

# Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976

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

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

The British Simplified Spelling Society will hold their 2nd International Conference at the College of All Saints, London, from Tues. Aug. 30 to Sat. Sept. 21, 1977. The Patron of the meeting will be His Royal Highness Prince Phillip. The Conference theme will be *Reading and Writing in English*. It is not too early now to plan on presenting a paper at the Conference. Several titles have already been received. As there were presented at the 1st conference in 1975 some three dozen papers, we can expect to have more than that in the '77 conference. The 1975 papers are going to be published and a ten dollar bank draft from you in advance of publication will insure that you will receive a copy. Only a few extra copies more than advance orders will be printed. The Sub-Committee on Education of the United States Senate has expressed a desire for a copy.

The 1975 Conference was attended by about 50 persons who came from as distant places as Australia, Nigeria, U.S.A., Canada, Switzerland, Sweden and Germany. More are expected for this next conference.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp1,19 in the printed version]

## 1. SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH SPELLING FOR INTERNATIONAL USAGE by ABRAHAM TAUBER, PH.D.

(Reprinted from *English Around the World*, No. 14, May 1976)

Editor McCulloch's succinct statement of the aims of the English-Speaking Union ought to be inscribed permanently on the masthead of *English Around The World*.

"In attempting to follow the ups and downs of the English language and English language teaching around the globe we are not plotting to uproot any existing tongue. Quite the contrary, we are fascinated by the multiplicity of languages with which our earth has been endowed. We do feel, however, that the possession of a second or auxiliary language, universally understood, would enormously improve communications worldwide and — hopefully — eliminate some of the misunderstandings which now bedevil us. We believe that of all languages, natural or artificially constructed, which exist at present, English has the best chance of assuming such a role, and to this goal we are firmly committed."

English would serve ideally as the world's best hope for a auxiliary language, for many reasons, said linguist, Jakob Grimm, Otto Jespersen and Mario Pei. English is the native tongue of about 300 million people, second only to Chinese in numbers of native speakers. Finally important, it is already spoken, read and written by many millions in non-English speaking countries in every corner of the globe, as an acquired auxiliary language.

As Mario Pei points out in *The Story of the English Language* (Lippincott, 1967), English is already the preferred auxiliary language in Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, and, quoting *The New York Times*, is "the lingua franca of the common man from the African coasts to India, Malaysia, China and the islands of the Pacific." The linguistic impact of English on modern Spanish and French has been pointed out — in Dr. Jesse Levitt's articles in *English Around The World*.

In Russia, where foreign language study is rigorously controlled, English is the first foreign language in terms of numbers of speakers and students. A recent development of great interest appeared in the November, 1975 issue of *English Around The World*, quoting reports in *The Linguistic Reporter* of March, 1975 that English is the foremost foreign language presently being taught and used in the People's Republic of China.

The preeminence of the use of English in aviation discourse and at international scientific gatherings is well known. Thus, English is today the most universally used language, measured both by distribution of speakers over the earth's surface, and by numbers of those who speak it as a native tongue and as an acquired auxiliary language. (Cf. Kenneth Katzner, *The Languages of the World*, Foreword by Charles Berlitz, Funk and Wagnall, 1975).

The language situation is due largely, of course, to the tremendous historical worldwide influence and power of the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia — economic, technological, political and cultural. However, though the growth and spread in the use of English have been assured by these realistic factors, the further fact that English shares the Roman alphabet with other western languages is a linguistic phenomenon that aids and abets the easy and ready adoption of English as an international auxiliary language. Nevertheless, our English sound equivalents for the vowels differ from those of other languages using the Roman alphabet, causing some frustrating confusion in the pronunciation of those learning English as a second language.

Thus, English has a tremendous head start in any auxiliary language race. Its comparatively simple grammar and reasonably restricted internal inflections make it not too difficult to learn. While its rich vocabulary and neologisms are considered by many to be a virtue, if it turns out to be a handicap, there is always some form of Basic English to be utilized, at least as a starter. Nor do its various intelligible dialects offer too great an obstacle to the learning of English by non-native

speakers or readers, despite some American and British differences in word usages and pronunciation.

Of course, *all* languages are easy for natives to learn the natural way --by hearing them. And all languages pose some difficulties to new learners, both of grammatical structure and vocabulary, and in reading.

However, the one difficulty about English, as a language, sometimes overlooked by natives, is the inconsistency of English spelling, which irritates educated foreign adults who seek to learn English. This spelling irregularity poses some problems to the ease of learning and to the ready acceptance and use of English as an auxiliary language. English spelling, says Mario Pei, is the great impediment because of the "divergence between speech and writing," referring to the symbol-sound confusion, or grapheme-phoneme lack of correspondence. He means that the speaker doesn't write the sounds he says, or say the sounds of the letter-symbol he writes or reads orally, as consistently as one does in Spanish, Italian, Russian, German or Hebrew, for example. At least, the differences are sufficiently noticeable and frequent, to constitute a problem-obstacle-irritant for many learning English.

Take some words in the last two sentences in the above paragraph, for example: the word "write" doesn't start with a "w" sound, as in "with." Why should not the word "says," pronounced "sez," be written that way, asks the literate, intelligent foreigner? And why is "doesn't" not written "duzint"? Sound the "c" in "sufficiently," "noticeable" and "constitute."

Several bits of verse-doggerel tell the story amusingly, but the gravamen is still serious. English spelling is confusing and frustrating.

Everyone who learns to read and write the English language encounters the irregularity of its spelling. The phonetic inconsistency of our orthography leaves many consequences in its wake, such as the fact that spelling must be taught throughout a student's school life.

Much has been written to satirize the anomalies in the spelling of English words. "Chaos," an example of verse in this vein, appeared in a Dutch book on English pronunciation. Its 146 lines contain numerous examples of baffling phonetic complexities.

Some illustrative lines are:

I will teach you in my verse  
Words like corpse, corps, horse and worse.  
For this phonetic labyrinth  
Gives monkey, donkey, ninth and plinth;  
Wounded, rounded; grieve and sieve;

Friend and fiend; alive and live;  
Through, though, thorough, plough,  
cough, tough,  
While hiccough has the sound of cup ...  
My advice is: give it up!

*(to be concluded in a subsequent issue)*

*Dr. Abraham Tauber, University Professor of Speech and Drama at Yeshivba University, New York and Adjunct Professor of Speech and Theatre, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, C.U.N.Y., is the author of George Bernard Shaw On Language, with a Foreword by Sir James Pitman, (Philosophical Library, N.Y., 1963) and Peter Owen, Ltd., London, 1965) and of the forthcoming English Spelling Reform: Linguistic Engineering for Better Reading, Writing, and Speaking, with an Introduction by Mario Pei, Preface by Godfrey Dewey and a Foreword by Sir Horace King.*

*Dr. Tauber is a President Emeritus of the American Society of Geolinguistics, and the retired Dean of Faculty of the Bronx Community College, C.U.N.Y. His ideas and suggestions are always worthy of serious consideration, and we are certainly grateful to him for his kind references to our publication.*

## 2. Sight Words and/or Phonics, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.\*

\* Presented at the 21st Annual Convention, International Reading Association, Anaheim, Ca, May 13, 1976.

\*Winter Haven, Fla.

### A Position

For generations, controversies have raged relentlessly over how to teach reading, mostly focussed on one facet of reading instruction: how to teach pupils to cognize and recognize words (word forms?) in beginning reading. At one time or another, protagonists have defended with all their energies (1) alphabetic, or spelling, methods, (2) "phonetic" methods, (3) phonic methods, (4) sight-word methods, and (5) spelling-pattern methods. Their goal has been an honorable and legitimate one: use of *automatic* skills for *recoding* written language into speech, leaving the learner's one mind for *decoding* the message. But the problems of word perception simply won't go away.

At this time, phonic zealots, journalists, and others doing *superficial* critiques of word learning have resolved all the problems into the simplistic dichotomy: phonics versus the look-and-say method. In their profound innocence, they cry for a "return to phonics" —*the* time tested method.

Today most parents and teachers are for motherhood, apple pie, honesty in government, lower taxes, more money, less inflation, equal opportunity —and *phonics*. Then, too, a growing number of thinking professionals lend some legitimacy to meaningful sight-word methods to provide a basis for phonics and to admit the reality of irregularly spelled words that do not fit the rules. Finally, recognition is being accorded scholars —from, linguistics, orthography, psychology, and other disciplines —who are examining the *medium*, the spelling system or lack of system, which *causes* the failures of phonics and which creates a real need to consider sight methods.

The evidence for an all-out phonics method and against a sight-word method is underwhelming. An interesting mass of evidence points the finger of guilt at several factors related to the mismatches of speech and writing:

1. Self-defeating phonic rules,
2. Variable relationships between speech sounds and letters,
3. Unreliable relationships between spellings and etymology.

A defensible position regarding this artificial but real controversy is to legitimize phonics by reducing orthographic irregularities which offer insurmountable roadblocks to many children. Two caveats merit identification:

1. Speech symbolizes organized experience; writing is another layer of symbols representing speech. Hence, reading is two steps removed from reality.
2. A scientific, multi-disciplinary approach to the study of orthography and to proposals for reform is long overdue. On the other hand, a revised, validated spelling system may legitimize phonic teaching, but this revision may yield only ONE of MANY needed means of *escalating* reading instruction.

### Word Perception: Timely Questions.

Our chief concern is with the development of automatic responses to ink marks on the printed page, leaving the learner's ONE mind free to decode the message. This discussion deals with these crucial questions:

1. Why has phonics instruction failed to be effective? a. Are phonic methods plural?  
b. Why have phonic readers fallen into disrepute?

- c. Why has public interest in phonics waxed and waned for generations?
2. Why has the look-and-say (sight, word or whole word) method been retained?
  - a. Are sight methods plural?
  - b. Why has the public, especially parents, rebelled against the so-called look-and-say "method"?
  - c. Why have sight-word criteria been articulated as preparation for phonics?
3. Is a consideration of phonic methods and sight methods an either-or proposition, in relation to conventional spelling (traditional orthography)?
4. Why do some beginners in reading learn to talk easily but have difficulty with the print marks? That is, why is the transition from spoken to visible language so difficult?
5. What teaching strategies need to be considered in wedding the phonological-orthographical dimensions for efficient word perception and cognition (comprehension)?
6. To what extent do different shapes for the same letters (e.g., A-a) contribute to frustration in beginning reading?
7. Do irregularities in the spelling system contribute to common reading difficulties and, possibly, to dyslexia?

### **The Alphabetic Principle.**

English is an alphabetic writing system as contrasted to pictographic, ideographic, logographic, or "phonetic" systems. Yet, English writing makes use of a number of logograms, as the numeral 6 (six), *etc.* (et cetera), \$ (dollar). Added to these deviations from the alphabetic principle are contractions, abbreviations, contradictions between letter names and speech sounds, and 23 letters plus *c*, *q*, and *z* to represent about 42 distinctive speech sounds (phonemes). In brief, the English alphabet is phonemically based but, strictly speaking, is neither a phonetic nor a phonemic alphabet.

The evolution of the Greek-Roman alphabet, Semitic in origin, used for English writing dates back to at least 1400 B.C. Phoenicians, neighbors of the Greeks, used characters to represent their *consonant* sounds. To these consonant characters, the Greeks added seven vowel letters to represent all the sounds in their language. Then the Greeks arranged the letters in a fixed (alpha, beta, gamma) order (possibly to facilitate memorization), assigned a name to each letter, established a left-to-right direction of writing, and concerned themselves with the shapes (forms) of letters.

When the Romans borrowed the Greek letters, probably via the Etruscans, they used the *sounds* of the vowels for vowel letter names and consonant sounds plus vowel sounds for the *names* of consonant letters. This bit of revised borrowing is said to have caused the big "snafu" regarding letter names and sounds they represent, especially the delusion regarding *learning* letter names as a prelude to beginning reading.

The Old English (500 to 1066 A.D.) alphabet was an adaptation of the Roman alphabet, with provision for more than the five vowel spellings of Latin. Although there were different spellings, Old English spelling patterns were fairly consistent. It is also interesting to note that Old English was quite replete with inflections as indicators of meaning.

During this period, English was influenced by the Scandinavian vocabulary of the Vikings, which tends to survive in Modern English. However, most Old English words were Germanic in origin.

Middle English (1100 to 1500 A. D.) was influenced by the Norman-French (1066 A.D.) invaders, by the neighboring Dutch, and by more borrowings from the Latin lexicon. During this period, word order, the most important feature of Modern English began to take precedence over word endings, used in Latin, for signalling meaning. Many of the inflections of Old English came to be spelled with final *e* which today is written in words, as in *name*. Then, too, at this time, spelling shifted somewhat from the phonemic basis of Anglo-Saxon with the French *th* replacing the odd (Þ) letter;

*k* before *e* and *i* (e.g., *keen* for *cene*), the digraph *ou* (e.g., *h(ou)se*); doubling of consonants (e.g., *bitter* vs O.E. *biter*).

Modern English (beginning circa 1500 A.D.), basically Germanic, has been influenced by many factors: Caxton's introduction of the printing press (1477), standardization on London dialect, enlargement of the vocabulary largely by adapting words from Greek and Latin, and so on. Because of borrowings from many languages, especially via Greek and French through Latin, orthography has become quite complex. For example, English is one of the very few spelling systems in which *to*, *blue*, *shoe*, *few*, *through* rhyme. In spite of its difficulties, today about 12% of the people in the world use English.

One of the major events in the development of Modern English was the "Great Vowel Shift" of the 15th century. This shift in vowel and diphthong phonemes was accomplished WITHOUT a shift in spellings! Spellings were often introduced *falsely* to indicate etymology, as writing *s* in *island*, *b* in *debt*, which have no basis in etymology.

American English began to change from that of the old country soon after colonization. For example, words (e.g., *squash*, *wigwam*, *tomahawk*, *wampum*, *totem*, *tepee*, *maize*) were borrowed from the native Indians. In fact, many of our states have Indian names: *Dakota*, *Idaho*, *Illinois*, *Iowa*, *Kansas*, *Arkansas*, *Kentucky*, *Tennessee*, *Michigan*, *Texas*, *Oklahoma*.

From this truncated, oversimplified review, it is quite clear why the term *accursed spelling* was used by Lord Bulwer Lytton to describe it. In fact, Mario Pei, after reviewing the structural merits and pronunciation difficulties of Modern English, was moved to say, "English spelling . . . is a monument to traditionalism so weird as to be almost incredible." (*The Story of Language*, J. B. Lippincott, 1949, p. 293 -)

English, therefore, has a very interesting and somewhat consistent structure, with notable exceptions:

1. Invariable forms in parts of speech

a. Case endings for nouns are discarded

(1) Exception: In pronunciation, letter *s* of plurals represents /s/ following unvoiced consonants (e.g., *boats*, *looks*, *slips*) and /z/ after voiced consonants, nasals, liquids, and vowels (e.g., *legs*, *dolls*, *boys*).

(2) Exception: Possessives; e.g., *boy's* (only case ending retained)

(3) Exceptions to *-s* and *-es* (e.g., *boys*, *boxes*); plural of nouns: *man-men*; *child-children*; *foot-feet*; *deer-deer*; *lady-ladies*; *leaf-leaves*.

b. Inflections for verbs are limited

(1) Verbs: Internal vowel changes in conjunction (five forms in strong verbs), as *write*, *writes*, *writing*, *wrote*, *written*, and *sing*, *sings*, *singing*, *sang*, *sung*; addition of suffixes without internal vowel changes (four forms in weak verbs), as *love*, *loves*, *loving*, *loved* and *work*, *works*, *working*, *worked*.

(2) Exceptions: *do-does*, *has-have*, as in "He (does)" and "Does he (have)"

(3) Exceptions: In pronunciation, *-ed* after *t* or *d*, as in *wanted*, *landed*; *-ed* as in *asked*, *moaned*

c. Demonstrative pronouns: Number only; e.g., *this-these*; *that-those*

d. Personal, possessive, relative, and interrogative pronouns: Gender, number, or case (e.g., *I*, *we*, *me*, *us*: *my-mine*; *who-whom*)

## Perceptual Learning

An antiquated orthographic system which has not kept pace with pronunciation has created complexities in perceptual learning:

### 1. Category Learning

A substantial number of words can be identified by *analogy*, as *and-hat-cap*, *leg-pet*, *big-hit*, *hot-not*, *bug-fun*. These examples represent five subtypes of category learning that signal pronunciation.

### 2. Cue Learning

A cue is a part of a spelling that serves as an aid to the pronunciation of a word, as *ar* in *car-part*, *aw* in *saw-draw*, *all* in *call-ball*, *ind* in *kind-find*, and so on. To establish sub-rules for these cues only complicates learning; instead, these cues are learned via their predictable pronunciations.

### 3. Probability Learning

A spelling (phonogram) may represent different sounds, as *oo* in *moon-look*. Or, the same sound may be represented by different spellings, as /ər,/ in *h(er)*, *b(ir)d*, *h(ear)d*, *h(ur)t*, *w(or)ld*. On the other hand, *sew* may be the only common word in which the phonogram *ew* represents /ō/ but *ew* represents /yü/ with some consistency in *few-mew* and other words, as well as /ü/ in *new*, *stew*, *dew*, *flew*, and a number of other words. But cue learning appears to be requisite to probability learning.

### 4. Alternation Learning

As a type of perceptual learning, alternation appears to be a requisite at higher reading levels.

a. Shift from zero phoneme to pronunciation phoneme, as in

bom(b)-bom(b)astic  
autum(n)-autum(n)al

b. Shift in phoneme, as in

logi(c)-logi(c)ian  
met(a)-met(a)llic  
desi(g)n-de s i(g)nate  
ign(i)te-ign(i)tion  
m(ea)n-m(ea)nt

The above and other types of alternations have a long and interesting history. But they introduce another type of perceptual learning.

One of the aims of revised spellings in beginning reading is to increase the probability of category learning—the use of analogy. Apparently, a good reader has acquired an unusual learning set—a set for diversity in spellings. In terms of traditional orthography, uncertainty has too high a priority.

## Phonics

There is more than one way to view the relationships between sequences of letters and sequences of speech sounds. The first is the phonic approach, introduced by Valentin Ikelsamer in 1534, which has had a long and checkered history. Briefly, different phonic approaches have included the Aldine final blend (e.g., *at* in *hat*), Beacon initial blend e.g., *ha* in *hat*), Cordts' *whole* word versus phonic (graphic) parts in isolation, and "sounding" phonics leading to what was called "hiss and groan" phonics, and so on.

In general, phonic methods have tended to rely on the unquestioned use of fallible, highly complex, concept burdened, and unreliable vowel rules. Irregularly spelled words (e.g., *have* vs *gave*, and *said*, *you*) were passed over or taught by the sight-word "method." In short, phonic rules have been accepted on misplaced faith because other alternatives were not considered.

Another view of phonics is the spelling pattern plan proposed by Leonard Bloomfield and his linguistic followers. This approach was primarily

1. renaming vowel "rules" as "spelling patterns" and
2. introducing "regularly" spelled words in reading materials for beginners.

There are many reasons why this plan has fallen into disuse.

Finally, attempts have been made to legitimize phonics in beginning reading via more nearly consistent spellings. At the latest count, there are at least 53 proposals -- a few bizarre, some with possibilities, ALL in need of basic research. Not to be overlooked is a plan to give self-help to beginners by means of respelling within previously learned spelling patterns; e.g., *said (sed)*, *was (wuz)*.

In a publication on *Using Words and Improving the Teaching of Spelling in Elementary Schools*, a committee in a large city listed 13 "Common Reasons for Incorrect Spelling." Not one mention was made of inconsistencies in orthography!

Phonic zealots and tyros who are noted for their excesses and who go over the deep end of orthography, oversimplify the medium (spelling system) and its complex relationships to language (speech). In fact, some spelling reformers, interested in legitimizing phonics, tend to limit their concern to stressed syllables of words pronounced in isolation from their syntactic and semantic contexts.

In 1921, Fernald and Keller published their article on tactile and kinaesthetic techniques. These were syllable phonic techniques, labeled by my graduate students at Penn State (circa 1937) as the VAKT and VAK respectively. Actually, the VAKT and VAK are a "syllable phonics" approach to word perception placing a premium on different modalities of learning which reinforce the attention factor. Incidentally, these techniques are made ineffective by authors of extant publications who misquote Fernald and Keller, making a letter-by-letter mish-mash of them.

Any serious study of phonics in reading instruction leads directly to the study of the structure of language (speech) and the study of the structure of orthography (the spelling system, with the emphasis on *system*). In *Viewpoints III (Spelling Progress Bulletin, Fall, 1975, pp. 17-18)* theoretical viewpoints regarding speech-writing relationships were discussed.

Language (speech) has at least three dimensions:

1. Phonological, expressed in groups of speech sounds called phonemes.
2. Grammatical, embracing syntax and morphology.
3. Semantic, the message bearing dimension.

Yet, publications on the teaching of reading for many generations have paraded a surfeit of underwhelming and overwhelming cliches on phonics: decoding, processing orthographic information, breaking the sound barrier, reading with phonics, letter phonics, independence in reading via phonics and "structural analysis," sounds and letters, talking alphabets, unlocking words and plain talk, fun with phonics, spelling patterns, the teaching of sounding, functional phonetics, phonics and word power, *the linguistic method*, words in color, and so on *ad nauseum*. These cliches have been perpetuated by well-intentioned parents unsophisticated about the writing system (orthography), by journalists who rile against the word method and make superficial pleas for return to the "alphabet" method and phonics, and by national and state organizations of both parents and teachers. Unfortunately, these confusions exist in profusion at the present time because very few concerned with reading instruction have a profound understanding of the facts of either

orthography or word perception. In short, phonics --long a magic, ubiquitous word --is fast losing its glamor under the spotlight of reality.

### Phonic Methods

Phonic methods are plural; there is no such thing as THE phonic method. During the 450 years since Ikelsamer is said to have originated "the" phonic method, there have been many methods under this rubric: letter phonics versus word phonics; synthetic methods (blending sounds into syllables and words) versus analytical methods (identifying parts of whole words); initial blend versus final blend; phonic rules and/or spelling patterns; and so on. At the time of their introduction, authors of these methods claimed independence in reading for the beginner --independence in recoding writing into speech, but not necessarily independence in *decoding the message*.

Critics of phonic methods have been aware of spelling inconsistencies as a factor in complicating "phonogram" phonics and phonic rules. In 1929, Luella Cole, for example, commented, "One cannot teach a language (orthography) by exclusively phonetic [sic] methods unless the sounds and the spelling have a fixed and invariable relationship." (*The Improvement of Reading*, p. 8).

#### 1. Letter phonics

The alphabet (spelling) method was based on the *names* of the letters; the letter-phonics "method", on the *sounds* of letters. The alphabet method of teaching reading required the learner to spell a word by naming the letters and then to pronounce the word. On the other hand, some systems of phonics in the *past* have required the pupil to match the letters by which a word is spelled with the specific "sounds" which the letters "say" --sometimes called "sounding out" words, often preceded by learning a "sight" vocabulary. To this day, many parents and some teachers tell the hapless child who asks for help on an unknown word:

- a. "You know all the letters. So spell it out."
- b. "Sound out the letters."

Both the alphabetic method and "letter" phonics --at different times, or "the good old way" --are now chiefly of historical interest. Witness this statement:

Edmund Huey, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, 1908, p. 661:

"Just how the naming of letters was supposed to assist in pronouncing the word, it is difficult to see."

#### 2. Syllabic methods

One outgrowth of the alphabet, or spelling, method was the monosyllabic method. In this syllabic method, certain vowel-consonant and consonant-vowel combinations were spelled and pronounced. Two-letter combinations included *ab*, *eb*, *ib*. Later, three-letter combinations were included, as *glo*, *flo*.

The first edition of the *Hornbook* (really a "paddle" on which was fastened a parchment covered by horn), imported from England, presented only the alphabet. Later editions added syllables and religious selections. Vowel-consonant syllables included *ab*, *eb*, *ib*, *ob*, *ub*; consonant-vowel syllables, *ba*, *bi*, *bo*, *bu*. This *Hornbook* was one of the first instructional materials used in America.

Later, *The New England Primer* (October 5, 1683) offered "Easy Syllables for Children." These syllables included those mentioned above and others, as *av*, *ev*, *iv*, *ov*, *uv*. The syllabarium became a *special* feature of early instructional materials. This syllabarium *logically* introduced two-letter syllables and increased the number of letters to six.

Apparently recognizing the consonant boundaries of syllables and the need for a consonant-vowel pronunciation unit, Noah Webster (1807-1827) organized syllables according to similarity of sounds:

*ba, ca, da, fa, pa; ba, be, bi, bo, bu, by*

Oldsters have delighted in singing these syllables for this writer.

Finally, the emphasis was shifted to phonics (called "phonetics") and words around 1840, and the syllabarium fell into disuse.

### 3. Spelling patterns

Some phonics methods of olden days stressed the first teaching of words with somewhat regular spellings, as *a* in *cat*, *e* in *wet*, *i* in *bit*, *o* in *not*, and *u* in *cut*. These uninteresting, hard-to-read, tongue-twisting materials written with closed syllables appeared:

*The red hen is in the pen.*

*The pig in a wig did a jig.* (See Alfred Hayes, *Phonoscript Primer*, 1922.)

The above type of material fell into disrepute for several reasons:

- a. Intonation patterns were violated.
- b. The content was unrelated to interests of the child; the reading material was artificial.
- c. The vocabulary was severely limited; everyday words in the child's lexicon were omitted.  
This approach to vocabulary control probably had as many demerits as the "social utility," or frequency of usage, control of most extant readers since the 1920's.
- d. The contrast of visual patterns of words was limited, leading to confusion of words of the same length, as *of-if*, *is-so*, *was-saw*.

Interest in spelling patterns for developing phonic skills was renewed by the publication of Bloomfield's *Language* in 1932. Some of Bloomfield's disciples carried this approach to the extreme via *the* linguistic method.

As a result, these examples of writing appeared in beginning reading books, which were not unlike phonoscript phonics

*Nan can fan Dan. Tad had a gas can. A bad pup got mud on a rug.*

Included in these readers were these activities: *cob fob gob hob sod tod vod od*

Clinicians who have worked with dyslexics (as defined by neurologists) know that they can be *trained* to make automatic responses on these words. But when the dyslexic's sing-song performance is interrupted to check on meaning, he must close his eyes and say the word over and over to associate it with a referent. The same observation can be made of "normal" beginners in reading.

### 4. Phonetic methods

As late as 1914, Paul Klapper and other authors of professional textbooks on reading used the term *phonetic method* to apply to the use of "fixing signs", or diacritical marks, referred to in historical surveys of methodology. Klapper, however, refuted this method, which was in actuality a medium. More recently, Edward Fry has experimented with diacritical marks as signals to pronunciation. In reality, these are "promising orthographies."

Edwin Leigh (1864-1876) devised a variation of the spelling method to aid the learner in the prediction of pronunciation. In general, he added new characters by modifying traditional letter forms: "silent" letters, as in *de(b)t*, printed in hair-line letters; special marks, as /o, ö/ in *water* and

/au/ in *out*. Leigh's Principal, Wm. T. Harris (later U.S.A. Commissioner of Education), enthusiastically supported Dr. Leigh's methods and materials which, "has rendered the transition to ordinary print perfectly easy from any stage of progress."

## 5. Blending

Synthesis of the sounds of phonograms into words had its highly visible protagonists, as the authors of the Beacon initial-blend method and the Aldine final-blend method. Of course, sounds, not their visual representations called phonograms, are blended—a concept NOT understood by everyone.

In the initial-blend system, the first consonant-vowel *sounds* of words were learned as "families."  
For example:

ba-ck ba-t ba-g: nu-t si-t for-t

In these examples, the initial blends were *ba, nu, si, fa*.

In the final blend system, the final vowel-consonant sounds of words were learned as "families."  
For example:

*s-and h-and b-and st-and gr-and s-and s-ing s-it s-ad s-un*

In these examples, the final blends were *and, ing, it, ad, un*.

One of the advantages of blending over letter-phonics was the recognition of pronounceable units, as *ba* in *back* and *ad* of *sad*. Unfortunately, these phonic systems were taught in isolation from the reading activity, usually in a separate period. These activities permitted only partial perceptual closure and no opportunity for cognitive closure. In addition to textbooks, phonic charts and phonic flash cards were used.

## 6. Phonics countdown

Recently, the writer has been using a phonics countdown for regularly spelled, stressed syllables. In using this technique, the child learns the phonic (phoneme-grapheme)structure of the word by responding to meaning—referential or linguistic, the consonant-vowel sound blend, the vowel-consonant sound blend, and the vowel sound, as follows

(meaning)

bad

bad

bad

bad

bad

(meaning)

(meaning)

dark

dark

dark

dark

dark

(meaning)

This technique is also applied to the stressed syllable of words:

(meaning)

little

little

little

little

little

little

little

(meaning)

(meaning)

around

around

around

around

around

around

around

(meaning)

This procedure has several advantages:

- a. The word is identified during the silent reading and recorded by the child for follow-up study.
- b. The study of the word is introduced in a meaningful setting and meaning is consummated following a systematic study of its structure —providing effective perceptual and cognitive closure.
- c. The whole word is studied at each step.
- d. Consonant boundaries of the syllable are kept intact.
- e. Consonant sounds are blended with the succeeding or preceding vowel sound, avoiding distorted pronunciation or sounding, via pronounceable units *of* the whole word.
- f. Attention is focused on the informative substructures of the word.
- g. Crucial factors in *word perception* are brought into functioning, as immediate *need*, *grouping* parts of the word into pronounceable units, *closure* for meaning, *attention* to focal points, *feed forward* and *feedback* between lexical word and phonological word, *set* for word perception by structures, and so on.

### 7. Respelling by word patterns

Another technique used by the writer for irregularly spelled words is the use of respellings in terms of word patterns. These respellings are used in study pages preceding and following the use of the words in a reading selection. Examples include:

*one* (wun), *come* (cum), *from* (frum), *laugh* (laf), *of* (uv). This type of self-help serves several purposes:

- a. Phonics instruction is legitimated and reinforced as a matter of course.
- b. The pupil is dealing with known elements, as the (C)-V-C pattern to signal the pronunciation of *from* (frum).
- c. The pupil gradually learns that different spellings are used for the same sounds, as *gh* for *f* /f/ in *laugh*.
- d. The pupil achieves a degree of word-perception security via *self-help*.

### 8. Syllable phonics

Although a few two-syllable words (e.g., *little*, *again*) are listed in beginning reading materials, syllable phonics are not considered in this discussion. Inflection, derivation, compounding, and syllable stress are a mosaic of orthographic-phonologic situations meriting comprehensive treatment. Hence, syllabic phonics will be the topic of a subsequent publication.

### Sight Word Methods

Today there is much wailing against *THE* word method by journalists who find it profitable to get into the act of criticizing the poor showing of elementary, secondary, and college students in reading tests. These unsophisticated attacks are very superficial, leading parents to join in the fray. With little or no understanding of the vagaries of the English spelling system and, therefore, "unreliable and cumbersome" phonic programs, these self-appointed critics called for the return to phonics and the complete rejection of *the* word method. In fact, the word method has been called some three-phoneme names: *sight*, *look-and-say*, and *look-and-guess*.

What journalists and parents need is some understanding of WHY word methods evolved and why they are being continued. They need to be brought up short by seriously considering some crucial questions regarding beginning reading:

How can phonics be applied to the most commonly used words, as *you*, *one*, *was*?

What phonic rule applies to the very common words, *done*, *come*, *have*?

What phonic rules apply to *w(a)nt*, *wh(a)t*, *(a)ny*? What is the meaning of function words, as *of*, *or*, *to*?

What phonic rule or rules apply to words unstressed in phrases of conversational speech, as *the*, *for*, *and*?

Before the first two questions are "answered," phonic zealots, naive journalists, and parents have to surrender in despair. They are soon aware of the vagaries of the spelling system that makes a mockery of *rules* for reading.

More than 300 years ago, Comenius suggested the word method in his *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (Visible World, 1658). Following publications on this topic in France, Worcester (1828, Bumstead (1840), Webb (1846), and others in the United States reacted strongly against alphabet, or spelling, methods by endorsing word methods. These methods were hailed as revolutionary in beginning reading. However, they were followed at higher reading levels by alphabetic —"phonetic" methods. In general, word methods placed a higher premium on *meaning* in the reading process

Like phonic methods, sight-word methods are as plural as children in a class. These methods include:

### **1. Pictured word cards**

These "flash" cards have a word and picture on one side and only the word on the other side. After flashing the sides with word-pictures, during which time the child "learns" to associate the word with picture (e.g., *boy*-picture of a boy), the child attempts a rapid response to the word only. This procedure is an exemplar of paired-associate learning, used to develop reading fluency "by making a sight vocabulary automatic."

More recent publications are pictured dictionaries for beginners in reading. But these "dictionaries" have not maintained their popularity, partly because they were cumbersome to use when an immediate identification need was recognized.

### **2. Flash cards (words)**

Over the years, flash cards have been used for words, phrases, and sentences —followed by reading them in larger verbal contexts. These word cards, often unrelated to the learner's immediate needs, required *rote* memory, perhaps using word configuration or shapes (overvalued according to recent research), as in *cap-bad*, and/or partial cues, as the *o* in *mother* or the *m* in *man*.

### **3. List of common words**

In the *recent* past, teachers anointed as "reading specialists" by the superintendent or supervisor or certified via lecture courses of questionable validity taught developmental, corrective, and remedial reading by inane daily drills on a list of 220 words. These words were certified as common words and, therefore, as legitimated sight words by the compiler of the list. Not much scholarship is required to assess the value of this rote-memory route to reading failures. But the quantity of words does indicate a need for some *reliable* means of learning them.

### **4. Tell-the-child-the-word "method"**

Probably one of the commonest sight "methods" extant in today's classroom is to tell the child the word when he points to it in his silent or oral reading at sight. For example, the teacher tells the child the word *pick* /'pik/. His word-"recognition" skills having been improved not one whit, he points to the word *picked* in the same paragraph and the teacher says, "/'pikt/." Undisturbed by her *telling*, not *teaching*, method, the teacher goes merrily on her way as she "teaches" reading.

Teacher aides in today's schools become expert in telling the child words, without the so-called professional training in the teaching of reading. No need to wonder why!

What options does the teacher of beginners in reading have at this juncture? *First*, she can guide the young learner in developing an awareness of the alphabetic principle on regularly spelled words. *Second*, she can use a paired-associate technique for developing relevant sight words. *Third*, she can resort to laborious kinaesthetic (V-A-K) or tactile (V-A-K-T) techniques when the first two fail. *Fourth*, she can take a long, hard look at the basic unsolved problem: the spelling system —the medium. On this last point, she will find many answers (proposals for an initial learning medium)

requiring long-term research and at least one immediate answer: self-help via respelled words within common spelling patterns, as was (wuz), of (uv).

### Research

Perceptual hazards inherent in the traditional, or conventional, spelling system for English are not likely to be identified and removed without long-term *basic* research. On the other hand, this area of verbal learning can be "opened up" by masters' theses, doctoral dissertations, and individual projects by graduate students and faculty. As "starters", some of these and other projects merit consideration:

1. Relative discriminability of the shapes (forms) of letters—in. isolation and embedded in words and sentences.
  - a. Traditional, or conventional, alphabet
  - b. Proposed alphabetic spellings
2. Validity of spellings as signals to morphology
3. Experimental validation of preparation for teaching reading
  - a. Relevant concepts in educational psychology and/or psycholinguistics
  - b. Relevant concepts in phonemics (phonotactics)
    - (1) Segmental phonemes
    - (2) Suprasegmental phonemes
  - c. Relevant concepts in syntax and morphology (morphotactics)
  - d. Relevant concepts in orthography (graphotactics)
  - e. Relevant concepts in perception
    - (1) Factors in word perception
    - (2) Types of perceptual learning
    - (3) *Perceptual* processes
    - (4) Stress, syllable and phrase
    - (5) Word order
    - (6) Etc.
  - f. Relevant concepts in cognition (comprehension) and semantics
  - g. Relevant concepts in motivation
  - h. Prerequisites for a demonstration-laboratory course in teaching developmental reading
  - i. Effect on pupil achievement of different types and sequences of teacher preparation.
4. Experimental study of perceptual hazards in i.l.m. (initial learning medium) proposals; e.g., i.t.a. symbols *z* and [reversed *z*] for /*z*/, etc.; W.E.S. spellings of *line* (lien) and *find* (fiend), show (shoe), etc.
  - a. Visual-motor skills required for perception in reading and in spelling
  - b. Incompatibility with T.O. spellings
  - c. Names of proposed symbols
  - d. Comparative study of number and complexity of orthographic (graphotactic) rules
  - e. Reduction of cue, probability, and alternation learning and increase in category learning
  - f. Sociological, or sociolinguistic, factors in perception of visible language
  - g. Reduction of learning disabilities via proposed i.l.m.'s
  - h. Designs for computer reading and scanning
  - i. Etc.
5. Experimental study of reading processes
  - a. Visual skills required for proposed i.l.m.'s
  - b. Oculomotor activity
  - c. Perceptual and cognitive processing in relation to purposes
  - d. Etc.

[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 pp7,8 in the printed version]

### 3. Word Perception: Imagery, by Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., LL.D.

Imagery has been studied from two points of view: *first*, in terms of visualizations in reading poetry, prose, and other genre —cognitive functions; *second*, in terms of memory images —word perception. This discussion deals primarily with imagery in perception.

Hume is credited with introducing the concept of imagery in psychology in 1748. In 1897, Tichner listed the elements of images, differentiating them from sensation, as being unclear, of less intensity, and brief duration.

In 1925, E. Jaensch reported on *eidetic* imagery as having the characteristic features of actual sensation. He cited these usually vivid images as being relatively common among children, but rare among adults. His book *Eidetic Imagery and Topological Methods of Investigation* was published in 1930.

Imagery —a somewhat esoteric concept in psychology —has been born anew. The subject also was investigated rigorously by Goldscheider & Miiller in 1893, by J. Zeitler in 1900, and by others. During the late 1800's, studies were reported by G. M. Stout, Ribot, William James, and others — usually with the conclusion that the role of images in consciousness was overestimated.

In his *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, 1908, Edmund Burke Huey summarized these studies —with emphasis on the images of words. In his *Deficiencies in Reading Ability*, 1922, Clarence Truman Gray presented a chapter on "Imagery and Apperception as Involved in the Reading Process." He was particularly concerned with the role of imagery in mental life, emphasizing the "highly complex system of imagery" and concrete imagery which "may be so abbreviated that it would not stand in the way of a very rapid rate." (p. 228) His chief complaint: "Imagery has had little or no attention paid to it in its connection with reading." That there has been a renaissance of interest in imagery cannot be gainsaid; in the March, 1976 issue of *Psychological Abstracts*, for example, 18 doctoral dissertations on this topic were reported.

Imagery has been omitted from the National Society for the Study of Education yearbooks on reading, child development, and linguistics. However, there is one exception: imaging is discussed in *Media and Symbols: The Forms of Expression, Communication, and Education* (1974, Part I). But these discussions were limited to conceptual imaging via visual aids.

In the older literature on word perception and on spelling, this admonition is stated: "Strong appeal should be made to visual imagery in presenting a word." This advice is usually followed by the suggestion that (1) the learner see the word as a whole, and (2) systematically examine the *word form*. This visual imagery is reinforced by (1) auditory imagery (i.e., *hearing* the word pronounced), (2) speech imagery (i.e., pronouncing the word), (3) handmotor imagery (i.e., writing the word).

One of the key concepts in the above paragraph is the examination of the word form. In spelling, this is done by grouping into syllables. But *syllables* is a somewhat ubiquitous term unless the *pronunciations* in the dictionary are converted into spellings of syllables.

A second key notion in the above paragraph is that different types of imagery reinforce visualization. Auditory imagery, for example, appears to be superior to visual imagery. But how is reinforcement of visual imagery achieved in word perception?

In her *Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects*, 1943, Grace M. Fernald emphasized the "image of the word" in her visual-auditory-kinaesthetic-tactile techniques for teaching word perception and spelling. In fact, she made use of imagery tests to estimate potencies of different types of imagery --visual-auditory-motor --used by different individuals. One of the chief purposes of her technique was to develop imagery.

### **Concepts and Terminology**

Over the years, writers on the psychology of reading have used the terms *mnemonic devices*, *sensorial imagery*, *memory*, *memory storage*, *memory images*, *after images*, *eidetic images*, *reproductive images*, *verbal images*, *affective imagery*, *anticipatory images*, *spatial images*, *auditory* and *motor elements* of visual imagery, *imaganeering*, *image isomorphs*, *imagery values*, *structural visualization* (graphics), *visualization*, *retinal images*, *composite images*, *mnesic* (memory) *processes*, and *trace strength*. Terminology varies from neo-behaviorists to other theorists.

### **Imaging: Tentative Conclusions**

In the somewhat extensive literature on imagery, the following statements appear to merit consideration:

1. An image is an object or an event (e.g., a word, phrase, or sentence) which an individual "sees" in his mind or otherwise "perceives" without the object or event being present.
2. Imagery is an extremely complex, active process.
3. At higher levels of mental organization, the *image* is differentiated from the *percept*.
4. Imagery is considered to be a component of symbolic processes, including perception.
5. The efficacy of imagery has been demonstrated in the psychological laboratories and outside.
6. According to Vigotsky, in writing, the child "must disengage himself from the sensory aspects of speech and replace words by *images* of words." (Italics mine)
7. Image theories have not demonstrated a satisfactory explanation of the relation between symbol and meaning.
8. Primary memory permits an individual to hear seven or eight digits and to report them immediately.
9. Significant differences in imagery among individuals are well known; some individuals exhibiting exceptional photographic memory images, called *eidetic* images. That is, imageability is an important variable.
10. Eidetic images are equated with percepts; that is, the eidetic images may be fused with their percepts --visual, and other sensory inputs. That is *eidetic images* are more than *after images*.
11. Eidetic imagery appears to be prevalent among some children, and less common among adults.
12. In paired-associate learning, imagery value of words appears to be enhanced by concreteness versus abstractness. (Content vs function words? ) That is, concrete words (high-imagery words) are superior to abstract words (low-imagery words) in studies of imaging.

13. Drill on classified words develops a set for phonogram invariance. But in reading, the learner is confronted with diversity, or variance, possibly, or probably, interfering with storage in memory and retrieval and requiring a search and decision process.
14. In certain types of imaging, as related to memory tasks, stereoscopic vision at a reasonably high level appears to be a requisite.
15. There is some evidence that the image codes the word; that is, a learner can substitute (convert) a mental image for the word.
16. The development of images may facilitate memory via interplay with percepts.
17. Chunking processes (i.e., grouping pronounceable parts of words in various ways) in memory may play a role in imaging. These chunking, or grouping, processes operate in repeating digits and recognizing pronounceable parts of words, as consonant-vowel phonograms (e.g., *ca* in *cap*), vowel-consonant phonograms (e.g., *ap* in *cap*), and syllables (e.g., *al.pba.bet*).
18. Imagery may be a mediator in perception and re-cognition.
19. Function, or structure, words may play a role in larger contexts: phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
20. For short-term memory, auditory presentations produce results superior to visual memory.
20. Retrieval of information from the memory store depends upon the specificity of cues available.
22. There is some evidence that words and sentences can be remembered without recourse to imagery.

### Crucial Questions

1. What procedures have validity for assessing the predominant type of imagery used by different learners as a basis for instruction?
2. What techniques are efficient for developing visual imagery in word perception?
  - a. Does the study of phonics facilitate or interfere with word perception and re-cognition? (E.g., what types of phonics and other word-perception activities are relevant to imagery?)
  - b. For whom are kinaesthetic techniques appropriate? Tactile techniques?
  - c. Does paired-associate (e.g., picture-word) learning facilitate imaging for "sight" words?
3. What classes of words yield imagery?
  - a. Content words (e.g., *table, desk*) versus function words (e.g., *the, all*)?
  - b. Highly abstract words (e.g., *advantage, honor*) versus concrete words (e.g., *house, chair*)?
4. What is the role of stereoscopic vision in imaging?
5. Does imaging increase the attributes of word meaning? a. The semantic processing, or decoding, of writing? b. The linguistic —syntactic and morphologic —processing of writing? (Linguistic factors probably have limited importance in dealing with single words.)
6. Are words stored in memory as visual images? (Objects symbolized by nouns? Words as symbols of events?)
7. What is the effect on imaging of regularized spellings, especially in beginning reading? That is, do heterographic spellings interfere with imaging?
8. What assessment procedures are valid as a basis for prescribing activities to facilitate imaging?
9. What factors in word perception contribute to effective imaging? (E.g., meaning, need, intent to learn, perceptual and cognitive closure, graphotactics, contrast, feedback, feed forward, perceptual match and mis-match, analogy, attention, concentration, perceptual and learning sets, mediation, invariance of stimuli, reinforcement, and so on.)

*[Spelling Reform Anthology §4.3 p59 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 p8 in the printed version]*

#### **4. Th' Watermelon Hound, by Newell W. Tune** (Transliterated into Wurld English)

Ie'l bet yoo never sau a wautermelun hound. Wel, Ie did. Ie hav wun!

But furst, Ie shuud preepaer yoo for the unuezuel. Kwiet a fue yeerz agoe, wee serched for an unuezuel Christmas prezent for our litel boi. Hee wanted sumthing living, which hee kuud plae with, bee hiz kumpanyun, and on which too beestoe hiz afekshun. Wiefee toeld mee too get a short-haerd, smaul daug. Wun ov mie frendz toeld mee her daug had the kuetest pupee and shee wanted them too hav guud hoemz. Shee didn't tel mee thae wer long-haerd, larj daugz. A kros beetween a full sizd Poodl and a Sheep daug. Eether a Sheepoo or a Pooshee! And I'v bin heering about it ever sins!

Soe shee sed, "Hav yur boi kum oever th' dae bifoer Christmas and hee kan taek hiz pik ov th' lot. Soe wee did. Ov th' foer pupee, our sun pila out the whiet wun with blak eerz --rather strieking -- and veri afekshonit, az shee likt hiz hand az soon az hee tried too pet her. It wuz a caes ov luv at furst siet. Th' laedi askt him what hee wuz goeing too kaul th' pupee. "Wel," hee sed, "Az shee kums frum a French familee, Ie'l knul her 'Paulette.'" Soe Paulette wuz hiz moest apreshiatid Christmas prezant.

Shee haz bikum wun ov th' familee --and shee noez it too! Shee thinks ov herself az "wun ov th' familee," eksept, ov kors, when shee kumz noez-too-noez with anuther daug --which shee iz shoor too chalenj. But moest ov th' tiem shee thinks shee iz "a peepel" and ekspeks too eet "peepel" food. Shee begz foer everithing wee eet and luuks askans at what iz plasd in her eeting pan --unles wee preetend too eet sum ov it --or tel her hou guud it iz --yum-yummi. (This uezli works). This iz hou shee got startid on eeting wautermelun. It sounded soe guud th' wae Ie wuz slurping oever it, shee whiend foer sum. Soe Ie kut auf a chunk and auferd it too her. Suspishusli shee likt it. Lieking it, shee fienali aet it and whiend foer moer. Az Ie had neerli finisht mie pees, Ie held down th' riend for her too lik. Soon shee wuz chomping awae at it til shee chood awae everi pink bit on the riend. Shee bikaem a kunfirmd wautermelun adikt. Nou if wee kuud oenli get her too eet daug food!

-o0o-

## 5. Spelling and Spelling Reform in the Netherlands, by B. C. Damsteegt\*

\*Faculteit der Letteren, Talenlaboratorium, Rijksuniversiteit, Breestraat 85, Leiden, Netherlands. Reprinted from *Dutch Studies*, vol. 2, pgs. 28-47. Publ by M. Nijhoff, The Hague.

### 1. The Principles of Dutch Spelling

#### 1.1. Introduction: *De Vries and Te Winkel*

The general impression abroad about the spelling of Dutch is that the Dutch themselves are dissatisfied with it and are assailed at regular intervals by a feverish urge to change it. The reasons for this are generally unknown outside the countries concerned, but in fairness it should be added that the large majority of Netherlanders are little better informed. The following remarks are intended to give a brief account of the Dutch spelling system and some explanation of the efforts to improve it.

Like many civilized languages, the spelling of Dutch has a long pedigree. We could trace this back to Middle Dutch spelling, that is, to the thirteenth century, but that spelling in its turn was inherited from various Germanic dialects which can be regarded as forerunners of the Dutch language. The spelling of Middle Dutch varies considerably since there was no uniformity in the language. Interest in the vernacular and the gradual evolution towards a unified language during the Renaissance encouraged theorizing studies on the spelling, and efforts to achieve some measure of consistency; and even at that time the parties that were in disagreement about this spent much of their time slanging one another. Throughout the 18th century the discrepancies gradually disappeared, but an official regulation was not forthcoming until 1804. In that year the Government adopted the spelling which M. Siegenbeek, the first professor of Dutch language, had proposed, based on the existing norms and some earlier recommendations. It was a respectable piece of work, but rather more than a half a century later it was considered inadequate to represent the spelling of the proposed scholarly dictionary of Dutch. For this *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (1882-) M. de Vries, a Leiden Professor, and L. A. Te Winkel, a Leiden grammar school master, had in 1863 devised a new spelling. It is with this system that any description of the current spelling must of course begin.

The rules of De Vries and Te Winkel were divided according to three guiding principles, which might be termed phonological, morphological and etymological. Their spelling system has been modified by simplification in a number of details, as we shall see, but only partly at the expense of the etymological principle. Only partly, because this principle is still operative in the spelling of the diphthongs [ɛi] and [ɔu]. So we can safely say that the present spelling of Dutch is based on these three principles.

#### 1.2. *The phonological principle*

According to the phonological principle, the spelling must represent the phonemes of a word accurately, in the correct sequence, and in a one-to-one relation between phoneme and grapheme. It should be borne in mind that this formulation, and the principle itself, are based on structural phonology. A phonological spelling could also be derived from transformational-generative phonology, but that would lead to an entirely different result. Throughout this article, then, the terms "phonology" and "phonological" will be used with reference to structural phonology unless stated otherwise.

De Vries and Te Winkel could not of course allude to phonology or a phonological principle. The first spelling rule, their "Rule of Cultured Pronunciation," they formulated in these words: "Let your writing represent cultured pronunciation; i.e. record in characters all the elements which are heard

in a word when it is pronounced correctly by cultured people; and where the exact pronunciation cannot be represented, select the character most nearly approximating to it."

There are two points here that require comment. The first is that the description "the elements which are heard in a word when it is pronounced correctly by cultured people" is universally covered by our term "phoneme." It is after all inconceivable that "cultured pronunciation," however vague this term may be in itself, could be outside the scope of the phonemes. The second point is that De Vries and Te Winkel make no mention of the one-to-one relationship between phonetic sound and graphic symbol. Nor is this merely a theoretical description; the practical application of their rules does not involve this relationship either. We may therefore call De Vries and Te Winkel's first rule phonologically *avant la lettre* only to the extent that it attempted to express the phonemic structure of words as accurately as the available means would allow.

These were unfortunately inadequate. Even if De Vries and Te Winkel had not reduced the effect of the rule of cultured pronunciation by the introduction of other fundamental rules, it would have been impossible to achieve a one-to-one correspondence without, at any rate, supplementing the Latin alphabet with a number of additional symbols. Dutch contains approximately 35 phonemes; the exact number will depend on one's answers to certain theoretical questions. The Latin alphabet has more consonants than are required in Dutch, but even so it cannot provide for all the requirements in Dutch, and it has fewer vowel symbols. How, then, are these problems overcome?

### 1.3. The spelling of consonants

The symbols *c*, *q* and *x* are not needed for the writing of Dutch words because their function is performed by other consonant symbols. On the other hand separate symbols are lacking, for the voiceless velar fricative [X] and the velar nasal [ŋ]; so other solutions have to be found for these.

Most "Dutch" consonant symbols --and we can ignore the symbols *c*, *q* and *x* from now on --meet the requirement of one-to-one correspondence: *p*, *t* and *k*, *f* and *s*, *m* and *n*, *j*, *w*, and *h*, *l* and *r* represent one phoneme each. The *b*, *d* and *g* do not meet this requirement. The first two indicate voiced occlusives; the *g* is the symbol for the voiced velar fricative [y], which is in fact always or almost always pronounced unvoiced by part of the Dutch speaking people. At the end of a word, however, they indicate the corresponding voiceless sounds, as in *heb* [hɛp] (have), *hoed* (hut), and *dag* [da X] (day). For the phoneme /j/, the initial phoneme of "year", the symbol *j* is used, except after vowels; then it is written, as in *mooi* [mo.j] (beautiful) and *mooie* [mojə] (declined form). To fill the two velar gaps in the alphabet mentioned earlier, Dutch uses two digraphs, viz., *ch* for the voiceless velar fricative, e.g. in *schaap* [sXa.p] (sheep), and *wacht* [waXt] (watch, guard), and *ng* for the velar nasal, e.g., in *jong* [jɔŋ] (young) and *vangen* [vɑŋəŋ] (to catch).

Moreover, in some cases, depending on the preceding vowel, the phonetic value of one consonantal phoneme is represented by the double symbol for that phoneme. In this way a deficiency in the vowel symbols is met (see 1.4.)

The one-to-one correspondence is also undermined by the application of an etymological principle. Thus, on the basis of etymology, a silent *h* was written in the words *thans* (nowadays), *althans* (at least), and *thuis* (at home). The phoneme /s/ at the end of a number of nouns had to be represented by *sch*, e.g., in *mensch* [mɛns] (person) and *visch* [vis] (fish). This also applied to certain adjectives so as to distinguish them by their spelling from homonymous adverbs: *dagelijksch* (adj.) (daily) as opposed to *dagelijks* (adv.). In the spelling revision of 1934 the *sch* for /s/ was abolished. This was applied only in education however and was not adopted in Belgium.

The way in which the morphological principle affects the spelling of consonants is discussed separately in 1.5.

#### 1.4. The spelling of vowels

Dutch has 15 or 16 vowel phonemes. The uncertainty arises from a difference of opinion as to whether [ə] should be regarded as a separate phoneme, or whether [ə] and the Dutch realization of [ʌ], with very similar if not identical articulation and sound, should not be regarded as one phoneme. Amongst the 16 vowel phonemes —treating the [ə] as a separate phoneme— are also included the diphthongs [ʌi], [œy] and [ɔu]. It is clear that Dutch, like other languages with a rich vowel system, had to make the most of the five vowel symbols in Latin in order to meet its requirements. In discussing the salient aspects of this question, I shall use the terms "clear" as opposed to "dull" to indicate the qualitative difference which exists in English between the vowels of *peat* and *pit*, *late* and *let*, *road* and *rod*. In Dutch this difference also exists between [ɑ] and [a], e.g., *maan* (moon), as opposed to *man* (man), and between [y], the rounded front vowel, and the middle vowel [ʌ] (which is considerably less open than the English vowel in *but*), e.g., *minuut* [minyt] (minute-noun), and *benut* [bənʌt] (use-verb). It should be observed that the phonetic symbol [ʌ] is used in this paper for the Dutch medial vowel, not for the English vowel in *but*.

Four of the five clear vowels are represented by one vowel symbol in open syllables: *praten* (to talk), *eten* (to eat), *boten* (boats), *futen* (grebes). The [i] is represented by the digraph *ie* in both open and closed syllables: *Pieter*, *Pieta* but in the open syllables of loan-words, by either *i*, e.g., *individu*, or *ie*, e.g., *motieven* (motives).

In closed syllables, the same symbols (except *ie*) represent the dull vowels as in *bad* (bath), *met* (with), *lip*, *God*, *put* (well-noun). As a result the phonetic value of the dull vowel in open syllables cannot be represented in the vowel system. This is therefore done by means of the symbol of the following consonant which is then doubled, giving rise to the opposed spellings of the type *bakken* [bakən] (to bake) as opposed to *baken* [bakən] (beacon) and *potten* [pɔtən] (pots) as opposed to *poten* [po.tən] (paws). This clearly affects the spelling of consonants, since the phonemes /p/, /t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, /f/, /s/, /g/, /l/, /r:/, /m/ and /n/ can be represented by a single or a double symbol, depending on the preceding vowel. It is obvious that we are far from achieving a phonological spelling, even though the system itself is consistent.

This is also true of the spelling of [ə], which has a very wide distribution in Dutch. This phoneme can be spelt with an *e*, e.g. in the articles *de* and *het* (at) and in the ending *-en* of the infinitives and the plurals, e.g. *lopen* (to walk) and *stoelen* (chairs); with an *i*, in e.g. the suffix *-ig*: *gelig* (yellowish), *karig* (scanty); with an *ij* in the frequently occurring suffix *-lijk*, e.g. *viendelijk* (kind), *pijnlijk* (painful) and finally with *u*, e.g. in the place name *Dokkum*.

Adherence to the etymological principle is responsible for the fact that the phoneme /ei/ can be spelt with *ei* or *ij*, e.g. in *zei* (said) and *zij* (she); *leiden* (to lead) and *leiden* (to suffer), and that the phoneme /ou/ can be spelt with *ou* (or *ouw*) and *au* (or *auw*), e.g. *goud* (gold) and *klauw* (claw). There are only a few homonyms with /ou/ which are differentiated in the spelling; an example is *rouw* (mourning) and *rauw* (raw). The number of homonyms with *ei* or *ij* is greater and it includes some words of very high frequency, as in the examples given above.

De Vries and Te Winkel also applied an etymological rule to the spelling of /ee/ and /oo/ in open syllables. According to the vowel in primitive Germanic, they spelt some words with a single *e* or *o* in open syllables, others with *ee* or *oo*, e.g. *teeken* (sign, token) as opposed to *tegen* (against) and *nopen* (to urge) as opposed to *sloopen* (to demolish). In the same way, a distinction was made between certain homonyms, e.g. *kolen* (coal) and *koolen* (cabbages). The spelling of *ee* and *oo* in

open syllables, **which caused great difficulties in education**, was abolished in Dutch schools in 1934.

### 1.5. The morphological principle

De Vries and Te Winkel embodied this principle in two fundamental rules, one pertaining to uniformity and the other to analogy. The former operates primarily in words which have a *b* or a *d* in the declined form before the flecional ending. Since no voiced occlusives or fricatives occur at the end of a Dutch word, these words when undeclined are pronounced with a final *p* or *t*. For the sake of uniformity they are nevertheless written with a final *b* or *d*, e.g. *heb* [heb] because of the infinitive *hebben*; *paard* [pa.r̥t] (horse) because of the pl. *paarden*; *goed* [yut] (good) because of the declined form *goede*.

The words ending in [X] which have a [y] in the extended form are treated in the same way. We write *zeg* [zeX] (say) because of the inf. *zeggen*, *vraag* [vra.X] (question) because of the plural *vragen*.

In words with *b*, *d*, and *g* in the declined form, the morpheme therefore prevails over the phoneme. This is not the same in words which have a *v* or a *z* in the declined form. The singular of *wolven* (wolves) is spelt *wolf*, the singular of *huizen* (houses) is *huis*. In these instances the phonological aspect takes precedence over the morphological.

The rule of analogy also serves to keep the morpheme intact. We can observe its effect in certain derivations and compound words, and some verb forms. In the word *wijdte* [we̥itə] (width), for example, the *d* is written because it is a derivation of *wijd* with the suffix *-te*; in *hoofddeel* [ho.vde.l] (main part) two *d*'s are written because it is a compound consisting of *hoofd*+*deel*. ; This rule is also operative in verbs where the infinitive ending is preceded by *d* or *t*. We write *(hij) wordt* (words) on analogy with *(hij) loopt*; *(ik) antwoord-de* on analogy with *(ik) spell-de*; *(zij) praat-te* on analogy with *(zij) werk-te*. **However plausible this rule may seem, it takes a great deal of teaching to make the children conversant with it.**

### 1.6. The "case ending -n"

An important part of De Vries and Te Winkel's work was their rationalization of the masculine and feminine gender of nouns. One of the reasons for this was to formalize the declension in *-n* of nominal adjuncts occurring with substantives in the "acc. and dat. case" in certain syntactical functions and combinations. By this means De Vries and Te Winkel asserted their authority on a flecional system which Gerlach Royen, the Utrecht professor, called "a systematized paper fiction" and which, unlike German, for example, *had never, in any period or in a single dialect, existed in spoken Dutch*. Every Dutchman distinguishes words which in the singular take the article *het* from others which take the article *de*. In some dialects the *de* words can be divided into two groups, those with *de* and those with *den* as the article. These two categories do not, however, coincide completely in the various dialects and anyway the use of *de* or *den* is not dependent on the syntactical function of the noun. In non-dialectal usage, *de* is the only spoken form.

The rules which required that in certain instances, a flecional *-n* had to be added to nominal adjuncts meant in the first place, that the user of the language had to learn by heart a number of gender rules with many exceptions with frequent recourse to the dictionary! —and in the second place that he had to account for the "case" of the substantive. This completely artificial system was a wretched stumbling block for the brightest children and even amongst authors and academics there were only a few who could use it faultlessly. Since it no longer had to be taught in this form after 1925 —one of the most important achievements in the struggle for spelling simplification — and since after 1948 it was no longer maintained in the spelling of official publications and the press either, I need not pursue the matter any further.

### 1.7. Conclusion

In the above paragraphs only the main points of DeVries and Te Winkel's spelling system have been outlined, but from this it will be possible to appreciate later views on this spelling. Whatever may be said in criticism of it, it is a very thoughtfully conceived system, firmly rooted in the historical grammatical tradition of 19th century linguistics. Yet despite its strong internal structure, it displays a number of contradictions. These were practically unavoidable, since the basic rules clashed and were not arranged for practical purposes in any hierarchical order. *This spelling therefore demanded a very high level of knowledge and insight on the part of the users, and only an intellectual elite was capable of mastering it.* In the spelling debate which has gone on since 1890, advocates of spelling simplification could easily demonstrate that *even the boldest champions of the De Vries and Te Winkel spelling made numerous mistakes while using it.*

In 1883 this spelling was recognized by the government for its own publications, following the lead given in education, but 13 years before this the orientalist, J. P. N. Land had pointed out one of the weaknesses in the new spelling in what is now a very dated book on pronunciation and spelling. This was the conflict between the principles of standard pronunciation and etymology. Because of this, it is, says Land, like the spelling of most languages, "a compromise between the language forms of the past and present." It seems to be assumed "that the spelling must give evidence that it has been devised by academics, who alone possess the secret of the relationship between image and original. Less attention is paid to the needs of people in general, who use spelling and writing only for practical or aesthetic purposes. And in national education *it is doubly important that the short period at school should be taken up as little as possible with unnecessary rigmarole, and with the pursuit of anything that in no way increases our understanding.*" The last sentence of this passage written in 1870, formulates what is still one of the most cogent arguments in favour of spelling simplification.

## 2. The Struggle for Simplification

### 2.1 R. A. Kollewijn

1890 marks the opening of the campaign for the simplification of the spelling. In that year, the linguist Dr. R. A. Kollewijn published his important article, "Onze lastige spelling" (Our difficult spelling), in which he convincingly demonstrated the difficulties in the spelling by means of numerous examples. He was widely supported, particularly in education by those who later united and formed a society which campaigned vigorously for spelling simplification. Their programme was pragmatic rather than theoretical. Their sole aim was *to make spelling easier to learn by removing unnecessary difficulties.* Accordingly, they proposed that the declension *-n* discussed in 1.6 should be abolished. They also advocated abolishing the distinction between *ee* and *e*, and between *oo* and *o* in open syllables by applying the rule for *a* and *u*, "one vowel symbol in an open syllable," to all instances of *ee* and *oo* as well, regardless of etymology. This rule would have removed phonological differentiations, as in the word-pair *bedelen* [be.dələn] (to beg) and *bedelen* [bədə.lən] (to endow), whereas on etymological grounds De Vries and Te Winkel had made these words distinguishable, i.e. *bedelen* and *bedelen*. Citing the rule of cultured pronunciation, the reformers argued for the abolition of the etymological spelling of *-sch* for the final *s*, as in *mensch*, *visch*, *dagelijksch*. They did not, however, go so far as to challenge the dual spellings *ei/ij* and *ou/au*, but they did want the deletion of the mute *h* in the previously mentioned words *thuis*, *thans*, and *althans*, and also in *thee*. Other, less important modifications need not concern us here. They had no objections to the morphological foundations of De Vries and Te Winkel's spelling which means that they wanted to maintain the rule of uniformity (*hard* because of *harde*), and the spelling of the flexional forms of the verb.

### 2.2. The first phase

For more than four decades these proposals have been the subject of heated discussions. On rereading the written controversy, in which the conservatives generated more heat than light, one is

constantly reminded that almost everybody regarded himself qualified to pass judgement on matters of spelling. Professors of history and theology, lawyers, authors of note, editors of newspapers, and a whole host of less qualified people took part in the debate, frequently without the restraint of any real knowledge. It was evidently impossible for most of them **to differentiate between language and spelling**; not only was the simplified spelling called unaesthetic, but even unmelodious(!); it would result in a diminished respect for the mother tongue; it would make the learning of foreign languages more difficult; it was tampering with the instrument of creative writers; the simplified spelling constituted a threat to the culture! Against this emotional resistance, the reformers could only restate their sober arguments.

Opposition was not in fact confined to non-specialists; amongst Dutch linguists too there were opponents to the simplification, and their arguments could not always stand the test of linguistic criticism either.

During those years various Ministers of Education had to take up the spelling problem, watched, and more than once were rebuked by a critical parliament. Several commissions, for the most part composed of educationalists and linguists advised the government, but the differences could not be bridged. In the thirties, however, it did become clear that any modification of the spelling should not only apply to Holland, but to Belgium as well. Between 1925 and 1940 the dispute continued, with some modest results. In 1925 the schools were given permission to omit the case ending *-n*, with the result that three spelling systems were in use in the Netherlands: De Vries and Te Winkel with and without the case ending *-n*, and the Kollewijn spelling which was used by its supporters in their writings. In 1933 the gain which had resulted from the abolition of the flecational *-n* was partly lost again when the then Minister of Education introduced the rule that this *-n* was to be used for male persons and animals. This rule, which made a distinction based on sex instead of gender, was indefensible on any linguistic grounds, was only abolished in 1947, when the use of the flecational *-n* was made entirely optional. In 1934 the abolition of the *ee* and *oo* in open syllables and the *-sch* at the end of words, was adopted in the schools. Taken in conjunction with the change of rules for the case ending *-n*, *these simple changes brought an enormous relief in education*. The retention of the ending *-isch* [is] (e.g. in *logisch, psychisch, Indisch*), which Kollewijn had wanted to change to *-ies*, and of the *h* in *thuis, thans, althans*, and *thee* was by comparison of little importance.

Government documents however, retained the original spelling of De Vries and Te Winkel, and this example was followed by the smaller public departments, most newspapers and by far the greater part of industry. The result was that *school leavers on entering society often had to start learning the unchanged spelling of De Vries and Te Winkel because that was what their employers demanded*. Attempts to achieve a more satisfactory state of affairs were interrupted by the Second World War.

### 2.3. The post-war development

In 1945 a Dutch-Belgium commission was appointed, which promptly recommended that the amended De Vries and Te Winkel spelling, which had been taught since 1934, be recognized as the official spelling. The use of the case ending *-n* was left optional. This recommendation became law in the Spelling Act of 1947. The next step was the compilation of a new word-list which would also deal with the spelling of loan-words, the gender of nouns and the form of the pronouns. This task was also entrusted to the Dutch-Belgium Commission, which consequently acquired the title of the Word-list Commission. In 1954 the result of its work was published in the *Woordealiist van de Nederlandse Taal* (Word-list of the Dutch language). It was soon apparent that this contained the virulent germs for the renewal of the spelling conflict.

It was the spelling of loan-words that took the brunt of the criticism. Dutch has adopted a great number of words from other languages. Since the earliest days, French words have been adopted in the language, next to derivations from Latin and Latinized Greek words, especially in technical and scientific usage. The spelling of these words coincided fairly closely with the original spelling (with

the proviso that derivations from Greek are mostly spelled in the Latin way), so that *c*, *q*, and *x*, *ph*, *rh* and *th*, *ae* and *y* were generally adopted without change. Some words with a higher frequency, however, acquired a more vernacular spelling alongside the foreign forms, e.g. *telefoon* and *telephoon*, *filantroop* and *philanthroop*, *ritme* and *rhythme* etc. These modified spellings constituted only a very small minority. In the word-list of 1954, more than one spelling was recognized for many loan-words; a "foreign" next to a more Dutch. In doing this the Commission wanted to permit a greater degree of freedom in order to allow for the development of the spelling of these words, though it did indicate its preference for one of the possible forms --*in some instances there were three, four or more variations*.

*In teaching, the disadvantages of this policy were greater than the advantages: the need here was for just one specified spelling.* Against the intention of the Commission, the Minister of Education yielded to pressure and directed that the preferred spellings of the word-list were to be taught, although pupils had the freedom to use other forms provided they used them consistently. But the Commission had not arrived at the recommended spellings according to any particular system, with the result that it is almost impossible to predict whether for instance an original *c* in the preferred form of the word is written as a *c* or a *k*. While outside the school system everyone of course retained the freedom to choose whichever alternative he pleased, dissatisfaction, especially in primary education, remained, and in 1956 a commission was instructed to devise proposals for improvement, without however interfering with the word-list. The report, which the Commission submitted a year later, was shelved. The time was not yet ripe.

#### *2.4. The second phase*

Continued dissatisfaction with the word-list led in 1962 to the appointment of a new Dutch-Belgian Commission which would be allowed to effect necessary changes in the word-list. For the spelling of loan-words, they were to adopt "a principle as phonologically consistent as possible, to achieve the greatest consistency with vernacular spelling." This launched the spelling question into a new orbit: *the instruction unequivocally put the phonological principle first* for a given part of the vocabulary, taking precedence over the powerful principles of etymology and tradition which were particularly evident in the loan-words. There were other, morphological, problems concerning the spelling of compound words which the Commission were asked to advise on, but these need not concern us here.

The first report of the "Loan-word Commission" (1967) met with much incomprehension and opposition, though in some quarters it was well received. It is not surprising that there was widespread confusion between "phonetic" and "phonological," nor that the familiar confusion between language and spelling cropped up again. In fact all the old arguments were raised again as if they were brand new. *The teaching organizations supported the proposals*, but were dissatisfied because the proposed simplifications were limited to loan-words and to specific types of compound words. Now that the notion of a phonological principle had become more widely accepted, and had been partly incorporated in the report, albeit of course within the framework set out in 1.2 to 1.5, *the primary school teachers also wanted to see some of the basic difficulties in the spelling of Dutch words eliminated*. They therefore requested the Minister to extend the Commission's terms of reference so as to include an investigation into the spelling of *ei (ij)* and *ou (au)* and the spelling of verbs. The latter implied that the morphological principle of uniformity should also come up for consideration. It is, after all, impossible to choose between the spellings (*hij*) *wordt*, *word*, *wort*, without also expressing an opinion on *woord* or *woort*, *heb* or *hep*, *dog* or *dach*. Whatever the decision of the Commission, *here were all the necessary conditions for a continuation of the spelling debate*.

### **3. Fundamental Differences**

#### *3.1. Research and speculation*

Feelings indeed ran high again when in 1969 the *Final Proposals* of the Loan-word Commission were published. In some newspapers its opponents pointed out *the need for research into all aspects of the spelling problem before making any changes at all*. The majority of those who supported this view were probably more concerned with achieving a postponement rather than any investigation as such. This does not however apply to a group of linguistic scholars headed by Prof. dr. A. Cohen (Utrecht) and Prof. dr. A. Kraak (Nijmegen). *They advocated a scholarly investigation of the psycho-linguistic and didactic problems affecting the readability of the spelling*, because they doubted the accuracy of the axiomatic proposition that a (structural) phonological spelling would be best for Dutch. According to Cohen and Kraak, any spelling reform should take account of transformational-generative phonological principles.

As far as I know, *no start has as yet been made on this research, and anyway possible results could not be expected for years*. It is in any case doubtful whether such research is feasible in practice. The various aspects of different spelling systems could, one would have thought, only be compared if the test groups called in for the purpose were as familiar with the experimental spellings as the control groups would be with the existing spellings. I do not see how statistically reliable results could be produced.

For the time being only theoretical speculation is possible on the question of which spelling is the most desirable for a "developed" language. Modern society undeniably makes demands which must be taken into account in determining the spelling. It is expected of every citizen that he should be able to read and write; of many that they should read well and write faultlessly; of many that they, while reading fast, absorb a great deal of information in a short time. Hence, it is important that spelling should be easily learnt, even by those of average intelligence, so that it must also be easily taught. Furthermore it is of some importance that a spelling should present a pleasantly readable textural image. The ease of learning and teaching and what I would like to call the "readability" are discussed in special paragraphs, but a few introductory observations may find their place here.

The unchanged De Vries and Te Winkel spelling left much to be desired in its application to teaching and learning. For the teacher the difficulties lay mainly in the etymological principle: in many cases he could only say *how* a word had to be written; the reason *why* this was so he himself generally did not know. Etymology was a closed book to him and *the arbitrary operation of rules which followed no hierarchical order, did not make the matter any easier*. The pupils had difficulties with both etymological and morphological principles. *The first made a heavy demand on their memories of word images*, and the application of morphological rules required the necessary grammatical knowledge. As we have seen, however, the worst of the etymological difficulties were removed in 1934.

By readability, I understand that property of a spelling which enables the reader to survey and grasp the meaning of words, word groups and sentences with rapidity. The greater the readability, the easier will also be the broad survey of paragraphs and longer passages. The importance of this is self-evident. For spelling, this means that in fast reading it must provide as much information as possible. *It seems probable that a constant word image is an advantage because it contributes to the immediate recognition of a word*. This is of particular importance when one is scanning a text for key words.

### 3.2. *Spelling and T. G. G. (transformational generative grammar).*

It seems to me scarcely questionable that the spelling of a living language must as nearly as possible satisfy the above requirements. The opinion of the advocates of T. G. G., that the spelling must also be an expression of the abstract phonetic structure of a language is, I consider, at least debatable. Cohen and Kraak agree with the view that the spelling of English must be regarded "as an almost optimal expression of the abstract phonetic structure" of that language. With some reservations they advance the hypothesis that "a spelling which to a high degree expresses the deeper structure, can be used over long periods of time and for differing dialects." With regard to the latter it should be

said in passing that in Dutch (and in English for that matter) we are concerned with the spelling of the standard language, and that for the purpose of spelling a dialect adequately, other means (phonetic symbols, special letter combinations, etc.) have always been found necessary. The main point is, however, that the retrieval and description of the deeper structure is a matter for linguistics, and irrelevant to the daily use of language as communication. Such knowledge of this structure as the language user may have, is knowledge of which he is unaware. He handles structural laws without being conscious of their existence; if questioned he can not even account for them unless he is well grounded in linguistics. What is then the point of reflecting the deeper phonetic structures in the spelling? The *d* ought probably to be retained in *reeds* (already) which is related to the stem of the verb *reden* (to prepare) and the adjective *gereed* (ready), since this *d* belongs to a "deeper structure." Yet the Dutchman who uses this word without any knowledge of this relationship, needs no more than the surface structure of the word, which consists of four elements: r + ee + t + s. *For him the d is an unnecessary burden on his memory.*

The spelling of Dutch verbal forms, at least in part, furnishes significant examples of the expression of the deeper structure. The form of the 3rd person *wordt*, for example, reflects the structure of the stem morpheme *word* + the suffix of the 3rd person *t*. A spelling on a T. G. phonological basis will undoubtedly want to maintain the existing system.

The current spelling of certain compound forms of nouns also reflects the deeper structure. Thus the compound of *dorp*+*straat* is written *dorpsstraat* (with double-s, although only one is pronounced) because its structure can be shown to be *dorp*+*s*+*straat*. T. G. phonology will have no difficulty in determining these and similar spellings. But difficulties will be unavoidable in the case of many compound words which are formed with the medial [ə]. These are spelt in two ways, with *-e* and *-en*. Sometimes the [ə] can be interpreted as a plural ending, e.g. in *boekenkast*, but in *boerenzoon* there is no plural. Does *peresap* (*pear-juice*) have the structure of *peer*+*a*+*sap* or is it perhaps *peren*+*sap*?

It is clear that T. G. phonology can: 1. take us back to etymologically determined spellings, even though that will not go so far as in De Vries and Te Winkel's spelling, and 2. ensure a strict adherence to morphological principles. In this it offers no new prospects; it only defends known principles with new arguments, thereby running the risk of prostituting the true function of spelling, as an instrument of communication, by making it serve a linguistic purpose. In my opinion *that is only justifiable if it does not harm the primary function of the spelling*, or to phrase it differently, *if it does not adversely affect the ease of learning and readability*. We shall now take a closer look at these two factors.

### 3.3. *The ease of learning*

It has been argued that some conceptualization is called for in any (structural) phonological spelling too, so that such a spelling cannot *a priori* be regarded as easy to learn. Of course that is so. There is however no spelling system where all abstraction can be avoided. Spelling will always have to be learnt. Even without further investigation, however, it seems obvious that it will be easier for every user of the language if, for example, the phoneme group /ort/ pronounced [ɔrt] is always written *ort* and not, as in the present Dutch spelling and in accordance with the deeper structure, sometimes as *ort* (e.g. *kort*, "short"; declined form *korte*), sometimes as *ord* (e.g. *bord*, "plate"; declined form *borden*) and sometimes as *ordt* (e.g., *wordt*, 3rd person of *worden*). A constant relationship between phoneme and symbol can only be an advantage, both for ease of learning and readability. This is not a plea for the theoretically ideal one-to-one relationship between symbol and phoneme. In practice little difficulty is experienced in resorting to double symbols or to indirect indication, as in the opposition *bakken*: *baken*, providing that under similar conditions the same symbols or configurations of symbols are always used. It is this factor that determines the degree of "predictability" inherent in a spelling system. I am here alluding to the extent to which the spelling system enables the user of the language to predict accurately the spelling of a word he hears but has never seen written; and conversely *the extent to which the spelling image enables the reader to*

*decide without error on the pronunciation of a word which he has read, but has never heard spoken.* Though the latter affects readability more than learning, I shall consider both aspects since they are inseparably linked.

If one wants to spell the French word [pti] by ear, one has the choice of at least 12 forms: *pti ptit, ptites, ptis, ptie, pties*, plus these same spellings with *pe-*. For the spelling of the English word [lou] one can choose *lo, low, loe* (cf. foe) and *lough* (cf. though). We may call this a low degree of predictability. In Dutch this is generally higher, provided we exclude the verb forms. A low degree of predictability exists in the choice between *ei* and *ij*, *an* and *ou*, and between *b* and *p*, *d* and *t*, *g* and *ch* at the end of words.

The converse, the predictability of pronunciation, is of importance because most users of the language acquire a part of their vocabulary in the first instance in written form. *English is the language that most obviously fails this predictability test.* This can easily be demonstrated, even without resorting to a contrived sentence such as: "The tough cough and hiccough plough him through." *The native speaker of English undoubtedly gets a jolt from time to time when he first hears the pronunciation of a word which he only knows in the written form.* In this respect, Dutch is fairly predictable, at least if one knows certain rules and conventions, but it is not completely so. Especially the pronunciation of *e* in open syllables can be misleading, because this can indicate [e.] as well as [ə]. Words such as *bevelen, tekenen, betekenen, levende*, etc. give no indications about the phonetic value [e.] or [ə] in the symbols themselves; there are however morphological indications.

The introduction of the etymological principle reduces the predictability. The term "etymological" is used here in the sense in which De Vries and Te Winkel employed it, viz. that of diachronic etymology, and not of synchronic analysis in morphemes. *In language communication, etymology plays no part; so it is hardly conceivable that it should determine the spelling. Etymology merely introduces complications* for every user of the language who is not one of the few who are trained in historical phonology and who is (in the case of *ij/ei* and *au/ou*) not one of those dialect speakers who can determine from the phonetic distinctions retained in his dialect what the etymologically correct spelling is. The silent *b* in *ambt* [amt] (office employment), the *ch* in the suffix *-isch*, the *d* pronounced as *t* in *gids* (guide), the *ei* in *beitel* (chisel) and the *ij* in *bijten* (to bite), the *ou* in *koud* (cold) and the *au* in *blauw* (blue), etc., *encroach on the constant relationship between phoneme and phonetic sound, and thereby decrease the ease of learning.* Retention of these spellings will require a defense other than one based on etymology, e.g. one making an appeal to readability or tradition.

### 3.4. The readability

It was proposed earlier that a fixed word pattern will probably contribute to the speed of perception in reading. This constitutes an argument in favour of the preservation or introduction of morphological rules into a spelling system. In De Vries and Te Winkel's spelling these are the rules of uniformity and analogy discussed in 1.5. These were the codification of spelling practices which came into being through a process of gradual development. The spelling in the documents between 1200 and 1600 *can be called almost entirely phonological.* Yet the writer Willem van Afflighem as early as circa 1260 defended the morphological spelling *laett* in the 3rd person (stem *laet*+suffix *t*), although as a rule even at that time no double consonants were written at the end of a word. From the 17th to the 19th century there is a gradual increase in morphologically based spellings. We can conclude that this achieved what was considered to be a desirable increase in the constant pattern of words. This indicates that some caution may be needed when abolishing morphological rules in reforming the spelling.

One factor in readability which is most difficult to assess is the occurrence of *homographs*. (Meant is the more frequent occurrence of homographs when abolishing etymological spellings). The fear of non-linguists that homographs impede reading comprehension is of itself sufficient reason for linguists to consider whether the fear might be justified. If the difference between *lijden* (to suffer,

etc.) and *leiden* (to lead, etc.) were eliminated by a change in the spelling, they would become homographs and the reader observing the one retained spelling pattern would have to choose between two semantic groups, whereas now his choice is limited to one group because of the differentiated spellings. Yet it is uncertain whether homographs cause real difficulties when they occur in context. Usually the context is given so that possible confusion is avoided. And after all, confusion is very rare when homonyms (homophones) crop up in speech. Differences in syntactical grouping give the necessary indications, and frequently one word in the context is enough to ensure the correct identification of the word, even where both words are from the same word class. Nevertheless, it remains an intriguing question at what point an increasing number of homographs makes reading more difficult than with differentiated spelling. This is however a question to which no general answer can be given with any certainty, if only because much if not everything depends on the particular nature of the text.

Finally I mention a purely technical aspect of readability which calls for comment in conjunction with the possible abolition of the etymologically determined difference between *ei* and *ij* in Dutch spelling. The *ij* is one of six letter symbols in the alphabet which project below the line of type. Of these six (*g, j, p, q, y, ij*) there are two (*q* and *y*) which occur only in loan-words. This makes the *ij* a striking symbol, causing those words in a text in which it appears to catch the eye. The *ei* on the other hand falls entirely within the type lines. The symbol *e* moreover is the commonest letter in Dutch texts and it also forms part of 5 digraphs: *ei, e, ee, eu, oe*. There is therefore some ground for the fear that a substitution of *ei* for *ij* can make the rapid scanning of a text more difficult. My personal experience with texts in which this has happened certainly does not allay this fear. So if the etymological distinction were removed, the *ij* rather than the *ei* would have to be retained.

### 3.5. Conclusion

From earlier comments about the ease of learning and readability, it is clear that the requirements of each can come into conflict with the other. Ease of learning seems to require a constant relation between phoneme and symbol, while readability seems to be assisted by morphological spelling. To achieve an optimum spelling system, some sort of compromise will be necessary. The kind of radical simplification, in which only the ease of learning is taken into consideration, as proposed by the extremist advocates of spelling simplification in the Netherlands, is as unacceptable as a point of view which opposes any encroachment on morphological rules with an appeal to grammatical structure, which is what the Utrecht professor B. van den Berg does with regard to the forms of the verb.

## 4. The Present State of Affairs

The present position is, briefly, that the *Eindvoorstellen* (Final Proposals) (1969) of the Belgian Dutch Commission on loan-words are still with the Dutch and Belgium governments. The moderate proposals extend to a phonologically based adaptation of the spelling of loan-words which would give a Dutch spelling to a large number of fully adopted words, mainly of French origin. All in all approximately 4% of the word tokens (9% of the word types) in a Dutch newspaper text would be changed. To simplify the learning of the spelling, the Commission also proposes the elimination of some of the morphological rules for the spelling of verbs, while retaining the rule of uniformity. The Commission advocates dropping only the rules which yield superfluous information, such as the *-t* of the 2nd and 3rd person where the stem ends in *-d* (*jij, hij word* instead of *jij, hij wordt*) and the *-dd-* and *-tt-* in the past tense of the so-called weak verbs (*ik antwoorde* instead of *ik antwoordde*; *zij ruste* instead of *zij rustte*).

Contrary to the phonological principle, the Commission recommended that the representation of [ɛi] by the double spelling *ei* and *ij* should not be abolished. It feared that readability might be impaired, and also regarded the abolition of this spelling differentiation as too serious a break with nearly eight centuries of spelling tradition. The Commission also wants to retain the dual spelling of [ɔu] as *ou* and *au*.

The proposals will certainly make learning easier, but in the opinion of the radical spelling reformers, especially those in education, they do not go far enough. Opposed to them, and to the Commission, there are of course many who are against any change whatsoever. In the meantime, several of the changes in the loan-words proposed by the Commission are already used in everyday spelling. Numerous *c*'s are replaced by *k*'s; the replacement of the "official" spelling *cadeanu* by *kado*, originally used as an eye catcher by large department stores, has long since lost its advertisement value. All kinds of groups which advocate social reform use far-reaching --indeed over-reaching --phonological spellings of loan-words as a means of expressing their radical views. All this certainly does not facilitate the task of educationalists, since they have to teach the officially approved spelling. I am unaware of the extent to which the schools are still conscientiously doing this.

The introduction of spelling reform in this language requires a simultaneous decision by the governments of both countries, and in addition, Parliament in Holland and the Flemish Cultural Council in Belgium. Twice in the past there have been favourable circumstances when the proposals of the Loan-word Commission might have been accepted; as it is, changes of government and other political events have even prevented the Dutch and Belgian ministerial councils from arriving at a common viewpoint. At present there are plenty of matters of greater importance than the simplification of the spelling to keep both governments fully occupied. Besides, spelling revision would cost money, and that is even less available in 1974 than in 1969. All things considered, there is little prospect of the governments resuscitating the *Final Proposals* and introducing a simplification of the spelling on that basis. Supporters and opponents are silent; the opponents in the quiet confidence that they gain by every postponement, the supporters possibly because they want to save their strength for more favourable times. For the time being the state of uncertainty and confusion will no doubt continue. This is the somewhat gloomy note on which a survey of the present state of affairs must end.

Leiden University, June 1974.

### Literature

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.6 pp291–294 in the printed version]  
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 pp16–18,15 in the printed version]

## 6. Causes of Crime —1: Illiteracy and its Roots, by Harvie Barnard\*

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**Editorial note:** Crime is costing US —personally, industrially, and society in general — approximately \$100 Billion per year, about ¼ as much as our entire federal budget. (This is one hundred thousand millions!!!). Of this, nearly 20 thousand millions goes into "crime control", a never-ending, ever-increasing annual expense. It is time that the CAUSES of crime are better understood and positive steps taken to eliminate or reduce the *criminality at its sources*. Only in this approach can crime be curtailed—a long range program! A crime reduction of only 10% could result in a savings of 10 thousand millions per year. This would not happen immediately, but it is certainly a reasonable objective, certainly justifying an expenditure, (an investment), of a portion —if only 10% —of the funds spent annually for "crime control" which does nothing to eliminate the BASIC CAUSES of our greatest social failure. This discussion relates to one of the principal causes of criminality. It also proposes a practical remedy, a change in teaching material requiring little more than the acceptance of a minor yet basic innovation in educational policy.

When the clerk of the Circuit Court of Pinellas County, Fla., handed his daily summary of cases to Judge Charles M. Phillips, the Judge studied the detailed report carefully for a few minutes, drew a long breath, and sighed. "What we have here," he concluded ruefully, "is a serious indictment of our whole system of education, our public schools. This report tells me very convincingly that we have failed to provide a substantial portion of our children with the basic tools for earning an honest living."

The facts before Judge Phillips were not only startling, [\[1\]](#) —they were shocking! Of 24 young men brought before the Court charged with serious crimes —from attempted rape to murder —21 were white males under 25, more than 80%! Of these 21, none had finished high school, (all dropouts), and all were functionally illiterate. None could read competently, with full understanding, and could not express themselves in understandable written English. All had attended schools, and all had failed, or would it be more nearly correct to say that the schools had failed? [\[2, 2a, 3\]](#).

These young men were now about to be committed to so-called "correctional" institutions at a cost to the taxpayers of more than 820,000 per year per inmate, about 20 times greater than, (in some states, 30 times as much), as had already been spent to give them an "education," which had been a total failure as far as they were concerned. Each of these men, instead of being a social asset, had become a public liability, a sorrow to their families, a financial burden to society, and a tragic failure in their own estimation. If committed, their chances for rehabilitation were not good —at best, according to the most favorable statistics it would be about 30% —and of these few none would really succeed without intensive retraining, specialized school, and patient, watchful supervision. This too, would cost the taxpayers more money, and again would have little chance of success. [\[4\]](#)

If, after doing a "stretch," the ex-con was paroled, given another chance, the probability of getting a steady job at honest, (legal) employment, would be very poor. Why? Even with a new point of view—a corrected attitude —the inability to read, write or to follow written instructions would continue to be an insurmountable handicap. The first step in applying for a job is to respond satisfactorily to the questions asked on an employment application, which for the illiterate, would be impossible.

So where does this leave the drop-out from either a correctional institution or our public school system? [\[4a\]](#) His answer to the question, "How do you plan to earn a living?" is, "I got as much

rights as anybody; I'm gonna live, and I'm gonna get what I gotta have, regardless!" And so, as soon as "the law" catches up with our unemployable unfortunate, there will be another arrest, another trial, another commitment, and the sad story begins all over, and over, again. The only form of self-employment available to the repeater is illegal work —crime —not because he wants it that way, but because he has no other choice, no "options." His "work" is justified, in his opinion, by the normal animal urge to live -to exist by any means available. [\[5\]](#)

As Judge Phillips expressed it, "Illiteracy is the short-cut to crime," because the illiterate cannot compete successfully in the job market. The logical question then becomes, "What can we do to reduce illiteracy?" Illiteracy is not, of course, the only cause of crime, but statistically there is a very strong positive relationship. About 2/3 of our delinquents have been found to be functionally illiterate, and more than half of those arrested for criminal acts are illiterates —at least for all practical purposes.

And what is the cause of this illiteracy? As far as the public schools are concerned, deficiencies in reading show up very early, often in the first grade, altho standardized reading tests cannot be properly evaluated much before the latter half of the second grade or the first half of the third. At this point, the "slower" pupils may be as much as a full year behind their "reading at grade level" classmates. But long before this the experienced teacher has spotted the potential non-reader or likely dropouts. Such cases can frequently be identified even in kindergarten, and almost invariably by the end of the first grade. In some schools these slow starters can be given special help —when the teaching load is reasonable, when there are not more than about 25 pupils per class —but when there are more, and particularly when the teacher is new and inexperienced, there is little time for special treatment for anyone. In crowded classrooms —30 to 40 and sometimes more young children —it will be difficult to identify those who are falling behind, so that by the time such children are clearly in need of remedial help, their plight may be very serious indeed. [\[6\]](#)

In its broadest sense, education begins at birth, or very shortly thereafter. From the moment of birth the five senses begin to operate. Hearing and feeling become subconscious acts, and the brain starts recording these feelings and sounds much in the manner of a computer. The input into this natural mechanism —this organic computer —is no more nor less than the accumulation of what we call knowledge, learning, experience —in a word, "education."

Very strangely, the importance of this primal, formative, introduction to pre-school learning is little appreciated and deserves much greater consideration. Knowledgeable psychologists and teachers estimate that 50% of a child's learning capacity is developed prior to formal schooling, (kindergarten). [\[7\]](#) By the time children are 8 years old their learning potential has become about 80% of its eventual development. In view of these truths, a much greater emphasis should be given to the early phases of human development.

Perhaps no one better appreciates this fact more than Dr. Wilson Riles, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of California since 1970. Dr. Riles has taken positive steps to implement the education of children as early as possible to reach them thru the public school system. His program is known as "E.C.E.", Early Childhood Education, and under his enlightened guidance and experience is meeting with enthusiasm and success, not only by parents and teachers, but more importantly by the children themselves! [\[8\]](#)

A basic objective of the E.C.E. program is to raise the level of achievement in the basic skills, especially the communicative skills —reading and writing, as well as speech and listening. By means of individualized instruction- made possible by the assistance of trained volunteers -many children are rescued from frustrating situations before their confusion develops into an irreversible failure condition.

Those working closely with the Early Childhood Education program, such as Marilyn Shmaeff, chairwoman of an E.C.E. advisory committee, are gratified with the progress being made and is

especially enthusiastic over the extent to which community involvement has contributed to the overall success of this new approach to teaching and public instruction implementation. Richard H. Rioux, an active participant as a member of the Community Advisory Council's Committee on E.C.C. evaluation, has been consistently impressed by the stimulating atmosphere which prevails in the classroom. "The change over what existed last year, (at the Lorne Street Elementary School), has been dramatic!" [\[9\]](#)

While it may be a little early to analyze the success of the program in terms of test scores and similar data, those who have worked with the program closely feel that it is a genuine success and should not only be continued but also expanded, and should have the full support of the California Legislature.

But what connection, if any, exists between all our efforts to improve early childhood education and the causes of crime? What is the basic or underlying reason for all the difficulties our educators have been having in the schools thruout the United States? In spite of heroic efforts by dedicated teachers and experienced school administrators, there have been falling test scores, failing students, semi-literate high school graduates, dropouts, and hordes of incompetent students turned away from our colleges and universities because of communication problems. They simply have not learned to read or write well enough to assimilate the essentials of "higher education." The basic question remains, "why are there so many failures, so many dropouts, so many who simply have not mastered the essentials of grammar school education?"

Is there an answer? Yes, there is, and to nearly all concerned, from the bewildered first grader to the superintendent of schools, the answer is a real shocker!! Few will believe or accept the plain truth! In a word, the answer is so simple that no one will believe what serious students of language and linguistics have been trying to tell our colleges of education for the past 200 years! The answer is S P E L L I N G ! ! !

No language on earth is as badly spelled or as confusing to those who are in the beginning phases of learning English, our potpourri of many tongues —Greek, Latin, French, German, Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic and Middle English —plus at least a dozen additions from several other hybrid languages borrowed at random as our language developed over the last 900 years. [\[10\]](#) Altho many have mastered it, millions have not. At present we have in the U.S. at least 20 million who are functionally illiterate —read very little, and with poor comprehension —and perhaps twice as many who are actually afraid to try for fear of criticism or ridicule of their defective grammar or confused spelling.

"To most children," says Abraham F. Citron, Professor of Educational Psychology at Wayne State University, Detroit, "our spelling is a house of horrors." [\[11\]](#) Dr. Citron became interested in spelling difficulties when his students, (most of whom were teachers), reported wide-spread classroom problems with reading and spelling. Citron says, "So accustomed to it are we that we do not perceive our spelling as irrational, difficult, deceptive, clumsy, frustrating, wasteful. . . , but it is, especially so to our children. . . Our child-defeating spelling is one of the basic sources of discouragement and failure, aiding the transformation of many children into psychological failures or physical dropouts." He goes on to point out that, "Millions of student hours are spent on spelling, millions of dollars are spent on teaching time, yet the results are quite poor. Most students dislike spelling, many students abhor it:" And he could have added: most adults are afraid of it, preferring not to write rather than be subject to ridicule, rather than become the objects of mockery and endure the derision of those pedants and academicians who insist that spelling, per se, is proof of an educated person.

The writings of prominent authors and men of literary renown attest to their difficulties with English spelling, including such illustrious greats as Wm. Shakespeare, Robert Burns, G. B. Shaw, and Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). [\[12\]](#) The latter strongly urged the adoption of simplified spelling,

and implored the educators of his time to remove the burden of our confused and inconsistent spelling from our children as well as those who sought to master "our confused and inconsistent spelling of common English words."

Hundreds of more recent writers, linguists, publishers, editors, and teachers have urged spelling reform. To cite a few examples: Wm. D. Whitney, Professor and Chief Editor of the Century Dictionary, voiced a general feeling when he said, "It is the generations of children to come who appeal to us to save them from the affliction which we have endured and forgotten." And E. O. Vaile, Editor and Publisher, Chicago, (1901), ". . . Our accursed spelling, what to do with it?". More recently, Dr. John Downing, who conducted the experimental teaching project at the London Institute of Education comparing the teaching of reading with our Traditional Orthography and with a regular spelling system, Pitman's initial teaching alphabet, says, "The unequivocal conclusion is that the traditional orthography of English is a seriously defective instrument for the early stages of reading and writing instruction. As long as this traditional orthography is used in the early years of schooling in English-speaking countries, children's learning of reading and writing is bound to be much less efficient than it can be with a simplified and regularized writing-system such as the i.t.a. Of this there can no longer be any doubt." [12a]

The list of those who have advocated spelling reform is endless, and continues to grow. [13, 14, 15, 16, 17]

"So why hasn't something been done about it?", any reasonable person might fairly ask? In fact much has been done and more is being done to modernize and improve spelling in various parts of the English-speaking world—except in the United States! Also, in recent years several enlightened countries have reformed and simplified their spelling, including Holland, Turkey, Norway, Finland, the U.S.S.R., and China. [21, 22]

In some English-speaking areas, notably Australia, there is *Spelling Action*, a thoughtful publication promoting the reform of spelling in English by means of a gradual and reasonable step-by-step process. This introduction by simple conservative steps, is called "SR-1," meaning Spelling Reform, step 1. Harry Lindgren, Editor and publisher of *Spelling Action*, is successfully demonstrating—at least to open-minded readers—that spelling progress can be made and accepted without disrupting either the teaching of reading or the usual reading process. [18]

Lindgren's success, altho not wholeheartedly accepted by the least progressive elements of the Australian educational heirarchy, is meeting with enthusiastic acceptance by forward thinking educators and government officials. [19] And even more importantly, the teachers who voluntarily voted to use SR-1 and the students who are adopting this simple reform are not only happy with the change, but are looking forward to subsequent advances which will implement better communications and simpler spelling as a major step towards improved literacy.

Lindgren's SR-1 involves only very minor changes, affecting the spelling of less than 350 generally used words. The initial spelling changes relate only to the sound of the so-called "short e" sound, as in *bed* and *bet*, so that such words as *head*, *spread* and *ready*, would be written as they are sounded. The unsounded 'a' would be omitted, so the spelling would become *hed*, *spred*, and *redy*. This minor change would be applied to many commonly used words, such as *said*, *any* and *many*, which would be spelled as they are sounded, (phonetically): *sed*, *eny*, and *meny*. More truly phonetic spelling could be one of the many advantages of reformed spelling, so that "if you can say it, you can spell it," without hesitation, uncertainty, or the loss of time in going to the dictionary.

Unfortunately we have thousands of English words which are spelt one way and pronounced quite differently. Small children and foreigners are greatly confused, if not harmfully frustrated, by the queer spelling of such words as: *enough*, *though*, *thought*, *bough*, *cough*, *dough* and *plough*. Then there are the various silent letters—the "dumb b", as in *crumb*, *dumb*, *numb* and *thumb*; the "kooky k", as in *know*, *knee*, *knob*, and *knife*; the "woozy w", as in *write*, *wrong* and *wrestle*; the "confused

c", as in *cat, kitty, city, candy, center, sender, certain, curtain, bicycle, icicle* and *cement, science*. There are thousands of others to confuse the kindergartner, the primary pupil, and the many others who would like to learn English if it were not so illogically spelt and inconsistently pronounced. In addition to the few examples cited above, there is an almost infinite number of vowel variations, combinations, digraphs and diphthongs, homophones and homographs to confuse and frustrate the students of English.

To effect a complete reform of spelling in a single step or one "great leap forward" would be difficult, if not impossible. Altho quite logical and certainly very desirable from many standpoints, a total or general reform would be about as difficult to accomplish as an overnight switch to the Metric system-. Yet, we are converting to the Metric system of weights, measures, volumes, lengths, temperature and all scientific units, and this will be accomplished according to an orderly plan and schedule. Metric values and measurements have been taught in the public schools far many years, and altho we will work with a dual system for many years to come, there will eventually be a complete changeover or "reform" of our system of measurements and numerical expression of values. Our school children will find metrics easier to learn than the cumbersome English system, and much easier to use. By the time the new generation becomes adult, in another 10 or 20 years, the new system will be established in general use, and the die-hards who have opposed it will have come to appreciate its simplicity and common sense application to their daily lives.

The step-by-step SR-1 approach to spelling reform, like our gradual changeover to metrics, seems the most practical and reasonable process of accomplishing acceptance by the reading public, the writers, and the teaching profession. Where it has been tried, (in the Australian schools), [\[20\]](#) SR-1 has already achieved the enthusiastic support of teachers and students alike. By eliminating spelling problems, (tho not all of them by any means), the teacher's work is made easier, and by avoiding illogical inconsistencies the learning process becomes less frustrating for the children. Hopefully there will eventually be fewer illiterates, improved literacy, better readers, and many less dropouts. But all this will require time, and the first put of the process will be to prove that spelling reform is not only logical and reasonable, but that it is a possibility in terms of practical change. [\[21\]](#)

In summary, what is the connection between spelling, reading, literacy, and the *causes of crime*? First, it was shown conclusively that personal literacy, the ability to read and write effectively, is essential to getting a job. It was then made clear that getting an honest job is essential to earning a *legal* living. And since communicative ability is an essential element of literacy, a satisfactory knowledge of spelling -which is basic to both writing and reading --is the basis upon which we build the foundations of communication beyond simple speech. It has been pointed out that many poor spellers have become successful, and in certain spectacular instances this is acknowledged to be true. But in a great majority of cases, poor spelling is related to, if not the cause of, a low level of literacy and generally poor communicative ability. And both contribute to difficulty in obtaining and holding acceptable and legitimate employment. We have, therefore, a definite connection, a direct cause-and-effect relationship expressed in the words of Judge Charles M. Phillips of Pinellas County, Florida, "Illiteracy, A Short-cut to Crime." [\[1\]](#)

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*[Spelling Reform Anthology §21.2 pp275,278 in the printed version]*  
*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 p20 in the printed version]*

## 7. Our Readers Write

**Charles M. Phillips, Jr, Circuit judge,**  
Pinellas County Courthouse,  
Clearwater, Fla.

**Harvie Barnard**

Dear Judge Phillips.

In response to yours of June 17, I am still looking forward hopefully to receive your comments and appraisal of my essay on "Causes of Crime: 1; Illiteracy and Its Roots."

Your limited time for reading is certainly appreciated, as I realize your work load must be stupendous and exhausting.

I trust that reference to your thinking along the lines of illiteracy and crime and their close relationship is generally quite close to my point of view, and that you would not disprove of my essay. Several persons, including one editor, have expressed an interest in it, and I would like to feel in good conscience in releasing it for publication.

Trusting that I may have the pleasure of hearing from you further,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

-o0o-

### **The Judge's Reply**

**Dear Mr. Barnard:**

**Judge Charles M. Phillips, Jr.**

I indeed apologize for taking so long to respond to your kindness of Sept. 14 regarding your essay, "Causes of Crime," which is returned herewith.

Certainly I approve of the portions of your essay that refer to me, as being accurate, and you are certainly free to describe the experience that I had either in your own words, or in the type of quotations that you use.

Yesterday quite incidentally, I sat under a tree by a river bank with a group of casual young acquaintances, one of whom I discovered I had sentenced to the State prison a few years ago. 'We discussed illiteracy as a cause of crime. He heartily agreed and added that an inmate soon discovers which inmates have a chance of success after release and which do not. There is a direct relationship between literacy and opportunity for rehabilitation and success.

You have my profound best wishes for your campaign toward literacy.

Sincerely,

-o0o-

## Emphasis on Communication

Dear Judge Phillips:

Harvie Barnard

I deeply appreciate your kind and appreciative letter of Aug. 23rd.

Thank you most heartily for your permission to use the quotes which I took the liberty to employ in my article on "Causes of Crime" which you read and returned.

Your latter paragraph describing your communication with the young man who had served time in a state prison was indeed a substantial piece of "evidence" (in a sense), supporting the concept of literacy as a basis for rehabilitation and success. I feel that truth of this belief —perhaps I could say "FACT" —should be spread far and wide, & should be taught as a fundamental concept of education!

Also thank you for your good wishes for my campaign toward literacy!

Perhaps I could prevail upon your good offices to support this program even further? As in scripture, "Be Ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

You might be interested in furthering the idea of placing greater emphasis on communication in *all* our schools, as well as in our rehabilitative institutions? Perhaps you may discover an opportunity and a means to do this?

It has been a true pleasure to correspond with you, and I trust that this relationship may be productive of some lasting good. Yours very sincerely,

-o0o-

[*Spelling Reform Anthology §3.3 p54 in the printed version*]

[*Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 p20 in the printed version*]

## Comments on Viewpoints on Spelling Reform

Editor, *10 Second Reviews*,  
*Reading Horizons*,  
Reading Center & Clinic,  
Western Michigan Univ.,  
Kalamazoo, MI.

Newell W. Tune

(SR-1, 2 used)

Dear Friend:

Your conclusion in your *10 Second Review* in your Summer issue, on Dr. Betts' article, "Viewpoints IV: On Spelling Reform, in our magazine of Spring 1976, is *not* the conclusion to Betts' article. The intent of his article was to present *both* sides of the controversy and to start a discussion (pro and con) on the merits of the subject. You must have mis-interpreted the conclusion because you yourself were not in favor of reform. Betts' conclusion only stated that the differing opinions held by the writers quoted were different because of the differing backgrounds of those quoted. Please read it again.

Surely you can see that the practicality of any reform will depend to a large extent on its extent — and again this will bring varying opinions.

A thoroughgoing alphabetic reform which introduces all the additional new letters needed (about 18 or 19) to make a one-for-one alphabet may be considered impractical by many people. Certainly it would cause wide-spread disruption of our present style of writing as well as the need for new typefaces, typewriters, etc. Therefore, it would be unacceptable to most of the public.

However, a minimal (and gradual) type of reform such as is being suggested in Australia, has captured the enthusiasm of the teachers to such an extent that at their convention last Jan. they passed a resolution endorsing the teaching of SR-1 in the schools. Even the use of SR-2, SR-3 or SR-4 would cause so little disruption of our present spelling that the general public would probably tolerate it good-naturedly.

As you may have noticed, this is written in one kind of minimal reform. This goes beyond SR-1 in that it also eliminates the unnecessary silent terminal e when it wrongly indicates that the previous vowel is long, as in hav.

This type of reform was discussed in our Spring 1970 issue, which should be in your files. Although these two features would change the spelling of almost 2000 different words (and it was used here), it shows that these words do not occur so frequently in running text as to present any disruption of the reading habits of literate adults. Did it do yours? Therefore, I ask you, don't you think that a spelling reform to this extent is practical? Yours sincerely,

-o0o-

*[Spelling Progress Bulletin Fall 1976 p20,1 in the printed version]*

## **8. Book Review by Newell W. Tune**

Pauk, Walter, *How to Study in College (2nd edition)*, 1974. Houghton, Mifflin Co, pp. 274.

College is a big, new experience, and for many students bewildering. This book stresses practical techniques which in the author's experience with thousands of students at universities and two year colleges, have been found to work. My son, who is starting college this month, found it especially helpful in guiding his thoughts toward good habits, not only for studying, but also for organizing his time to make the best use of it. Good habits include forming the ability to concentrate on what is being studied, combating the destructive foe: forgetting, methods for remembering --for studying: skimming, note-taking, how to improve reading skills, how to speak effectively, how to arrange and put these thoughts on paper, facing an examination with confidence, writing good, interesting papers, and how to do research in a subject for a paper.

All-in-all, we found this book a well-arranged, dynamic, analytical and very useful book for not only college students but also for teachers who want to advance their skills in the subjects mentioned above.