alphabet to reduce confusion in visual discrimination of letter shapes.
7. *Initial Teaching Alphabets*. This option has been receiving increasing attention, but neither the attitudes of the reading establishment nor the efforts of competent researchers have produced significant escalation of reading instruction via revised spelling. Yet 53 reform proposals are delineated and illustrated in the Phonemic Spelling Council's *Orthographies*: 1974. To date, there is evidence that an initial teaching alphabet is more effective than traditional spellings (T.O.). But which revised initial teaching alphabet is superior to another? Inevitably this question requires positive thinking by the best minds in orthography, psycho-linguistics, psychology, and education.
8. *Consistent Respellings (Self-Help Aids)*. One simple device in beginning reading has proved effective: the respelling of irregular words, as self-help aids, into patterns previously learned. For example, these (consonant)-vowel-consonant respellings have been used successfully for the irregularly spelled words *said* (sed), *was* (wuz), *come* (kum), *laugh* (laf), *of* (ov).

### **Medium: Alphabetic Spelling**

Reading instruction embraces (1) motivation, (2) word perception, (3) comprehension (cognition), and (4) differentiated guidance. All four of these *facets* of instruction play muted roles in learning to read when the effect of the initial learning medium is overlooked and disregarded by those charged with the responsibility for improving instruction. Writings on word perception, for example, become mere intellectual doodling or screeds of the invariable wrong. A revised spelling system is as inevitable as it is foreseeable, requiring draconian efforts of scholars, legislators, and the public.

Parents complain and detest ineffective reading instruction, but they have misplaced confidence in phonics and the obsolete spelling system -- two of many factors which cause reading failures.

In conclusion, journalists, including the author of *Why Johnny Can't Read*, tell their readers nothing and sell them the same. They need to learn when and how to use four little words: "I do not know."

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*[Spelling Reform Anthology §16.1 pp221,222 in the printed version]*

## **Section 16**

### **Historical Changes in Spelling**

Over the centuries there have been changes in pronunciation and also in English spelling. This section explores the trends and tries to explain a few of the causes of these changes. Since there is little factual history on this subject, some humorous renditions are offered.

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp10,11 in the printed version]*

### **3. Mark Twain on Simplified Spelling**

The first time I was in Egypt a Simplified Spelling epidemic had broken out and the atmosphere was electrical with feeling engendered by the subject. This was four or five thousand years ago – I do not remember just how many thousand it was, for my memory for minor details has suffered some decay in the lapse of years. I am speaking of a former state of existence of mine, perhaps my earliest reincarnation; indeed I think it was the earliest. I had been an angel previously, and I am expecting to be one again – but at the time I speak of I was different.

The Simplifiers had risen in revolt against the hieroglyphics. An uncle of Cadmus who was out of a job had come to Egypt and was trying to introduce the Phonecian alphabet and get it adopted in place of the hieroglyphics. He was challenged to show cause, and he did it to the best of his ability. The exhibition and discussion took place in the Temple of Astarte, and I was present. So also was the Simplified Committee, with Croesus as foreman of the Revolt – not a large man physically, but a simplified speller of acknowledged ability. The Simplifiers were few; the Opposition were multitudinous. The Khedive was the main backer of the Revolt, and this magnified its strength and saved it from being insignificant. Among the Simplifiers were many men of learning and distinction, mainly literary men and members of college faculties; but all ranks and conditions of men and all grades of intellect, erudition, and ignorance were represented in the Opposition.

As a rule the speeches on both sides were temperate and courteous, but now and then a speaker weakened his argument with personalities, the Revolters referring to the Opposition as fossils, and the Opposition referring to the Revolters as "those cads," a smart epithet coined out of Uncle Cadmus.

Uncle Cadmus began with an object lesson, with chalk, on a couple of blackboards. On one of them he drew in outline a slender Egyptian in a short skirt, with slim legs and an eagle's head in place of a proper head, and he was carrying a couple of dinner pails, one in each hand. In front of this figure he drew a toothed line like an excerpt from a saw; in front of this he drew three skelton birds of doubtful ornithological origin; in front of these he drew a partly constructed house, with lean Egyptians fetching materials in wheelbarrows to finish it with; next he put in some more unclassified birds; then a large king, with carpenter's shavings for whiskers and hair; next he put in another king jabbing at a mongrel lion with a javelin; he followed this with a picture of a tower, with armed Egyptians projecting out of the top of it and as crowded for room as the cork in a bottle; he drew the opposing army below, fierce of aspect but much out of drawing as regards to perspective. They were shooting arrows at the men in the tower, which was poor military judgement because they could have reached up and pulled them out by the scruff of the neck. He followed these pictures with line after line of birds and beasts and scraps of saw-teeth and bunches of men in the customary short frock, some of them doing things, the others waiting for the umpire to call game; and finally his great blackboard was full from top to bottom. Everybody recognized the invocation set forth by the symbols: it was the Lord's Prayer.

It had taken him forty-five minutes to set it down. Then he stepped to the other blackboard and dashed off "Our Father which art in heaven," and the rest of it, in graceful Italian script, spelling the words the best he knew how in those days, and finished it up in four minutes and a half.

It was rather impressive.

He made no comment at the time, but went to a fresh blackboard and wrote upon it in hieroglyphics:

"At this time the King possessed of cavalry 214,580 men and 222,631 horses for their use; of infantry 16,341 squadrons together with an emergency reserve of all arms, consisting of 84,946 men, 321 elephants, 37,264 transportation carts, and 28,954 camels and dromedaries."

It filled the board and cost him twenty-six minutes of time and labor. Then he repeated it on another blackboard in Italian script and Arabic numerals and did it in two minutes and a quarter. Then he said:

"My argument is before you. One of the objections to the hieroglyphics is that it takes the brightest pupil nine years to get the forms and their meanings by heart; it takes the average pupil sixteen years; it takes the rest of the nation all their days to accomplish it – it is a life sentence. This cost of time is much too expensive. It could be employed more usefully in other industries, and with better results."

"If you will renounce the hieroglyphics and adopt written words instead, a tremendous advantage will be gained. By you? No, not by you. You have spent your lives in mastering the hieroglyphics, and to you they are simple, and the effect pleasant to the eye, and even beautiful. You are well along in life; it would not be worth your while to acquire the new learning; the aspect of it would be unpleasant to you; you will naturally cling with affection to the pictured records which have become beautiful to you through habit and use, and which are associated in your mind with the moving legends and tales of our venerable past and the great deeds of our fathers, which they have placed before you indestructively engraved upon stone. But I appeal to you in behalf of the generations which are to follow you, century after century, age after age, cycle after cycle. I pray you consider them and be generous. Lift this heavy burden from their backs. Do not send them toiling and moiling down to the twentieth century still bearing it, still oppressed by it. Let your sons and daughters adopt the written words and the alphabet, and go free. To the youngest of them, the hieroglyphics have no hallowed associations; the words and the alphabet will not offend their eyes; custom will quickly reconcile them to it, and then they will prefer it – if for no other reason, for the simple reason that they will have had no experience with any other method of communication considered by others comelier or better. I pray you let the hieroglyphics go, and thus save millions of years of useless time and labor to fifty generations of posterity that are to follow you."

"Do I claim that the substitute which I am proposing is without defect? No. It has a serious defect. My fellow Revolters are struggling for one thing, and for one thing only – the shortening and simplifying of the spelling. That is to say, they have not gone to the root of the matter – and in my opinion the reform which they are urging is hardly worthwhile. The trouble is not only with the spelling; it goes deeper than that; it is with the *alphabet*. There is but one way to scientifically and adequately reform the orthography, and that is by reforming the alphabet; then the orthography will reform itself. What is needed is that each letter of the alphabet shall have a perfectly definite sound, and that this sound shall never be changed or modified without the addition of an accent, or other visible sign, to indicate precisely and exactly the nature of the modification. The Germans have this kind of an alphabet. Every letter of it has a perfectly definite sound, and when that sound is modified, an *umlaut* or other sign is added to indicate the precise shade of the modification. The several values of the German letters can be learned by the ordinary child in a few days, and after that, for ninety years, that child can always correctly spell any German word it hears, without ever having to be taught how to do it by another person, or being obliged to apply to a spelling book for help.

"But the English alphabet is a pure insanity. It can hardly spell any word in the language with any large degree of certainty. Then you see the word *chaldron* in an English book, no foreigner can guess how to pronounce it; neither can any native. The reader knows that it is pronounced *chaldron* – or *kaldron*, or *kawldron* – but neither he nor his grandmother can tell which is the right way without looking in the dictionary; and when he looks in the dictionary, the chances are a hundred to one that the dictionary itself doesn't know which is the right way, but will furnish him all three and let him take his choice. When you find the word *bow* in an English book, standing by itself and without any informing text built around it, there is no Englishman or American alive, nor any dictionary, that can tell you how to pronounce that word. It may mean a gesture of salutation and rhyme with *cow*; and it may also mean an obsolete military weapon and rhyme with *blow*. But let us not enlarge upon this. The silliness of the English alphabet are quite beyond enumeration. That alphabet consists of nothing whatever except silliness. I venture to repeat that whereas the English orthography needs reforming and simplifying, the English alphabet needs it two or three million times more."

Uncle Cadmus sat down, and the Opposition rose and combated his reasonings in the usual way. Those people said that they had always been used to the hieroglyphics; that the hieroglyphics had dear and sacred associations for them; that they loved to sit on a barrel under an umbrella in the brilliant sun of Egypt and spell out the owls and eagles and alligators and saw-teeth, and take an hour and a half to the Lord's Prayer, and weep with romantic emotion at the thought that they had, at most, but eight or ten years between themselves and the grave for the enjoyment of this ecstasy; and that then possibly these Revolters would shove the ancient signs and symbols from the main track and equip the people with a lightning-express reformed alphabet that would leave the hieroglyphic wheel-barrow a hundred thousand miles behind and have not a dammed association which could compel a tear, even if tears and diamonds stood at the same price in the market-place.

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[*Spelling Reform Anthology §16.2 p222 in the printed version*]  
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 p11 in the printed version*]

#### **4. What is a cow? (For advanced students of English or engineers)**

A cow is a completely automated milk manufacturing machine. It is enclosed in untanned leather and is mounted on four moveable supports, one on each corner.

The front end of the machine has the input which contains the cutting and grinding mechanization, utilizing a unique feedback device. Here also are the headlights, air intake and exhaust, a bumper and a fog-horn. All of these parts are self-renewable and never need replacing.

At the rear and underneath the large storage tank, the machine carries the milk dispensing equipment, with four spigots. The rear end of the machine has a built-in reflex fly swatter and insect attractor so as to provide insects for the swatter. The center portion houses a hypochemical conversion unit. Briefly this consists of four fermentation and storage tanks connected in series by an intricate network of flexible tubing. This part also contains a central heating plant complete with automatic temperature controls, plumbing station and ventilating system. The waste disposal apparatus is located to the rear of this central section, below the fly-swatter.

Cows are available in an assortment of sizes and colors to match any decor you wish. They seem to be very durable and able to withstand a variety of inclement weather but not freezing cold. They have very little depreciation with age, and they have the unique ability (among machines) of reproducing their own kind, which often makes the older machines more valuable than new machines.

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[*Spelling Reform Anthology §11.3 pp165–167 in the printed version*]  
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp12–14 in the printed version*]

## 5. The Drawbacks of Traditional Orthography, by Sir James Pitman, KBE\*

\*London, England.

\*Paper to the Internat. Assoc. of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, London, April 3, 1975.

What are these drawbacks and what are their cumulative effect upon the learner of English as a foreign language?

The first is that the accident of history has greatly confounded the English orthography with a 2,000 year-old alphabet – perhaps adequate for the Latin tongue, but lacking characters for at least 17 sounds of the English tongue – and, with a basically 600 year-old attempt at spelling some 40 sounds with only 23 letters (*c*, *q* and *x* are redundant).

We who are literate have become so conditioned to the shortcomings of the means by which what is spoken and listened to in English is thus confusingly represented, that we nearly all have found it virtually impossible to analyse – or even to appreciate the analyses of those confusions made by others.

The confusions between oracy and literacy come in four categories – two in *decoding* (reading) and one in *encoding* (writing), and one in the representation of correctly pronouncing English.

### Decoding

1. The multitude of variants in virtually all the 26 letters cause us to use well over a hundred letters including multilateral forms such as TH, Th, th, etc., and over 2,000 spellings for only some 40 sounds of English.

**For instance, there are three variables of *a* (A, a, *ā*); three of *b* (B, b, *β*); only one of *c*, two of *d* (D, d); three of *e* (E, e, *Ē*); four of *f* (F, f, *ƒ*, *ϕ*); and corresponding variants in the otherwise most consistent digraphs such as *ch* and *th* (CH, Ch, *Ĉh*), (TH, Th, *Ṭh*, *ṭh*).**

The effect of these ambiguities of "characters" in relation to "letters" and of the further ambiguities of "digraphs" for those 17 sounds (which lack letters in the Roman alphabet) is a cause of inescapable confusions in de-coding (reading), encoding (writing), and pronouncing (speaking) to the foreigner and even to the already English-speaking child learning literacy and extending his oracy with a comprehensible and acceptable pronunciation. [\[1\]](#)

These variations in the shapes of letters and the consequent confusions in decoding and encoding are an even worse handicap to the foreigner in his learning also of speaking, even if the literacy of his native tongue is the Latin alphabet, and of course are even worse still if the literacy to which he is used is in any of the very many alphabets which did not originate in Rome 2,000 years ago. Cannot these confusions and the handicaps they cause be eliminated? Yes, as will be developed later.

2. The second category of confusion lies in the instability of value attached to every one of such 26 "letters."

There is a total of 173 differing values in sound for only 26 letters, an average of 6.7 different sound values for each of the 26 letters. For instance, the *a* is not stable, as is the number-value of *l*. Indeed we need think only of words such as: 1. *at*, 2. *fat* (*father*), 3. *hat* (*hating*), 4. *hat* (*what*), 5. *shall* (*all*), 6. *man* (*many*), 7. *postage* (*wagon*) and 8. of the mute *a* in *Isaac*. [2]

### Encoding

3. The third category of confusion lies in the variety of different spellings for each of the 40 sounds of English.

For instance, there are wide variations in the spellings of the sound of *a* in *acorn*. There is a total of 42, using combinations of *a, e, f, g, h, i, o, r, t, u* and *y* – eleven different letters: some of the most common and useful words of the language-making, *save* (but *have*), *rain*, *straight*, *eight* (but *height*), *may*, *played*, *great* and *they* – vary greatly.

The task of writing is made very difficult indeed and learners are therefore inhibited from attempting to write words they can speak because they do not know how to spell them. [3]

Can anyone doubt that these three categories of confusion constitute an aggregation of the drawbacks of T.O. when used to teach the learners of literacy, or of oracy, or of both? Cannot these three causes of confusion be eliminated, at least during the learning period. Again and again, yes, yes, YES!!-as will be shown in the fourth category, namely the:

### Misrepresentation of sounds

4. The lack of 17 characters specifically to represent the eleven vowel and six consonant sounds spoken in English – but not spoken in Rome 2,000 years ago – makes equivocation and misrepresentation inevitable.

There is a minimum of seventeen discrete sounds, plus the 'schwa' (about which later), which are spoken in English, for which there are no letters available in the Latin alphabet. All of these may be represented without equivocation as exemplified below.

It will be noticed how these may be represented in new lower case characters (and using lower case characters exclusively eliminates the drawbacks of the first category of confusions), either by the junction of the digraphs commonly used to represent them, or by borrowing from the cursive alphabet, e.g. No. 1 *a*,

- Vowels :
1. *arm* (18)
  2. *roplane* (42)
  3. *atumn* (23)
  4. *el* (40)
  5. *oe* (37)
  6. *to* = two, too (41)
  7. *gd* (11)
  8. *die* (34)
  9. *out* (13)
  10. *ol* (12)
  11. *due* (28)
- Consonants :
12. *church* (11)
  13. *north* (7)
  14. *northem* (3)
  15. *Ship* (13)
  16. *aguer* (8)
  17. *long, logger* (7)

In the case of No. 17, *logger, loggest* (from *long*), the second element of the common digraph has been aligned below the x-line and reduced in size, thus obviating not only the difference of a double *g* in *longger*, but also the confusion over such words as *ungrateful*. In No. 4, not only does the eye complete the incomplete *ee* into *ee*, but regards *ec* and *EE* in *FEET* and *FEET* as akin. In Nos. 6 & 7 the eye not only completes the tops of the  $\omega$  and  $\omega$  to form the *oo* of *moon* and of *foot*, but also finds similarity to the cursive alphabet version  $\omega$  of the lower case *w*. This choice of  $\omega$  and  $\omega$  is of value also in the u-class of spellings, e.g. *ruby, true, rheumatism, fruit, soup, full, would*, etc. Of course the consonant sound /w/ and the longer vowels and the shorter vowels represented in i.t.a. by  $\omega$  and  $\omega$  represent as much semi-consonants as *w* represents a semi-vowel. It is impossible to pronounce quickly the word *wet* spoken with the vowel sound / $\omega$ / or / $\omega$ /, without achieving the consonant sound /w/. Thus when *wet* or even  $\omega$ *wet* are printed instead of *wet*, the forms and the sounds are more than closely enough related in sight and in hearing for diaphonic comprehension.

and No. 16 ʒ in *arm*, and *azuer*.

The representation of the schwa raises its own problems, and here again the fact that i.t.a. is a diaphonic *reading* system and not a phonetic *writing* system plays an important part in providing practicably a simple solution to an otherwise insurmountable difficulty.

Many words in any page of continuous English have variants of either strong or weak forms. Adding up the ascertained frequency in Table 4 of Dr. Godfrey *The Relativ Frequency of English Speech Sounds*, the total percentage in the language of such word pronunciations varying between their strong and weak forms is very high.

The total frequency of even the 24 most frequently recurring words in the 100,000 words in selected running text was 27.194% and of these 24 only the ego (I) is invariable in its spoken form, while all the 23 others are variable and more often unstressed than stressed, and changed in their vowels to either schwa (19.184%) or to what I have called 'schwi' (6.254%). These 23 thus recur very frequently. It would only cause semantic confusion to vary the spellings of the words *of*, *and*, *to* apparently erratically where clearly there is little, if any, confusion in diaphonically listening to the alternations of strong and weak forms.

The advantages of such a diaphonic reading system for teaching reading are clear, seeing that each reader, who knows English speech, will anyhow pronounce each word he reads in his own idiosyncratic version of his regional version of the language. The extremely delicate resources of the International Phonetic Alphabet – being a writing system – are not required for teaching reading seeing that their precision would be wasted unless the purpose were to represent a particularly determined pronunciation. This interesting contrast between a diaphonic reading system and the differing purposes of a phonetic writing system is illustrated by the following quotation from the famous Prof. Max Muller, published in the *Fortnightly Review* of April, 1876, in regard to my Grandfather's attempt to eliminate the drawbacks and confusions of T.O. as a medium for *learning* reading:

"What I like in Mr. Pitman's system of spelling is exactly what has been found fault with by others, namely, that he does not attempt to refine too much, and to express in writing those endless shades of pronunciation, which may be of the greatest interest to the student of acoustics, or phonetics, as applied to the study of living dialects, but which, for practical as well as for scientific philological purposes, must be entirely ignored. Writing was never intended to photograph spoken languages: it was meant to indicate, not to paint, sounds. Language deals in broad colours, and writing ought to follow the example of language, which, though it allows an endless variety of pronunciation, restricts itself for its own purpose, for the purpose of expressing thought in all its modifications, to a very limited number of typical vowels and consonants. Out of the large number of vowel sounds, for instance, which have been catalogued from the various English dialects, those only can be recognised as constituent elements of the language which in, and by, their difference from each other convey a difference in meaning."

In order to teach oracy, a writing system, not a reading system, is required because the purpose as in a pronouncing dictionary, is to teach exclusively a particular pronunciation – a habit of speaking those particular phonemes (,with no diaphonic variations of them) which have been spoken by the voices of those who have recorded the words on the cassettes and have thus determined the intended character-to-sound values and the rhythmic variations for what has been printed in the books, thus indicating both the changes of vowel (to the schwa or to the schwi) and the variations in stress.

A writing system is thus as desirable an approach to the teaching of oracy as it is in the editing and printing of a pronouncing dictionary for which the editor decides the particular phonemes and the

particular stresses which he wishes the printer to reproduce and indicate visually. This involves a phonetic alphabet whose characters-to-phoneme relationships will be set out in the preliminary pages of the dictionary, and ought to be – but seldom if ever is – accompanied by a cassette.

No one can doubt that in teaching oracy in the English language to a foreigner it will be most helpful to indicate the incidence of the variations in stress – and consequently in vowel sound – of the otherwise homographic *the's, of's, and's*, etc.

Typography may be called in aid to obviate the drawbacks of our T.O., while still keeping the same 'spelling,' whatever the stress or vowel change. Syllables may be printed:

1. in semi-bold type, or underlined on the blackboard, to show primary stress, or
2. in ordinary type, or the absence of underlining, to show what may be called middle-stress, or
3. in much smaller type altogether to represent stresslessness and the change of vowel to the particular other vowel.

*Speech i.t.a.* was illustrated at the Jan. 4th 1974 IATEFL Conference in London. A specimen is however reproduced at the end of this paper. Reprints of that earlier paper with the title "The Importance of Medium and Motivation in the Learning of English as a Foreign Language," [4] were available to those attending the Conference, and may still be obtained from The Initial Teaching Alphabet Foundation, Reigate, Surrey, England. Its bibliography included 16 items in reference to the use of both *Speech i.t.a.* and of ordinary i.t.a. for teaching literacy and oracy. Since then Prof. D. U. Robertson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Education at California State Univ. and T. S. Trepper, B.A., Research Director at Murchison Street Elementary School in East Los Angeles, have published in *Reading World* most favorable results of their research with 52 Mexican-American bilingual fourth-graders. This is here added because, at any rate in America, copies of Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1974 will be readily available.

**In the last case, words or syllables which lose stress and suffer a change in vowel to the schwa can be aligned centrally to the bottom of the x-line (or underlined with a downward pointing obtuse angled underscore if not so printed) and those in such words as *the*, (before a vowel), *me*, *be*, *by*, *before*, *equator*, which on losing stress suffer a change of vowel to the schwa, can be aligned centrally to the top of the x-line (or overlined with an upward pointing obtuse-angle overscore). This treatment of the i.t.a. alphabet and spellings is specially designed for teaching oracy (in parallel with literacy) and is thus called *speech i.t.a.* Such a change from a reading system to a writing system is not necessary for those already skilled in English oracy—they know when to stress the demonstrative adjective as *that* and when to speak, without stress and with the change of vowel to the schwa, the single relative pronoun *that*; and when to stress the negatively expected hypothetical *if* or to unstress it as if in a positively expected situation. For the foreigner, however, such an approach to "photographs of the spoken language," (to quote again the late Prof. Muller) and to a writing system are very helpful in learning and establishing a comprehensible standard of pronunciation, as used in the cassettes, and therefore varyingly printed in relation to them.**

Is there anyone in the audience ready to come forward and deny that the four categories of confusion are major drawbacks in the teaching of English as a foreign language? Is there anyone to challenge the claim that the particular characters added to the alphabet to make good the absence of letters with which to represent those sounds are so conforming to a frequent representation practice in Traditional Orthography that the transition from T.O. to i.t.a. (and in the reverse direction from i.t.a. to T.O.) is immediate, effortless and – even if disturbing to deeply conditioned prejudices – to be welcomed as an initial learning medium freed from the drawbacks which the confusions of T.O. have hitherto imposed? Please refer again to the list of 17 sounds together with the 17 characters which have been designed specifically to achieve the closest possible relationship to the most frequent available spelling for that sound in our T.O. If any of those present have reservations in accepting these two propositions, I ask him to remember how wrongly the evidence of the eyes and the preconditioning of their daily observations led even the most intelligent and expert professionals of those days to reject the claims of Copernicus and Galileo that the sun did not go around the earth daily but that the earth revolved round on its axis daily.

We cannot make progress unless we are ready to think afresh – or think laterally as I understand it is now called; to recognise immovable obstructions and to go round them by another route rather than to keep trying to move them away.

Let us now at least follow the example of the ant who, at the bottom of the telegraph pole, which the preceding sections of the army had been scaling and then descending ahead of him recognised the simple alternative and went around the base of the obstruction leading his followers to the desired end, more effectively and economically.

### Notes

[1] On Feb. 28, 1975 there was published the report of the Bullock Committee (A Language for Life), a committee appointed by our Secretary of State for Education and Science "to inquire into the teaching in the schools of reading and other uses of English."

The Committee devoted three pages (82-84) to this and the next category of confusion pointing out "Variations in *letter shape* (my italics) multiply at the word level" (6.11) . . . "They increase the total quantity to be learned and add to the burdens of the slow learning child an extra dimension of difficulty that he could well do without. This difficulty is probably even more marked when the child comes to write, since he may be confused in deciding which of the various forms to set down." (6.10). They point out: "Letter outline may convey very little to the child unless it has been invested with some kind of special significance" (6.7) and that these variations "sometimes lead to teachers assuming mistakenly that there is something inherently wrong with the child if he happens to have difficulty in learning to recognize letters." (6.7).

[2] The Bullock Committee devoted 17 more pages (84-94 and 107-112) to "the relationship between letters and sounds" (6.16) including, as an example of the dis-relationships in this second category of confusion, the spelling (of the sound usually spelled as *chemist*) as *calmbost* which they justify by precedents as follows: *candle*, *many*, *calm*, *ham*, *lamb*, *women*, *lost*, *lost*, (6.10) much as Bernard Shaw produced *ghoti* for *fish* (*enough*, *women*, *nation*) and conclude "decoding is of particular importance in the early stages of learning to read, and the complexity of English spelling patterns does appear to retard progress" (6.20) "children will tend to be confused by the complexity of the spelling patterns they encounter in the early stages." (7.23). "Encounter with such variations is inevitable." (7.23).

[3] The Bullock Committee reported only indirectly on the great degree of confusions in this third category (encoding), but, in the course of their treatment of both of the categories of confusion in decoding, they reported a number of findings which are relevant not to decoding but to encoding. For instance: "Children tend to learn quite quickly how to spell in i.t.a. and they have ready access to almost (why almost?) every word in their spoken language. The value of this for language experience activities is obvious" (7.29); and again, "the i.t.a. pupils remained superior in T.O. . . . spelling even after five years at school, i.e. well beyond the transition stage." (7.29). They also touch on it (11-41) where they report that, of 16,000 ten-year-old children "fewer than half spelled the word 'saucer' correctly and those who wrote it incorrectly gave 209 alternative spellings."

[4] Reprinted in *Spelling Progress Bulletin*, v. XIV, No. 1, Spr. 1974.

### Specimen of Speech i. t. a.

az every reeder will not the international fonetic alfabet is wriedly used as a meedium for teeching lisenig and speeking, but with soe græt a departuer from the forms ov tradishonal orthograpy (T.O.) that teeching ov reeding, rietig and particueclarly ov spellig in T.O. is grætly vishiated.

thus the græt advantæj ov speech i.t.a. is that whiel it mæ bee used just as effectivly as I.P.A. to teech lisenig and speeking, it offers aulsæ a much mor effectiv tool in teeching reeding, rietig, and cueriusly as reserch has establisht, eeven spellig aulsæ.

*[Spelling Reform Anthology §7.2 pp112,113 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp15,16 in the printed version]*

## **6. How to Pass a Bill (thru the Legislature), by John Ligtenberg\***

\* General Counsel, American Federation of Teachers.

Reprinted from *The American Teacher*, Feb. 1955, pp 9-10, 20.

### **Essential Procedures for Successful Education Legislation**

The most important law making body in the daily lives of the people is the state legislature. Because it deals with private and local affairs and the intimate details of family, social and business life, the state legislature is far more important to most of us than the national Congress.

For anyone interested in legislative work in the field of education and teacher's welfare, nothing is more important than to know how such a legislature operates. The legislature must be understood as a social institution that acts not only within a frame of constitutions, statutes and rules, but also according to many unwritten customs and practices. It is influenced in a direct and immediate sense by the many organized and unorganized community groups within the state, the political climate of the community, and the party system itself.

The procedures in each state vary in accordance with local customs, laws and constitutions. In their broad outline they operate in much the same way but the details vary greatly. It is often an understanding of the details that makes the difference between successful operation of a legislative program and failure.

A knowledge of the state constitution, the statutes adopted by the legislature to guide the process of making laws, and the rules adopted by each house of the legislature for the conduct of its affairs should be understood by the legislative representative of the teachers organization.

In practical effect it is even more necessary to understand the various party and intra-party alignments. The pressure groups that operate in the lobbies and corridors, the committee chairman and other officers of the legislature all play a vital part.

### **Support Necessary**

No bill should ever be submitted to the legislature *unless some support is first obtained for it*. This support may be of several different kinds. In the case of legislation desired by a teachers' union, it may be necessary to decide whether other teachers' organizations would favor it. If so, it may be a question whether their support should be sought beforehand or whether they should be left alone to determine their attitude at a later date.

In most such instances the support of the labor organizations affiliated with the teachers' union should also be secured. If there are other groups in the community whose attitude toward the teaching force and the issues involved in the proposed legislation is favorable, their support should be sought also. That usually means that both branches of organized labor can be counted upon. Other groups such as P.T.A., women's clubs, civic organizations in general, taxpayer's organizations and chambers of commerce may have a common interest, or they may be opposed.

### **An example may be helpful:**

A number of years ago a board of education in a large city felt that the state aid it was receiving was inadequate. Under its leadership a civic advisory committee was formed. To this committee were invited representatives of the A. F. of L., the C.I.O., all of the teacher's organizations in the school system, P.T.A., women's clubs, League of Women Voters, Association of Commerce, manufacturers association and others. By this means a meeting of the minds of a full cross section of the professional, business and educational life of the community was achieved. 'We need hardly add that a large measure of success was gained in the face of a state administration reluctant to increase taxes for educational purposes.

Support on such a broad scale can hardly ever be hoped for, but it is advisable to work on as broad a scale as possible.

### **Drafting the Bill:**

The bill embodying the proposed measure should be drawn and studied by an attorney for the union who has an understanding of the processes of legislation. It should be considered very carefully to meet possible objections from whatever source and to see that it does not contain language which could backfire.

This means that the bill must be considered in the framework of existing legislation. Possible constitution- al objections must be overcome or avoided. If the proposed bill conflicts with existing legislation, such conflicts must be removed or the bill so drawn as to repeal or amend the conflicting provisions.

It is necessary to consider against this background whether the bill will accomplish the purpose intended. The law books are full of decisions by reviewing courts holding that acts of the legislature did not mean what its sponsors thought it did, or holding them unconstitutional for any of a variety of reasons. Often these objections could have been met in advance if the law-writer had been knowledgeable of existing conditions.

When the bill is in satisfactory shape it must be placed in the form required by that particular legislature, with proper headings and introductions. It is very important that the title conform to local requirements. Many times laws have been held unconstitutional simply because the title was defective.

### **Importance of Sponsors:**

Since no bill can actually be introduced in the legislature by anyone except a member of that body, it is necessary to secure the support of at least one member of the legislature before it is filed. In selecting a sponsoring member of the legislature, it is usually highly desirable to obtain the support of one belonging to the dominant party.

Sometimes it is desirable that a bill be introduced by more than one member and not infrequently there are a large number of sponsors from both of the major parties. These members are then known as the sponsors of the bill. This is done in various ways but usually by having the legislator endorse his name on the bill. It is then introduced in the legislature by one of the sponsors. Not infrequently it is desirable to have identical bills introduced in both houses.

From this point on the precise details of how a bill is handled will vary widely from one state to

another. It is possible, however, to discuss the process in broad out- lines with the understanding always that there is no substitute for local knowledge.

### **After Introduction:**

When a bill has been introduced, it is usually read by title only, given a number and ordered printed. It also is usually referred to a committee at this stage. A bill of great importance may sometimes be referred to the Committee of the Whole.

### **Committee Hearings:**

At this point the committee plays a most important part in its future progress. One or more committee hearings will be held. The sponsoring legislator will usually acquaint the committee with its merits.

Other legislators may express their views and the persons interested in the bill and representatives of organizations may be heard. Usually those who wish to appear ask the chairman for that privilege. Citizens may also speak to committee members and members of the legislature in person or by mail, giving their opinions and urging support.

This is the point where the active support of the bill by the supporters you have marshalled becomes extremely important. Representatives of the various groups will appear before the committee and give reasons for wishing to have the bill enacted. Individual members of the committee may be contacted and the matter discussed with them.

**Any amendments to the bill** may also be considered and acted upon. The committee will then report the bill to the house. Usually the report will take one of the following forms:

- 1) *That the bill pass;*
- 2) *That the bill do not pass;*
- 3) *That the bill pass as amended,*
- 4) *That the committee may prepare and offer a substitute bill;*
- 5) *No recommendation.*

It is important that persons interested keep contact with committee chairmen or members to see that the bill is considered by the committee as early in the session as possible so as to get it back on the legislative calendar.

The bill then goes back to the particular house of the legislature in which it is filed. Usually when it is reported out of the committee it will go to the house for second and third readings and passage. This may vary from state to state.

### **Procedures on the Floor:**

Usually the first reading is a routine matter when the bill is read by title only. On second reading the various amendments proposed by the committee are considered as well as any amendments offered from the floor. These are accepted or rejected by a majority of a quorum. A bill may be killed at this stage in various ways, often by a motion to amend the bill by striking out the enacting clause. If the bill survives, it is again printed with all amendments and advanced to the third reading. Usually the third reading is the final reading and adoption or defeat is by a majority vote on roll call.

After a bill has successfully passed one house of the legislature, it goes to the other house and is

there processed in much the same way. If the second house passes the bill with amendments it will go back to the house of its origin for concurrence. If there are serious differences, a committee may be appointed from each house to confer on the bill in the hope of reaching an agreement. A bill must pass both houses in exactly the same form in order to become law.

Readers who are unfamiliar with the process of legislation may exclaim at this point that the legislators really seem to have very little to do with it; that the lobbyists and pressure groups carry the ball for the bill. However, when we consider the broad aspects of the right of petition guaranteed by the constitution, we see that these groups are merely exercising that right. In the last analysis the legislators exercise their own judgement but in most instances they act only when they find that a large body of people favor action.

#### **Action by the Governor:**

The bill must then be sent to the governor of the state who may sign it, allow it to become law without his signature, or veto it. Usually if the veto is received before the adjournment of the legislature, the legislature has an opportunity to override the veto.

This points up the fact that it is frequently advisable to have contact with the governor of the state to secure his support of the bill. If the matter is of great importance, it may be advisable to secure his support in advance. In any event, it is wise to let him know of your interest in the legislation and your desire that it be approved.

It will be observed that the right of petition is exercised right up to the final stage, and that the problems of the supporters of the legislation are never ended until the bill has passed the executive hurdle. Even there the process does not end, for executive action may be necessary to put its provisions into effect. In other cases, vigilance may be necessary to see that the administrative officers charged with enforcement do their duty. That may finally bring you around to the judicial department where court action is instituted to enforce the provisions of the law or to secure a constructive determination of its provisions.

#### **Experienced Leadership Necessary:**

In this particular field there is no substitute for experience. The teachers' union in every state ought to have at least one person whose continuing duty it is to represent the interests of the group in legislation. Such person cannot become an expert in one term. If he shows promise he should be kept on the job.

Eventually he will come to understand his duties thoroughly and the legislators will come to know him and to respect his judgment. In that process they will also come to understand and sympathize with the objectives of those he represents.

Editors' note: While this article was intended for securing legislation at the state level, it is equally valid for most of its provisions at the national level.

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §3.1 pp41,42 in the printed version*]  
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1975 pp17,18 in the printed version*]

## 7. Viewpoints III, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D.\*

\*Reading Research Lab, Univ. of Miami, Fla.

This *Viewpoints* deals with theoretical discussions of the relationship between speech and writing. It focuses attention on the differences between informal speech used in everyday conversations and formal speech used especially in scholarly discussion groups. It also focuses on the differences between informal writing as in letters and formal writing as in textbooks and speeches. At the same time, issues are raised relevant to the spelling of homonyms, homographic heterophones, homographic homophones and the relationship between orthography and spellings. Also raised are questions regarding morphemic, prosodic, and other features of language (speech) to be represented orthographically. In short, it serves to point out the complexity as well as the complications of spelling reform.

In discussions of spelling reform, the terms *phonetics*, *phonemics* and *phonics*, are used with abandon by some authors. This misuse of terms only adds to the confusion of educators who make final decisions, especially regarding i.t.m. (initial teaching medium). (See Betts, "Confusion of terms" *The Reading Teacher*, XXVI, No. 5, Feb. 1973).

Two terms often used interchangeably are *spelling* and *orthography*. The latter embraces representations based on theoretical frameworks of grammar – traditional, structural or transformational-generative (non-phonemic features of orthography). In short, the English writing system includes more features than the alphabet; e.g., punctuation and grammatical (morphemic and syntactic). Orthography has been defined as that "phase of linguistic study which treats of spelling." Robertson and Cassidy, *The Development of Modern English*, Prentice-Hall, Inc. (1954). In short the two terms have been used for the same referent.

For a long time, scholars have continued a debate over the relationship of language (speech) and writing. Briefly, there are two schools of thought:

1. The autonomists, or functionalists, who maintain
  - a. Written language is essentially distinct from spoken language.
  - b. Writing and speaking are co-equal in the symbolization of ideas.
  - c. Phonetic transcription is spellings belonging to the spoken norm.
  - d. Writing represents different levels of language structure – phoneme, morphophoneme and morpheme – beyond that of theoretical phonology.
  - e. Spelling-pronunciations are examples of the written norm in structure interfering with the spoken norm in structure.
2. The correlationists who maintain
  - a. Writing is correlated and is dependent on speech.
  - b. Writing is a representation of speech, although it is neither adequate nor accurate.
  - c. Writing represents language as it is spoken – its phonetic substance includes levels of linguistic structure.

The autonomist's position is championed by Joseph Vachek (*Written Language: general problems and problems of English*, Mouton, The Hague, 1973). The correlationist protagonist, among others, is Robert A. Hall, Jr. (Review of Joseph Vachek book, *Reviewed in Language*, Vol. 51, No. 2, June, 1975, pp. 461-465)

H. J. Ulhall challenges the notion that speech is primary and writing is secondary; instead, he says they "simply coexist." He continues: "From the graphic manifestation of a language we can distill, then, in the same way as from phonic manifestation, an inventory of forms, defined by their mutual functions, which might equally well be represented phonically or in any other convenient way, and of which we know that in the combinations which we have registered they are sufficient to express the language satisfactorily." (In Hamp et al, *Readings in Linguistics*, Univ. Chicago Press, 1966).

On the other hand, some grammarians tend to emphasize morphological and syntactical bases as well as the phonological basis of spelling. Robert Hall, Jr., for example, points out:

". . . English orthography is not, as often thought, wholly irregular and haphazard; there is a gradation in fit between sound and spelling. A very large number of words are spelled quite regularly, and another large number are only semi-irregular, in that these irregularities fall in patterned sets; only a small percentage of our words show irregularities in their spelling." (*Introductory Linguistics*, Chilton Co., 1964, p.227).

Psycholinguist Norman N. Markel cautions that writing does not mirror speech: "A frequent oversight on the part of both laymen and scientists studying language behavior is the fact that the sound system (phonemic structure) of language is not necessarily isomorphic to the writing system (orthography) of that language." (*Psycholinguistics*, the Dorsey Press, 1969, p.75).

Undoubtedly, most alphabeteers assume a desirable relationship between sounds and spellings (phoneme-grapheme relationships). This viewpoint appears to be shared somewhat by Godfrey Dewey, Sir James Pitman, Axel Wijk, and others. Of course, Wijk is to the far right of most spelling reformers, emphasising the regularity of conventional spelling and producing a *Regularized English*, (Almqvist & Wicksell, Stockholm, 1959) to retain almost 90% of conventional spellings.

Many phoneticians tend to share the concept of regularity of spellings to represent speech sounds. The late Charles Kenneth Thomas commented, for example: "When we speak of the invention of the alphabet, we mean that this stage in the visual representation of ideas had arrived, and that writing had shifted from an ideographic to a phonetic basis." (p.8). Thomas despaired of achieving spelling reform: "Systems of simplified spelling come and go, and the phonetician generally finds them haphazard and inadequate." (p.10). (*Phonetics of American English*, the Ronald Press, 1958).

For a long time phoneticians have been acutely aware of disparity in spellings. Ralph R. Leutenegger is one witness to the fact: "The wide divergence between the sounds and the spellings of our language has caused innumerable problems and called attention to the need for a system of symbols by which the sounds of our language and others can be recorded." (*Sounds of American English*, Scott, Foresman & Co., 1963, p.3).

Kantner and West cogently summarized phoneticians' view of spelling as: "English is a fabulous museum of linguistic fossils. . ." (*Phonetics*, Harper & Brothers, 1960, p.238).

Phoneticians invented the I.P.A.(International Phonetic Alphabet) to record many of the fine characteristics of speech. But I.P.A. requires considerable *professional* training for its effective use. More recently phonemecists have grouped speech sounds, reducing the number of symbols. Most dictionaries for use in public schools are phonemically based; perhaps the best example is *Webster's Elementary Dictionary* (G. & C. Merriam Co.), 1956 and later editions.

H. A. Gleason, a linguist, cautions against the simplistic notion that "Reading written material and transcribing speech are . . . simply changing the physical form. . . . If this close parallelism between spoken and written English in certain features is remembered, this notion of translation gives a much better understanding of these processes. For one thing it will focus attention on the structural signals of the two systems." (*Linguistics and English Grammar*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965, p.110).

Carol Chomsky has discussed "Reading, Writing, Phonology" (*Harvard Educational Review*, Vol 40, No. 2, May, 1970) in terms of the non-phonetic aspects of English spelling; that is, in terms of lexical spelling ("meaning-bearing items in the language") and its correspondence to conventional orthography. She states the implications of this view:

"The first, it implies that what the mature reader seeks and recognizes when he reads is not what are commonly called grapheme-phoneme correspondences, but rather the correspondence of written symbol to the abstract lexical spelling of words. Letters represent segments in lexical spelling, not sounds. It is the phonological rule system of the language, which the reader commands, that relates the lexical segment to sounds in a systematic fashion.

Stated somewhat differently, the mature reader does not proceed on the assumption that the orthography is phonetically valid, but rather interprets the written symbols according to lexical spellings. His task is facilitated by the fact that the orthography closely corresponds to this lexical representation as would be required if the English spelling system were phonetically based. What he needs to identify are the lexical items, the meaning-bearing items, and these are readily accessible to him from the lexical based orthography."

In his review, Hall (op. cit.) agrees with Vachek's challenge of the Carol and Noam Chomsky view on quoting: "Clearly as a piece of apology for present-day English spelling, the argumentation adduced by Chomsky and Halle is hardly convincing." (See Chomsky and Halle, *The Sound Pattern of English*, Harper & Row, 1968).

In *The Structure of English Orthography*, (Mouton, The Hague, 1970), Richard L. Venezky presents his view regarding spelling reform:

"A rational approach to spelling reform must recognise the various phonological, morphological and syntactic or patterns in the current orthography, and must increase the regularity of the existing patterns or the range of one group of patterns at the expense of others. To base spelling reform on

the argument that orthography should by nature in the phonemic, morphemic, or anything else is both unrealistic and unsupportable."

In fact, Venezky claims: "Spelling units are not related directly to sound, but to an intermediate (morphophonemic) level first, and then to sound." (*Reading Research Quarterly*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1967, p. 84).

Of special note is educator Venezky's challenge of a strictly phonemic (not phonetic) spelling reform as being unrealistic and unsupportable. For this reason, he asserts that morphological and syntactical patterns merit consideration.

In conclusion, there appears to be more than one way to consider the relationship between speech and writing. But the fact remains that beginners in reading are confused too often by our one-dimensional spelling conventions which presents them with an inordinate high percentage of irregularly spelt words. A superficial inspection of the list of commonest words – used in beginning reading materials – reveals a distressing number of words which defy spelling pronunciations. Consider the three commonest words which account for 10% of running words in all writing, including pre-primers and adult writing: *I, and, the*. Or, the 10 commonest words: *the, and, of, to, I, a, in, that, you, for*. Irregularities in the spelling of these commonest words are very real hazards in the attempts of beginners to master the "silent" language. This appears to be a truism because the 43 commonest words constitute 50% of the words used in writing by child or adult; 300 commonest words, 75%; 1000 commonest words, 90%.

Another implication of the above data is the need for alphabeteers to cross-check their proposed spellings of these commonest words.

In general, at least three types of spelling reform have been proposed:

1. A silent language (natural writing *system*) that mirrors more nearly be phonemics (not the phonetics!) of speech.
2. An artificial language rather than a living language, such as Esperanto, Interlingua, Ido, Occidental, and others.
3. A system of writing essentially distinct in nature from a "spoken language"; that is, apart from phonemic structure.

This third approach might have some appeal to communication engineers who are confounded by irregularities in spellings and letter forms.

It is important to note that the Metric System has gained worldwide support for several reasons. One of these is that it has been scientifically determined and tested. Hence, the Metric System is not analogous to any unvalidated spelling proposal made to date. (More on this in succeeding *View Points*).

[*Spelling Reform Anthology* §10.4 pp153–154 in the printed version]  
[*Spelling Progress Bulletin* Fall 1975 pp18,16 in the printed version]

## 8. Book Review by Newell W. Tune

Emery, Donald W., *Variant Spellings in Modern American Dictionaries*. National Council of Teachers of English, 1973, pp. 130. \$2.95.

This book is essentially a compilation of the various ways in which certain words are spelled in English. Some of these variants are due to regional differences in spelling like "Americanisms," "Yankeeisms," etc.

Every teacher of English is faced with the problem of deciding what criteria to use in determining the appropriateness or "correctness" of a language form as is found in the several American dictionaries, which are not always in agreement. In many instances, logic, analogy, or tradition favors one while wide-spread usage favors another. Sometimes a spelling is regional or national, as British spellings are often different from American. Why should we bring in British spellings when this book is all about American spellings? Because New England is still allied somewhat closely with the British and represents the most conservative part of the U.S.A.

This material should have implications for two groups of teachers of English, particularly at the high school and college levels, and authors of spelling lists, spelling books and other materials for teaching spelling. The teacher of English certainly wishes to keep himself as well informed as possible about spellings sanctioned by current and reputable dictionaries. In addition he must determine his own attitude toward the use of variants so that his teaching of spelling will reflect current usage. Some teachers are not aware of many variant spellings. Others may not let their students use some commonly found variants because of personal preference, because of excessive reliance upon the application of spelling "rules" or because of a well-intentioned effort to preserve what they as teachers feel to be the "purity of language."

The teacher who wishes to warn against the use of a variant is not always on safe ground when he relies upon that old standby "preferred spelling" for reasons other than the obvious one that a disputatious student might protest that the secondary spelling is the one *he* happens to prefer. For one thing, the fact that a spelling is placed first is no guarantee that it is preferred; if two spellings are equally acceptable, the dictionary makers have to place one before the other. Also, as indicated in numerous points in this book, dictionaries are not always in agreement upon which variants should be included and which of two or more forms should be placed in first position.

Similarly, the problem of variant spellings cannot be disregarded by those who prepare materials to be used in the teaching of spelling. Rules for spelling are frequently disregarded in common usage. The material assembled in this book will not, of course, provide satisfactory answers to all the questions about rules. Some teachers may not want to give too much information about variant spellings recognizing that for some of them this knowledge might serve only to make spelling seem even more troublesome and chaotic.

The original edition of this book was published in 1958. The justification for a completely revised edition lies in the fact that the dictionaries which supplied the data for the earlier edition must now be considered out of date and unusable for a serious study of current practice. Two of the dictionaries used in the new edition were not in existence in 1958, and the other three have been revised since. The dictionaries used in this study are: *The American Heritage*, 1973, 2. *Webster's New Collegiate*, 8th ed. 1973, 3. *Webster's New World*, 2nd College ed, 1970, 4. *Random House College*, 1972, *F & W Standard College Text*, 1968.

In the 102 pages of listings there are 2500 words with variant spellings. And we have been told that English spellings are fixed and regular!

## 9. Our Readers Write Us

### In re: representing pronunciation

Dear Newell:

Kingsley Read

I have recently renewed correspondence with Pitman which had lapsed since his retirement. I am happy to back him even in small issues whenever I can, owing much to his help in past years. It is his frequent non-phonetic spelling in i.t.a. (in order to stay closer to T.O.) that must be fought sooner or later, and his perpetuation of orthodox spelling.

I don't know, except by name, Dewey's W.E.S. Dictionary. I wish I did. My preference for that pronunciation to be written which least departs from Orthodox is purely with a view to getting reform floated and accepted and temporarily helping children to 'transfer.' But not so carefully spoken that it represents distorted pronunciation. It must be a genuine and widely-heard (if not widely spoken) pronunciation. Note too, that my general rule has its "over-riding considerations." But have I said one word here about 'word-signs'? The proposed 'word-graph' is the letter-assembly resulting from an exact phonetic representation of *one* known pronunciation. Thus, of the four known and used phonetic spellings of 'the,' (tha, thi, thee, & th'), (the last is given in Daniel Jones' dict. of English pronunciation, and we all say it as well as hear it), common sense and economy suggest writing the consonant only and always (unless the writer wants to indicate an emphatic pronunciation). But I'm easy – all I ask is a decision; and unless this is an 'over-riding consideration,' the (*the*, in which the vowel is ee, suits my general rule and *my* new alphabet. Re-read my letter in this light. And let us have *decisions* instead of abortive researches.

Always glad to hear from you. If we ever agreed, there would be little to write about. I may have some new type next year – if I last that long – and I hope to.

By the way, 'to' should always be 'tu', i.e. as in 'full, pull;' 'too' is for *two, too*. I don't fancy 'tə', but I would allow a frank 't'.

With best regards,

-o0o-

### Re: the Bullock Inquiry

Dear Newell:

William J. Reed

Here is an extract from my letter to George dated 9.5-75. "Our differing opinions about this Inquiry and this Report might be usefully discussed personally on some later occasion. My correspondence with the Bullock Committee extended over more than 18 months and there were also telephone talks. The four representatives who received the S.S.S. members were headed by Prof. John E. Merritt. I have written several times in praise of Prof. Merritt whom I have admired for many years and of whom I wrote warmly to Mr. Arnold who was Secretary of the B. I. I stand by what I wrote on those occasions. I must also stand by my remarks concerning "the Committee's prejudices, – not to mention ignorance." One last point re: Bullock: During the whole of my correspondence with the D.E.S., I made it quite clear that I was submitting evidence as a teacher and not as a member of the S.S.S. or any other society. I did not use official notepaper. The only time I mentioned the S.S.S. was to say that the Society should have been invited to give oral evidence in the early stages and also to give written evidence. Actually, it was not until Jan. 1974 that Bullock agreed to allow a few spelling reformers to appear before members of the Inquiry! We were finally admitted 23rd Jan. 1974, but were only allowed to stay for a little longer than an hour.

I have long been convinced that only the Central Authority can implement any measure of spelling reform (pace Noah Webster and Atatürk). I read a paper at the Conference entitled *Spelling and Parliament*. John Downing made a kind reference to this paper at the A.G. M. If or when our Proceedings are published, you will see it but if not, I will send you a copy when I get some printed. The Conference was very good indeed, and most promising for the future. I don't think there will be another next year; but perhaps in 1977, if George can stand the strain. Many great figures in S.R. were there but we missed you,

Betts and Bonnema. You have done much for spelling ref. and future generations of scholars (and children) will be grateful but the forces of ignorance are powerful even yet.

-o0o-

### Comments on a book review

To Newell W. Tune: Greetings from Uphill.

Ivor Darreg

I find it hard to keep up with the closings of the down-town library departments, one at a time, while they "automate" the book-cards with that ancient and venerable institution: the IBM punch card. What with the various forms of magnetic tapes and cassettes and film and magnetically sensitized record-cards, the punch card is now a thing of the past and someday they will have to proceed again to make a drastic, expensive change.

Anyway the reason I am writing now is a book review in scholarly journal *Language* in the magazine-rack of the literature and philology department, which I saw today.

*Language*, for March, 1973, page 190 sqq. Review. T Haas, *Alphabets for English*.

The reviewer is harshly polemic against Kingsley Read's Shaw Contest Alphabet to a point seldom seen in scholarly journals. He is somewhat in favor of Axel Wijk's limited reform proposals.

He violently disagrees with the contention of other scholars that speech is primary to writing, and refuses to concede that written systems are a code for the speech-code. In other words, the reviewer is heavily visile-biassed.

There is quite a "Milquetoast" story here: several universities turned down the money offered for the establishment of a chair of Spelling Reform, and finally the Univ. of Manchester (England) accepted the money and as a result two books were published.

It's the old story of "What will people think?" That was the fear-principle that ruled my father all his long life, and where did it get him? Thank goodness I realized this before it was too late and stopped torturing myself.

I am willing to concede a point about this visile-bias thing: I am willing to admit that cartooning, stick-figures, animation for T-V, and ideographic schemes like Isto, Iso-type or Bliss' symbols or Chinese characters or Egyptian hieroglyphs are a visual language where the visual code is not a code of speech-sounds but a conventionalized representational drawing. But I am still not willing to call the Roman or Greek alphabet or the Japanese syllabary primary to speech. Perhaps it is just as well the question has been raised in that linguistic journal.

One of McLuhan's best points is where he discusses the "phonetic alphabet" but what he means is the Greek and Roman alphabets as coding for spoken words and beyond the point where they

ceased to be hieroglyphs or pictures is of objects, but now were code symbols for sounds or groups of sounds. His point is very well taken despite his inaccuracy in calling the Roman alphabet "phonetic."

My present problems are with a different kind of sound: A rock drummer moved in upstairs and has robbed me of some 40 evenings steep by pounding a bass drum and shaking the ceiling and walls and getting not only me but five or six neighbors extremely angry, to the point where we are about to petition that he be forced to move out. A friend of mine bought me a big pair of earmuffs of the kind the airport People use. It works outdoors but is powerless against the bass-drum sounds communicated thru the walls inside this house.

Yours sincerely,

-o0o-

### Pronunciation and spelling

Dear Newell:

Sir James Pitman, KBE,

It is my strong admiration and regard for you which keeps me taking the pains to respond to your letters and maybe it is the same with you.

We agree only on one point: That homographic heterophones are poor communication. We do not agree that:

1. heterographic homophones are better communication than homographic homophones because they add a factor of discrimination, & at no cost (see 3 & 4 below) in reading facility.
2. Variations in pronunciation across even individuals in the same region of pronunciation impose the *necessity* of choice between *either* 'imposing a new standard orthography (based not on the writer's pronunciation but on the judgement of some *universally* acceptable authority who cannot even exist) or allowing the printed page & mass communication (but see 3 below about handwritten & other small scale communications) to vary with no in-built control monitoring a common standard.
3. The convenience of the writer (of small scale communications) can be met without any need for standardization by telling him to go ahead and spell as he likes in whatever pronunciation he would use in speaking to his correspondent.
4. There has been no evidence produced, at any rate in the common words of the language, that the respelling of either homophones of words or of such common words as: *of, to, is, I, be, was, as, you, he, have, by, are, we, they, all* – fifteen of the nineteen of the commonest words in Dewey's Table 3 – will add anything to improve the speed, or comprehension of the *reading* of printed, i.e. mass communication, nor any *a priori* argument to indicate that the change from heterographic to homographic forms of words which are homophones will not impede rather than improve the speed and comprehension of homophones – again in the reading of mass communication & in standardized spellings. I am not talking of an initial learning medium or worrying about small scale communicating. I am all for not only i.t.a. but permissiveness for individual & small scale communication, using the W.E.S. or some other self-evident convention which is sufficiently based on T.O. to be immediately read & understood, provided only that the pronunciation is not bizarre. Because I accept permissiveness in small scale communication & desire standardization (& on T.O.) in being communicated with from the printed page in mass communication, I take essentially a reading attitude, decoding not encoding (spelling), when I'm considering either large scale or small scale communication.

In large scale mass communication the onus lies on the N. Y. Times for instance, to do all in its power to make easy, attractive & standardized what it presents, so that its *readers* may select & rush through the pages & catch their commuting train. In small scale communication the onus is different. The writer is King. Everything will be done to facilitate his task &, provided the hand-writing is decipherable or even barely so – as for instance mine – the recipient is anxious to obtain the full meaning of the writer.

This applies even more to spelling. My story of the man who misspells "accomodation" in booking a room is very apt. The only questions the hotel clerk asks, if the hand-writing is decipherable, are: 1. have I a room to let?, 2. will he be good for the money? (incidentally get one of your mathematical friends to work out how many thousand legible spellings there are for that word, recognizing that the initial a & the middle o & the final io are all pronounced with the schwa and will be easily read whether spelled with *a, e, i, o, or u!*, and of course that *cc, ck, c, k,* & even *kk* are also legible variants, with one *m* & two *d*'s thrown in for good measure).

If it is a sales letter, then the writer is no longer the King. Great trouble, as in the case of the N. Y. Times, needs to be taken to make the message as acceptable, as legible & therefore as standardized as possible – and that is why any realist – and I claim to be as great a realist as G.B.S.- is right when he says that the only forms of S. R. which stand a chance of general acceptance are: 1. The I.L.M., 2. Permissive spelling for personal communication & note taking and, 3. A better cursive alphabet than the *ae* to *zee* alphabet which can be joined & so written and repeated cursively with all the intervening characters and without ever lifting the pen from the paper, except for spaces.

At any rate, you & I will agree – even if you dont agree that these three are desirable S.R.'s, & the only desirable S.R.'s – that any one of these, quite separate S.R.'s, is greatly resisted and perhaps even without the hope of that realization which realists deny.

Please realize that you spelled Bonnema's article with your pronunciations & that I would spell it with mine. If you agree that that is so, but rejoin that it doesn't matter, then you grant me my permissive alternative & we can agree that permissiveness for personal communication &, for note-taking (using either T.O. or the agreed alternative *system*) is at any rate one of the three worthwhile interpretations of the imprecise expression "Spelling Reform" & leave as one of the fields of disagreement between us my belief that since mass communication is quite different from small scale communication, different factors apply & that for effectiveness of mass reading standardization is valid, indeed essential (because beneficial) in cases of the New York Times & sales letters, etc., where the writer subordinates himself entirely to the readers convenience – and I might add, tastes, about which no argument!

Finally, if even the first of my three forms of desirable S.R. is so unrealistic as to be unrealized, possibly S.P.B. might do it & achieve I hope a profit in the process.

I so greatly admire your persistence, lack of bitterness, and self-sacrifice,  
yours admiringly, Jim.

P.S. How very much like B is 8 when printed, cf SB4B8 in your note heading. As a typographer, I deplore the letter O and the figure 0 & of course I and l (el) and 1, also 5 and S & 8 and S. It is all a very badly thought out means of communication.

**London, England.**

**In answer to the above letter**

**Dear Jim:**

**Newell W. Tune**

In answer to your letter:

1. I do agree that heterographic homophones do add a factor of discrimination that is lacking in a strictly fonetic (or fonemic) spelling. But our difference of opinion is whether or not they are really necessary. To my thinking (along the lines of Ben Franklin's), if they were not available, writers (and to some extent speakers) would use them more carefully, and in such a manner that they would not be misunderstood. Hence they are merely a convenience and because they are useful (and in most cases, derived from different sources – or are different parts of speech) they were devised in the first place. Several alfabetees have devised systems to accomodate more than one spelling of homophones, notably Axel Wijk, Walter Gassner, and Clarence Hotson. I am not strongly opposed to the idea but try to keep an open mind in case a compromise along these lines seems useful or more easily attainable.
2. Variations in pronunciation between educated persons in various parts of the far-flung English-speaking world are not so far apart or different as to make (if written phonemically) much more than 1% of the letters in running text. While it is true that even this little difference would, if followed without compromise, necessitate two or more editions of books printed in strictly phonetic spelling, I think a compromise spelling system based upon a standard (which is itself a compromise of BBC and NBC Handbook of pronunciation- or as you say: upon some universally acceptable authority) could be accepted by both of our governments and hence be adopted as a recommended standard, but not enforced as a requirement.
3. Seems to be agreeable when confined to personal communication and in special instances: when trying to attract attention to spelling, in comics, or in books on or of dialectal studies or stories. I am only concerned that the general public may conclude the writer is either uneducated or careless, and that such an impression is to be avoided.
4. You say: there is no evidence ... that the respelling of either homophones or common words ... will add anything to improve the speed or comprehension of reading of the printed page. . . I doubt if anyone has made such a claim, as it should be obvious that (initially at least – till the public is well acquainted with and competent in reading in the new spelling) it would not improve the speed of reading of homophones. As for the 15 common words, while their frequency is so high that they will be conspicuous if written fonetically, this same frequency will make the new spellings easier to learn and hence to be assimilated by the public. I'm sure they can take in their stride: *ov, tu (or too), iz, le, waz, az, yoo, hav, bie, ar, wee, thae, aul*, as easily as pupils do in i.t.a. and accept them as the new way without equivocation or objection. But to be sure, there will always be some diehards.

"At any rate, you and I will agree ... that any one of these, quite separate S. R.'s is greatly resisted and perhaps unattainable." Yes, I do agree that all three are desirable – but as to unattainable, I cannot agree as that is a defeatist attitude. Just in recent years you have seen decimal currency and the Metric System put into use, so we should keep up hope that there is still a chance for a limited reform.

And that brings up the question of too-close a similarity of certain letters and figures in handwriting (in print this is seldom a problem). Perhaps a study could be initiated to see how such too-similar, confusable letters and figures could be improved as was done with the i.t.a. *b-d, p, a, a*, etc. by slight changes that would not make obsolete our present alfabet, yet which would improve their discriminability.

Yours cordially and appreciatively, Newell

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**From S.A.S., Apple Isle, Tasmania.**

**Dear Newell**

**Harold Thomas,**

My No.1 correspondent concludes – and I agree with her – that among school-teachers, the need for spelling reform is seen clearly only by those who have had personal experience in trying to teach English spelling to children who found it difficult and who were exasperated thereby. This explains why so many teachers are either hostile or apathetic towards spelling reform – the urgent need for it forms part of the experience of only a minority of teachers.

She and I have found, too, that most tertiary students feel half-hearted about spelling reform, partly because they have more urgent problems to worry about, but chiefly because they are drawn, with very few exceptions, from the 30-35% of secondary students who have not found great difficulty in mastering our inconsistent spellings. We should all bear in mind that about 65-70% of secondary school children surveyed in 1974 were found to have insufficient command of written English to fit them for university. It is this large fraction of the school population who suffer, and cause their teachers to suffer, because of the inconsistencies of conventional spellings. It is *they* whom we should ask whether spelling reform is desirable.

The highlight of the year was the endorsement of step-by-step spelling reform by Australian Teachers Federation in the Conference in Sydney in January, 1975.

One prophet of gloom, Publisher H. P. Schoenheimer, made a meritorious suggestion: that SR-1 be taught as an acceptable alternative to standard conventional spellings – not a replacement for it.

\*Edited from *Spelling Action*, July, 1975.

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