Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978

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

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Editorial note: One of the 4 dozen jingles gathered by Dr. Dewey in his *Rimes Without Reason,* published by the S.R.A.

Pure disdeign

A King who began on his reign
Exclaimed with a feeling of peign,
"Tho I'm legally heir,
No one here seems to ceir
That I haven't been born with a breign."

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 p2 in the printed version]

1. Let's Write What We Say, by Charles Gerras*

There's much talk these days, that English will soon take over as the major language of the world, through sheer economic and political force. Some Americans, particularly international businessmen, would be delighted to see this happen; others who feel that Americans are already too insular, culturally, deplore the possibility. But right now the discussion is academic. Before English can realize its commercial and diplomatic potential internationally, the influence it has as a spoken language must be translated into the written word. That is where the difficulty lies.

In a recent letter to *Quinto Lingo* Ben D. Wood, Director of Columbia University's Bureau of Collegiate Educational Research, explained the problem quite clearly:

"English, in its various 'pidgin' forms, is already the nearest to a world-wide spoken language. For nearly 400 years, a number of far-seeing scholars in England, America and other nations have been trying to make English orthography feasible as a world-wide *written* language.

"Our present orthography, which Noah Webster correctly described as 'vicious', is not even feasible for children or adults in English-speaking countries. During Mr. MacNamara's tenure in the Pentagon, he conscripted 1,800,000 draftees; but he had to reject 600,000 (33%) as too illiterate for any kind of military training. About the same % holds for England and other English-speaking countries. The reason is not lack of intelligence, in pupils or teachers, but our crazy, idiotic spelling which includes over 560 ways of spelling the 40 or so unitary sounds of English.

"Last year I received a personal letter from the president of a publishing firm that had just spent over a million dollars developing an elementary school reading series, asking me to endorse his product, by which he guaranteed 'to teach each child the sound of each letter' in less than the usual time. I agreed to endorse it if he would satisfactorily answer one question: 'Which sound of which letter?'

"To help him apprehend the meaning of my question, I gave him this sentence: 'The fate of the fat father was to fall through the thin ice; the accident was fatal, as so many are.'

"The letter *a* occurs nine times, but is sounded in seven different ways. The digraph *th* has two pronunciations, of which neither sounds like *t* in *ten* or the *h* in *hen, s* is *z*, *c* is either *k* or *s*, *i* is either *i*t or *i*ce, etc. This simple sentence is only a minuscule sample of our many spelling idiocies. . . "

Dr. Wood makes a good cause. *Quinto Lingo*'s concern is not so much for the popularity of written English thruout the world, where its adoption is not essential, but we are concerned about the hundreds of thousands of Americans with serious reading problems which can almost invariably be traced to the capricious orthography of the English language. Many of these people, otherwise quite bright, are frozen out of their job potential, and barred from the intellectual satisfaction offered by the world's greatest literature, merely because of the antiquated mechanics of the way we write English.

New proposals for phonetic spelling of English have come along steadily over the years, advanced by such luminaries as Teddy Roosevelt, Andrew Carnegie, Geo. Bernard Shaw. Apparently the English- speaking-world was not mature enough to consider them seriously at the time. Are we mature enough to consider them now?

Reprinted from *Quinto Lingo,* vol. 9, nos. 8-9, Aug,/Sept. 1971.

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Talks Given at the Annual Meeting of the Educational Records Bureau, Sponsored by the Phonemic Spelling Council*

* Cleveland, Oct. 31, 1974.

Speakers:
Dr. Godfrey Dewey, Hon: Chairman of Phonemic Spelling Council
Dr. George H. Baird, Founder, President and Chief Executive Officer of the ERCA, Cleveland, Ohio
Dr. Brandon B. Sparkman, Supt., Richland County School District One, Columbia, S.C.

2. Introductory remarks written by the late Dr. Richard S. Levine,

Pres. Phonemic Spelling Council and Vice Pres. Educational Testing Service and Operating Officer of ERB programs, who was to have presided at this session.

W.E.S. is an alternative initial learning medium (I.L.M.) to help assure the "Right to Read" for more beginners at all age and grade levels, and to reduce the proportions of non-readers in our total population at all age levels.

The ERB had a significant part in introducing to our country the Pitman Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.), when in 1962 Dr. Arthur E. Trailer, then the Executive Director of the ERB, invited Sir James Pitman, K.B.E., and Dr. John A. Downing to be the featured speakers at the annual fall conference of the ERB. Their addresses, illustrated with slides, marked a high point in the history of the ERB annual conferences. That session was an SRO meeting. We of the present administrative staff of the ERB are very proud of that example of the innovative spirit that has been the mainspring of the ERB from its founding in 1927, and which we confidently hope will continue as long as the ERB may live.

We have arranged the program of this session of the ERB conference in response to requests from many school leaders for more information on the World English Spelling Alphabet. Frequently referred to as WES, as promulgated by Dr. Godfrey Dewey, about which they have learned some details from the publications of the Phonemic Spelling Council (PSC) under the dynamic leadership of its distinguished former President, Prof. Emmett Albert Betts, Ph.D., Research Prof. at the Univ. of Miami, Fla., who has long been a prominent leader in all phases of the work of the International Reading Assoc.

A decade of using the Pitman i.t.a. for beginners has thoroughly established the multiple pedagogical values of a phonemically consistent and compatible I.L.M. alphabet, especially when the pupils have access to a typewriter to use as a supplement to the pencil for putting their thoughts on paper.

For this pedagogically strategic contribution of the Pitman i.t.a., Sir James has earned our heartfelt thanks, and also the gratitude of millions of children now living, and of still unborn generations who will not have to struggle with the twin roadblocks of traditional orthography and the pencil as the exclusive means for written self-expression by pupils.

In presenting WES at this session, we ardently hope that the movement so auspiciously inaugurated by the Pitman i.t.a. will be strongly enhanced, and that our efforts to help insure the "Right to Read" to as many children as possible, as soon as possible, will be more effective by acquainting you and other educators of the availability of an alternative initial learning medium which may appeal to

schools that, for whatever reason, have not responded to the opportunity afforded by the Pitman i.t.a.

I speak for officers, trustees, and members and all friends of the Phonemic Spelling Council, when I say that we are all very happy at our good fortune to have at this session of the ERB annual conference, as our first presentation, as address written by such an eminent and Promethean leader as Dr. Godfrey Dewey.

We may say that Dr. Dewey grew up with the American organized effort to deal with the problem that is central to the interests of the Phonemic Spelling Council. His father was Dr. Melvil Dewey, who invented the Dewey Decimal System of book classification which is still used inmost large libraries, and also founded the first Schools of Library Science, notably those in Albany and at Columbia Univ, and also founded the Spelling Reform Assoc. in 1876, only ten years before his son Godfrey was born.

Dr. Godfrey Dewey shared his father's life-long interest in spelling reform, and became active in the movement as early as 1906, when he wrote his first important essay on the subject, again in 1909 when he delivered a speech at the Harvard Commencement on the subject, and more intensively in 1921 when, after the funds donated by Andrew Carnegie to the Simplified Spelling Board were exhausted, Dr. Dewey took over as Secretary of the SSB; and later, after his father's death in 1931, he also became Secretary of the S.R.A.

Still later, in 1946, when the two previous organizations merged to form the Simpler Spelling Assoc., which concentrated on World English Spelling under that name, he became Secretary of the SSA, until 1971 when, largely by his initiative, the Phonemic Spelling Council was organized, so that his *active* involvement with the problem spans a period of at least 50 years.

There is a point I would like to make which I am sure Dr. Dewey would approve: A phonemic notation as an Initial Learning Medium is a logical evolution from spelling reform; and the spelling reform roots of WES go back at least to the Ripman and Archer proposals to the British Simplified Spelling Society for their New Spelling in 1910.

In a recent letter, Dr. Dewey mentions that Prof. Zachrisson of Uppsala Univ. developed his Anglic notation, which was very similar to the SSA New Spelling, and which had been used with conspicuous success in teaching English to Swedes as a second language. But these two early notations were improved by the international conference of 1930. Dr. Dewey modestly says that in that conference he was distinctly the junior member; but he cannot deny that all members of that and other conferences had extensively used his seminal study, published by the Harvard Univ. Press in 1923 under the title *Relativ Frequency of English Speech* Sounds, in the evolution of WES, which (he insists) was a collective product of scholars. His modesty casts a brighter light on the image of a creative scholar.

Unfortunately, Dr. Dewey's failing eyesight prevents his being with us in person, but we are happy to welcome Dr. Helen Bonnema, the Secretary of the Phonemic Spelling Council, who will read Dr. Dewey's highly instructive address.

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3. An Alternative Initial Learning Medium, World English Spelling (WES), by Godfrey Dewey, Ed.D.*

* Deceased Oct. 18, 1977.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to take advantage of your broad-minded and far-seeing invitation to bring to your attention an initial learning medium, World English Spelling, commonly referred to as WES, which offers certain important characteristics which may appeal to you. In a comparatively large and diversified group such as is represented by the member schools of the ERB, there will be, in addition to a few who may be using Sir James Pitman's Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t a.) and others who may have considered but not adopted it, a considerable proportion to whom the very idea of a phonemic notation as an initial learning medium is unfamiliar. Our task this afternoon, therefore, must be twofold: first to call your attention to the important advantages inherent in any soundly conceived phonemic notation for English, sufficiently simple, explicit, and compatible with traditional orthography, often referred to as T.O.; and second, to point out the particular advantages which we believe are offered by WES.

Before proceeding with either aspect of our topic, the highest possible tribute should be paid to Sir James Pitman, grandson of Sir Isaac Pitman, whose Initial Teaching Alphabet (i.t.a.) was introduced in this country, largely thru the educational statesmanship of Dr. Ben Wood, by just such a meeting of the Educational Records Bureau as this, in 1962. The i.t.a. was a giant step in the evolution of initial learning media, which began at least as far back as 1851, and millions of children in Great Britain and a somewhat lesser number in this country are better readers and writers because of i.t.a. Personally I have known Jim Pitman since 1936, long before he was Sir James, and have been associated with him in other enterprises, and count him among my closest personal friends. We agree on so many basic issues that we have learned to disagree amicably on one or two without impairing that friendship. One of those friendly disagreements appears in the course of today's discussion.

It has been recognized for centuries that the complex irregularities of our traditional orthography (T.O., for short) have been a chief factor in retarding the education of the English-speaking child as compared with children in countries such as Spain, Italy or modern Russia, which enjoy a simple and regular phonemic spelling. Educators have assumed, however, that since there was no immediate prospect that the present adult generation would accept any significant degree of spelling reform, there was nothing to do but to accept our present English spelling as one of the given conditions, the only possible medium for reading instruction. This plausible but erroneous assumption has resulted in a proliferation of *reading methods of every description, all striving to sweep the difficulties of English spelling under the rug, where unfortunately they bulk too large to be disposed of in so summary a fashion.*

Most methods, of whatever type, take for granted as a matter of course that the medium of instruction for beginning reading and writing is T.O. This assumption results in a large proportion of effort being concerned either with the teaching of spelling or, more broadly, with the problems created by the irregularities of English spelling. Such efforts are dealing chiefly with symptoms, not the disease, and resemble nothing so much as efforts to build a modern emergency hospital at a grade crossing instead of eliminating the crossing. The idea that children might learn two alphabets

more easily than one, especially when the goal is mastery of the second, does not, at first thought, commend itself to common sense. Nevertheless, evidence has been accumulating for more than a century that normal, native English-speaking children, at least, can be taught to read and write using *only* a substantially phonemic notation until they have acquired a considerable degree of fluency, and thereafter make a complete transition to T.O., in substantially less time than by any established method using T.O. only, and with markedly superior results, judged strictly by current conventional tests and standards. Such a phonemic notation is what is currently being referred to as an initial learning medium or I.L.M.

Evidence for the significantly superior results to be attained by an I.L.M. goes back at least to 1851. A recent study by Bothe deals with six of the most important 19th-century experiments, using two quite different alphabets. In view of the uniformly impressive successes reported from so many experiments, going back more than a century in both the United States and Great Britain, it is pertinent to ask why none of these projects survived and took root. For one familiar with the problems of introducing an educational speciality, especially a revolutionary speciality, into the schools, the answers are not hard to find. For this particular revolution, a phonemic notation as an I.L.M., here are some of the more important reasons:

1. The inherent prima facie unreasonableness of the basic idea that to teach a child two complete systems of reading and writing – first, one he will not continue to use and then the one he must use thereafter – will give better results more quickly than to teach the one he must continue to use in the first place.
2. The natural fear that the transition to T.O. might prove confusing or ineffective, a fear that dies hard, even today, tho by now it should certainly be moribund.
3. Lack of standardized tests and objective measurements to back up subjective and therefore controversial judgements.
4. Defects and deficiencies of the various media employed, which in most cases fell far short of the *compatibility of i.t.a. with T.O.*
5. Lack of a supply of teachers adequately familiar with the phonemic facts of English, or means for training such teachers, once the original protagonist of each project dropped out of the picture.
6. Paucity of teaching materials, costly and difficult for any publisher to produce for a limited and highly problematic market. Only a strong publisher, moved by conviction as well as the tenuous hope of ultimate profit, could have hoped to take on and overcome successfully all the other obstacles involved.
7. The dead-weight pressure of conformity, which called for stark courage as well as flaming conviction for a school board superintendent or principal to shoulder the overcoming of the foregoing obstacles instead of continuing in the safe, well-trodden paths, which are unlikely to be criticized even tho they are ineffectual.
8. Finally, last but by no means least, the active hostility of *vested interests,* intellectual as well as financial – a phenomenon by no means confined to the 19th century. The motivation of a commercial publisher who sees his market for a highly profitable textbook series-representing a considerable investment – threatened is sufficiently obvious, and we are all familiar with brass-knuckle tactics in that field. There is also, however, a more poignant intellectual vested interest: that of the educator-author who has developed his whole educational philosophy on the major premise that the subject matter of elementary reading and writing is traditionally spelled English, and has perhaps authored a successful reading series based on one or another of the various "emergency hospital techniques". The shock of having the rug pulled out from under his major premise, thereby largely invalidating much of the superstructure, is not

conducive to dispassionate educational statesmanship, and when it touches his pocket nerve as well, via diminished royalties, the results in too many cases are all too predictable.

In my correspondence with Bothe, he agreed that these eight reasons completely disposed of any generalized conclusion that it was for lack of effectiveness that the six projects which he had investigated were discontinued.

In this century, Harrison reports, among others, on experiments in 16 schools in England and Scotland using an earlier form of the British New Spelling, a no-new-letter notation of the type of WES, using incredibly limited teaching materials-three thin paperback pamphlets and the black board – with no standardized tests a control groups, and reporting purely subjective judgements by teachers, headmasters and school inspectors, which nevertheless were uniformly favorable. More recently Sir James Pitman's i.t.a. has yielded a mass of evidence, both from demonstrations and from controlled experiments under unimpeachable conditions, far outweighing all that has gone before in favor of an initial learning *medium* applicable to any *method* of instruction.

It was in 1946 that the Spelling Reform Assoc., founded in 1876 with my father, Melvil Dewey, as Secretary, and the Simplified Spelling Board, founded in 1906 by virtue of gifts from Andrew Carnegie, were merged to form the Simpler Spelling Assoc., which immediately issued the first draft of World English Spelling under that name, and shifted its emphasis to the middle ground of a no-new-letter notation, "Standardizing the Roman Alphabet," a position which the British Simplified Spelling Society has maintained consistently from the beginning. Also, Sir James confirms that it was in 1946 that I convinced him it was a largely futile waste of effort to seek to change the reading, writing and spelling habits of the present adult generation, most of whom are not even aware of the number and nature of the sounds of their own language, even tho they might speak it correctly, and thus turned his thoughts in the direction which eventuated in the Augmented Roman Alphabet, shortly renamed the Initial Teaching Alphabet. It is perhaps of historical interest that I first learned of the Initial Teaching Alphabet in Sir James London office well before its first publication and we fought a pitched battle, metaphonically speaking, over whether he should use for his initial teaching medium a no-new-letter notation such as the British New Spelling, essentially similar to WES, or a new essentially one-sign, one-sound notation which involved adding some 20 new letters to the Roman alphabet (and hence the name Augmented Roman Alphabet). I lost, of course, and a few years later admitted to Sir James that under the then existing circumstances he was probably right, since without the "gimmick" of the new letters he probably would not have gotten the indispensable permission of the Ministry of Education to experiment in the schools, and the project would never have gotten off the ground. For the long pull, however, I am personally more than ever firmly convinced that far the foreseeable future a thoroly researched no-new-letter notation incorporating all available experience, including that of i.t.a., offers certain important advantages, some of which ore cited on page 8 of the folder which should be in your hands.

When, at your 1962 meeting, Sir James Pitman and the research director, Dr. John Downing, introduced i.t.a. to this country, they had already had a year of teaching it in Great Britain, albeit with considerably more limited teaching materials than later became available, and could show you slides and films and quote statistics that were striking and impressive. In introducing WES at this meeting, we cannot do the same, for to provide abundant teaching materials, fairly comparable with those used by the i.t.a. program, would require initial funding, whether by federal or foundation grants, of some $ 500,000 – an amount which, altho substantial, is a pittance as compared with grants which are constantly being made for far less important objectives, far less effectively

explored. Exploratory efforts are of course already under way. Meanwhile, we are presenting the case for WES in two parts, the first of which, as I explained at the beginning, is the case for the superiority of any soundly conceived initial learning medium as compared with any reading program, whether of the code emphasis or meaning-emphasis type, which confines itself to the medium of T.O. Our next speaker, Dr. George H. Baird, founder and President of the Educational Research Council of America, will present important evidence for this aspect, drawn largely from the recent experience of much the most successful initial learning medium to date Sir James Pitman's i.t.a.

So much for past experience with initial learning media in general. The particular advantages offered by WES will perhaps be clearest if we first note the important features in which i.t.a. and WES are in complete agreement.

The phonemic foundation of each is precisely the 40 sounds distinguished by Pitman Shorthand, commonly classed as 24 consonants, 12 vowels and 4 diphthongs, ignoring such sophistications as whether the name sounds of *a* and *o* are diphthongs or whether *w* and *y* are semivowels. These 40 sounds are the only phonemic basis for writing English which has been proved in practical experience by millions of writers for more than a century.

Both i.t.a. and WES use only a single letter-form approximating lower-case print (manuscript writing) far each symbol – a pioneering decision by Sir James of great importance.

Each maintains distinctions which a large number of cultivated speakers do make, even tho another large number of cultivated speakers do not make them, e.g.:

1. Writing postvocalic /r./, which "r-keepers" pronounce but which "r-dropper" omit (as in far) or reduce to schwa (as in *near).*
2. Writing *wh* (for /hw/) altho some speakers, especially southern British, do not distinguish it from /w/.
3. Distinguishing the vowel of *father* and *calm* from the vowel of *bother* and comma, as in most British pronunciation, altho general American pronunciation does not make this distinction. This has the added advantage that (except before *r* and occasionally after *w*) it follows quite closely the T.O. spellings with *a* and *o* respectively.

Each makes some provision for the sound of schwa (as in *a*bout, f*u*rther, dat*a*), usually omitted in shorthand writing, which must be provided for in longhand, typing, or print. i.t.a. does this by an additional character (the tailed *r,* ur) which is used as a diacritic to signal that the preceeding vowel is to be pronounced as schwa. WES accomplishes this by simple general rules for vowel retention or substitution in unstressed syllables.

Because the problem of transition from phonemic writing to T.O. has always been the chief bugbear for those who have not had experience with it, Sir James Pitman, in the interest of maximum compatibility, incorporated in i.t.a. a number of departures from strictly phonemic writing, based on T.O. practice rather than phonemics. Actually the comparative ease of the transition has been one of the chief surprises in experience with i.t.a. Wes analyzed each of these departures from strictly phonemic writing and adopted the three whose influence on compatibility was statistically significant. These three, more fully described, with examples, on page 5 of your folder, are:

1. Writing a doubled consonant for a single sound where and only where (except far *rr* following a stressed short vowel) T.O. has a doubled consonant, including *ck* f or *T.O. ck.*
2. Writing c where, and only where, T.O. has c for the sound of k, including ck as above, and c where T.O. has *ch* for the sound of k. Note that cc in T.O. is sometimes pronounced cs, e.g., WES /accept/.
3. Writing the semi vowel y also for the unstressed shat vowel sound closely similar to i or *ee* where T.O. has y for that sound at the end of a word or root.

These and similar features were adopted from i.t.a. partly on their merits but partly so that WES should be, so fat as possible, a Roman alphabet paraphrase of i.t.a., introducing as few variables as possible other than the outstanding difference on which its distinctive advantages depend-the fact that it is a no-new-letter notation, keeping strictly within the limitations of the universally available Roman alphabet.

The most obvious advantages accruing from this are summarized in a single paragraph on page 8 of the folder which should be in your hands. Let me read this for emphasis and perhaps to provoke discussion.

'For the pupil, it obviates learning to read, and especially to write, 20 new characters which will shortly be abandoned. Also, if combined with the typewriter, the great possibilities of which were demonstrated by Wood and Freeman over 35 years ago, it encourages spontaneous writing, concurrently with reading, long before the pupil is mature enough to manipulate a pencil properly. For the teacher, it facilitates preparing, on any available typewriter, supplementary teaching material to meet a particular situation. For the school administration, the absence of unfamiliar characters should mitigate somewhat the problems created, with any reading program, by pupil mobility.'

Let me expand a little on the opportunities afforded by WES for use of the typewriter. The typewriter is not at all essential for adopting WES, but there is considerable evidence that it will more than pay its way in more rapid progress, especially in developing creative writing, which, as pointed out by Riemer, is so important and so largely neglected in most reading programs. This advantage, which has been demonstrated in most cases by the standard 'qwerty' keyboard, should be greatly enhanced by the availability of the new ASK (American Simplified Keyboard) typewriter – a slight modification, approved by Prof. Dvorak, of the enormously superior DSK (Dvorak Simplified Keyboard) which Prof. Dvorak devised nearly 40 years ago.

Our final speaker before discussion is one of the first public school superintendents to recognize the value of and use i.t.a. a dozen years ago. He is Dr. Brandon B. Sparkman, Supt. of Richland Co. School Dist. One, Columbia, So. Carolina.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp5–7 in the printed version]

4. The Time Has Come, by George H. Baird*

* President, Educational Research Council of America, Cleveland, Ohio.

I consider it a great honor to be on the same program with such a great scholar, clear thinker and articulate writer as the author (Dewey) of the address which has been read to you so effectively by the Secretary of the Phonemic Spelling Council, Dr. Helen Bonnema.

But I am sure you know that I accept the honor with humility because you know as well as I do that it is a formidable challenge to me, as it would be to even the most gifted of speakers, to rise even part of the way to the high level of such a creative thinker and gifted writer as Dr. Godfrey Dewey, whose seminal contributions began with his first book, published by the Harvard Univ. Press in 1923, again in 1956, and more recently in an up-dated two volume edition by the Columbia Teachers College Press. That book and Dr. Dewey's later publications give us the essential foundation of what is now recognized as the most promising solution to the hitherto intractable reading problem throughout the English-speaking world.

I share the admiration expressed by Dr. Dewey for the pioneering work done by Sir James Pitman in actually producing the first truly "English" alphabet that is both phonemically consistent, in that it has a symbol for each unitary speech sound of English and in which each symbol stands for one and only one of the speech sounds of English. Secondly, it is so compatible with English traditional orthography (T.O.) that it can be used as a transitional alphabet; transition is almost automatic with at least half of the children, and the rest learn with only a little extra time and assistance.

I feel doubly honored in being on the same program with the next speaker, Dr. Sparkman, who, in the best sense of the famous Southern phrasing, is a scholar and a gentleman and a judge of good innovation for the improved education of all the children of all our people. If in this and the next decade we can have the benign revolution in our whole schooling system that is so obviously needed, it will be achieved by the kind of administrative and leadership genius which is so clearly exhibited in Dr. Sparkman's career. If you have not already read his book, *Blueprint for* a *Brighter Child,* I urge you to do so.

The time has come for a realistic interpretation of all the valid evidence on the still intractable reading problem, evidence that has accumulated a *priori* and experimentally during the last 10 or 12 years.

Among the American thinkers who have been aware of the major root of our reading problem, we may mention, first, Noah Webster, who described our English spelling as vicious; Benjamin Franklin; and (during the latter part of the 19th century) the whole galaxy of linguistic experts and educational leaders, including at least one President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, and one of our most generous philanthropists, Andrew Carnegie, who contributed a quarter of a million dollars to the Spelling Reform Board. The list includes also at least three U.S. Commissioners of Education, of which the first was Wm. T. Harris, writing in 1893; another was Commissioner Francis Keppel who, in a widely quoted address he gave in 1964, said that adequate experimental evidence had shown conclusively that the major difficulty in learning to read was in the unreliable relationship between the letters of our alphabet and the speech sounds which they were supposed to represent; a little later, Commissioner James E. Allen issued his famous proclamation on "The Right to Read," in which he called attention to the substance of Commissioner Keppel's statement.

The significance of these statements from several of our wisest leaders and thinkers was ignored except by a very few individual leaders in our schools and teacher education colleges; theirs were like voices crying out in the wilderness.

Thus, the most costly per-capita schooling system in the world spawns more semi-literate graduates than our economic and political system can tolerate without danger of national disintegration. Functional illiteracy becomes all the more intolerable as our society requires greater technological skills in place of unskilled labor.

One of the most significant bits of evidence is in an article by Robert J. McNamara, published about the time he left his post as Secretary of Defense. He said that during his tenure 1,8000,000 draftees, after having passed the rigorous physical examination, had been tentatively accepted. Full acceptance, however, did not come until after these able-bodied men had taken a mental test which consisted of little more than a simple reading test. This test showed that 600,000 or 33% were too illiterate to be accept, able for any kind of military training or service; in other words, one-third of our draftees, age 19-27, were total or functional illiterates.

Our group in Cleveland has worked on what we hoped was a more up-to-date and effective curriculum. One topic which the curriculum workers thought would be especially appropriate was to let children know how writing had been developed and what a tremendous achievement it was in history.

As everyone knows, the first writing was in pictographs in Egypt and ideographs in China. The first gigantic step in the development of writing occurred about 3,000 B. C. with the Sumerians, who shifted from word-signs to the principle of phonetization. The second step was syllabic writing by the West Semitic peoples. The final big step, which we now consider best, was the Greek development of full alphabetic writing. (Archaeologists have recently dug up the tomb of a Phoenician king of 1,300 B. C. inscribed with a 22-letter alphabet which was obviously the source of the later Greek alphabet.)

The dynamic relationship between writing and civilization has been documented expertly by Prof. I. J. Gelb in his A Study of Writing, from which I quote:

> "James H. Breasted, the famous Chicago historian and orientalist, once said, 'The invention of writing and of a convenient system of records on paper has had a greater influence in uplifting the human race than any other intellectual achievement in the career of man.' To this statement might be added the opinions of many other great men. . . . who believe that the invention of writing formed the real beginning of civilization. These opinions are well supported by the statement so frequently quoted in anthropology: 'As language distinguishes man from animal, so writing distinguishes civilized man from barbarian. . . 'There is no need, however, to urge that the introduction of writing was *the* factor which was responsible for the birth of original civilizations. It seems, rather, that all the factors – geographic, social, economic – leading toward a full civilization simultaneously created a complex of conditions *which could not function properly without writing.* Or, to put it in other words: writing exists only in a civilization and a civilization cannot exist without writing. . . "Writing is so important in our daily life that I should be willing to say that our civilization could exist more easily without money, metals, radios, steam engines, or electricity than without writing."

The magnitude of "the reading problem in America" has been described by Dr. Elmer R. Kane as follows:

> "There are more than 19 million Americans over the age of 16 who can neither read or write this sentence. These are the illiterate. Then there are the functionally illiterate those who cannot function fully in our society; they have been defined by various criteria, but number at least 10 million and perhaps as many as 70 million. However the standards are set or defined, the problem is enormous and the cost to the economy and national welfare is simply staggering."
>
> "The extent of the problem, its scope, and the challenge to education and to society are portrayed by the fact that *juvenile delinquency is ten times more frequent among dropouts than among high school graduates,* and that approximately half of all unemployed young people between the ages of 16 and 21 are functionally illiterate."

After describing various strategies in the teaching of beginning reading, Dr. Kane proceeds to ask, "What does research really say?" and ends his summary with this statement:

> "There is an overabundance of materials today with too few learning verification tests of them available. A majority of schools still use basal readers as the basic program in the teaching of beginning reading. These basal readers represent a tremendous investment of capital by publishers with substantial profits to be reaped. Often publishers spend millions of dollars in developing or modifying their basal reading programs. We would expect these programs to have been exposed to rigorous research and validation procedures. This depth of research prior to publication simply does not occur. Hence the consumer is left adrift without a set of specifications to guide him."

This observation by such an eminent scholar as Dr. Kane is enough to give even the most thoughtless of our educators an anxious pause in their professional decision-making procedures. What Dr. Kane has said is tragically true; it implies one reason for the tragedy of millions of children who have never learned to read and write, and for the disappointments of teachers who have tried honestly, with hard' work, to teach children to read with such untested materials. Some of us, after 10 to 12 years of careful research with initial learning media such as i.t.a., have said that no other instruments have ever had such extensive pre-publication experimental verification. The truth of this statement is beyond question; but the mind-boggling fact is that all basal readers have had 100 or 1,000 times as much experimental verification as the transitional alphabets have had so far. The significant difference is that these try-outs have been made *after* publication, with the *uniform results of failure,* as the statistics mentioned at the beginning of this paper indicate. The time has come to face these facts, without fear or malice, but with complete and intellectual honesty.

As indicated earlier, we have during the last 10 or 12 years conducted researches using a phonemically consistent and compatible alphabet. We have verified several ideas which, if properly implemented, will in my opinion substantially solve the hitherto intractable reading problem. Our research findings may be summarized as follows:

(1) The major conclusion is that an initial learning medium (I.L.M.) consisting of an alphabet which includes at least one character or letter for each of the 40 or 41 unitary sounds of English speech, and in which each such letter or character shall have one and only one sound, enables more children to learn to read and write English more effectively and more pleasantly than any other known device so far offered for beginners in learning to read and write at all age and grade-levels.

(2) The second major conclusion is that if the typewriter is used as a supplement to the pencil, the efficiency of learning to write and read by beginners using such a phonemically consistent and compatible alphabet is increased to an almost unbelievable extent.
(3) A third major conclusion, from closely related researches, is that the process of learning to write and read can, and should, begin at least two or three years before age 6, so that many if not most children can learn to write and read as well and as early as they learn to talk and listen; and they can do this without anything approaching coercion of any sort from parents, tutors or teachers, or older siblings.
(4) The fourth conclusion is that such children will, more often than not, learn to ***enjoy writing and reading*** as much as they enjoy talking and listening. We did not anticipate this goal in the effective domain, but experiments with i.t.a. or the typewriter, separately or together, have revealed that this bonus has been achieved. It exhibits eloquently the multiple pedagogical values of self-initiated and success motivated independent study and learning.
(5) Finally, many school leaders, superintendents, and teachers indicate they prefer WES to i.t.a. not only for the various advantages listed by Dr. Dewey, but also because they believe that the growing practice of using peer tutors as teacher aids would be facilitated by using WES as an I.L.M., especially if typewriters are also used by beginners; thus increasing the significant pedagogical values of a practice that has been too long neglected even in our best schools at all grade levels. Peer-mediated learning has been shown to have great value not only for those tutored, but also for both tutors and their teachers. (See Dr. Peter S. Rosenbaum's book, ***Peer-Mediated Instruction,*** Teachers College Press, 1973.)

In my view, the concept of a phonemically consistent and compatible alphabet for beginners in learning to write and read is the most constructive contribution that has so far emerged from the Anglo-American spelling reform movement which began more than a century ago. Our debt to those who conceived and implemented this concept can be adequately recognized and repaid only by the quality of our efforts to pass on the benefits to as many children as possible as soon as possible.

The time has come for us to examine critically all the evidence, with the object of identifying the roadblocks that have prevented children from learning to write and read with ease and enjoyment. There is no possible escape from the conclusions as I have outlined them. I know that Dr. Einstein said that it is easier to split an atom than it is for a human being to separate himself from his prejudices. I say the time has come for us as educators to become governed by rationality, to throw out our prejudices, and get on with the job of solving our illiteracy problem by using on a nation-wide scale the only two implementations that have been proved by ample experimental evidence to enable beginners, at all age- and grade-levels, to learn to write and read English more efficiently and more pleasantly than any other devices used in our educational system.

The time has come for us to avoid devices and gimmicks whose long record of failure has been proved beyond reasonable doubt, and to adopt the I.L.M.-typewriter combination whose multiple pedagogical benefits and lower ultimate money costs are sorely needed as well as deserved by all beginners in learning to write and read English, and also by their teachers and parents and taxpayers, whose patience has already worn very thin by noting that so many of their children after 8, 10, or even 12 years of schooling cannot properly write a grammatical paragraph or read with any depth of understanding an expository paragraph, beyond the mere decoding of familiar words.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp7–9 in the printed version]

5. Problems and Promises in Reading Instruction, by Dr. Brandon B. Sparkman*

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When I addressed this assembly last year, I stated that the number one problem in education in America was the inability of educators to teach children to read well. The problem is no less severe today, and it is not likely that it will change greatly in the next decade. Neither is the problem of recent vintage, although the penalty for one's inability to read, or read well, has become greater in recent years and will increase in severity in the years ahead.

As compulsory attendance laws were enacted and enforced, the difficulty of teaching all children to read well became prominent. Still the impact of the problem was not felt until the electronic revolution came into its own, and jobs available to untrained laborers began to disappear rapidly. In an article in the Jan. 1946 issue of *Harper's Magazine,* a high school principal observed that "By testing any graduating class of any high school in the country, the skeptic can see for himself. . . that a third of the high school pupils cannot read on a fifth grade level. The pupils who compose this lower one-third are not to be confused with the mentally backward. The great majority of them are normal, wholesome, even talented, responsible youth."

Dr. James B. Conant stated, as late as 1960, that "In the eleventh and twelfth grades the very slow readers may obtain only slight benefit from full-time attendance at school. They are debarred from the practical courses by their slowness with the printed word and their lack of skill with numbers." His implication that reading retardation is justification for sending a substantial portion of America's high school pupils out to work indicates that many jobs were available to the functionally illiterate even at that period of time.

Today we are all aware that the person who drops out of high school is almost sure to be listed among the unemployed, and the United States Dept. of Labor has predicted that automation will reduce the unskilled labor market to 5% by next year. As our society becomes more complex and job skills more demanding, those who cannot read face an uncertain and difficult future. The ability to read serves as a foundation for all education and is essential to economic success. Yet, each year more than 700,000 young people drop out of public schools with reading levels which lag two or more years behind those who remain in school.

The problems faced by individuals with inadequate reading skills are shown by the following facts:

(1) Today in our major cities approximately ½ of the unemployed youth between the ages of 16 and 21 are functionally illiterate;
(2) a 1962 study in Cook County, Illinois, showed that 51% of the people receiving public assistance had a reading level below 5th grade (the chances are good that a current study would show a significant increase in this percentage); and
(3) in New Jersey the average reading level of the entire population of four of the major juvenile delinquency correctional facilities is at the fourth grade level.

The magnitude of the reading problem and its detrimental effect on youngsters prompted Chief Justice Warren Burger to say, "The percentage of inmates in all institutions who cannot read or write is staggering. . . The figures on illiteracy alone are enough to make one wish that every sentence imposed could include a provision that would grant release only when the prisoner had learned to read and write."

The grim facts speak for themselves. There are close to 19 million adults and 7 million children in the U.S.A. who are functionally illiterate, and masses of American students are still coming out of schools unable to function effectively because of reading deficiencies.

There are at least six major reasons for the magnitude of the reading problem in America. The reasons are these:

(1) belief that education is for all people,
(2) the existence of a technological society,
(3) lack of precise knowledge about reading readiness,
(4) fear of teaching cognitive skills to young people,
(5) phonemic inconsistency of our traditional English orthography, and
(6) disregard of the learning styles of individual children.

Americans believe in the worth of individuals and their right to participate in the educational process regardless of the ability to learn academic materials. The adoption of such a philosophy, which the speaker heartily endorses, assures the presence of numerous problems and a high degree of frustration in attempting to achieve an almost unreachable goal.

Americans live in a technological society which demands education and skills for an acceptable level of participation: The United States Dept. of Labor has predicted that the unskilled labor market will reach down to 5% by 1975. This fact indicates that the sociological setting must be added to the national philosophy as a pressure on the schools to teach every individual to read well. Little can be done to change the conditions which penalize those with inadequate reading skills or to change the nation's philosophy with regard to educating all of its people. Therefore, it behooves those in education to examine the variables which have impact upon the acquisition of reading skills and to modify current practices to more nearly meet the nation's goals.

Presently there is little precise knowledge among teachers of young children about the skills and concepts which lead to reading. To most people, readiness is a general term. Educators know that many experiences are necessary in order for one to read, and they go about the business of providing these experiences in a "grab-bag" fashion.

Too often children are placed in kindergarten and first grade readiness programs and are taught with little or no regard for previously acquired knowledge and skills. In many instances, all children in a classroom are subjected to the same experiences which, in most cases, are either too easy or too difficult for many of the individual children involved. I am reminded of an experience of one of my own children who, after three years of formal preschool work which had enabled him to write his numerals to 100 and to do simple addition and subtraction, was subjected to weeks of so-called readiness whereby he received instruction in recognizing and writing the numerals one to ten. The experience led to extreme frustration and dislike for school.

Too many of our schools, both public and independent, are guilty of this gross and inexcusable violation of the most basic rule that teaching must be individualized to become educational, and that teaching must be subordinated to learning at all age and grade levels.

It is possible to identify the exact skills and concepts required for reading and to determine which of these have and have not been mastered by individual children. Once this determination has been made, it becomes a rather simple task to focus on the unlearned skills at a level appropriate for the individual child or for groups of children with similar needs. Time does not have to be wasted giving children unneeded experiences. Materials for assessing prereading skills and for assuring that appropriate skills and concepts are taught, are available now and are in use in several school

districts in the nation. The matter of preparing children to read should no longer be a *guessing game.* The precise and appropriate skills and concepts which are known to be prerequisite to learning to read, should be taught to children of any age level with confidence. A rational and compatible alphabet, plus an ASK typewriter as a supplement to the frustratingly slow, laborious and esthetically disappointing pencil as the exclusive instrument for written self-expression by children could make the acquisition of writing and reading skills easier and more enjoyable.

Fear of teaching content of a cognitive nature to young children has been deeply instilled in early childhood educators. The only basis for such fear is the fear that children will be pressured to learn that which they are incapable of learning. Certainly, pressure should not he used in teaching pre-reading skills, but uncertainty of a child's ability to learn a given concept or skill should no longer exist, since it is now possible to determine the readiness for learning each prereading skill. It is the speaker's observation that the most enjoyable and meaningful experiences of preschoolers are those of a cognitive nature. It is equally obvious that many children have difficulty learning to read simply because they have not been taught the prerequisite skills and concepts for reading. The arduous task of re-educating the teachers of young children must begin immediately. The time has come for this long-overdo "innovation." As Dr. Baird has just explained, history has revealed a symbiotic relationship between the invention and development of writing and the development and growth of civilization.

The most damning factor in teaching children to read is the phonemic inconsistency of the English perversion of the Roman alphabet. Those of us fortunate enough to have spent some time with the illustrious Dr. Ben D. Wood have heard him quote Noah Webster, our own first dictionary maker, who denounced our traditional English orthography as "vicious" in all its ramified, evil influences. The many sounds associated with single letters are highly confusing to the child who is attempting to read. For example, 8 different sounds are associated with the letter "a." For many, the confusion caused by such inconsistency leads to extreme frustration and failure.

In the current generation the first person to make measurable, experimentally proved progress in overcoming the reading problem caused by phonemic inconsistency is Sir James Pitman, K.B.E., a grandson of the famous Sir Isaac Pitman. His ingenious creation of 20 new printed characters which he added to the 24 useful letters of the 26 Roman letters made possible an initial learning alphabet in which each written symbol has one and only one speech sound (the letters q and x of the Roman alphabet are not used in the Pitman Initial Teaching Alphabet). The multiple values of this rational alphabet in teaching beginners at all age levels to write and read are now indisputable.

The Pitman i.t.a. has enabled thousands of children to learn to read with ease and to write creatively at an unusually early age because phonemic consistency removed vocabulary restrictions and confusion normally present is writing and reading instruction in early school grades. By using the Initial Teaching Alphabet, children can read and spell almost any word within their speech vocabulary when encountered for the first time in writing; thus the inane Dick-and-Jane type stories become obsolete.

My first experience with i.t.a. goes back to 1963, when I was serving as an elementary school principal in Tuscumbia, Alabama, the birthplace of the late Helen Keller. Very limited materials were available in America at the time we began using the radically different approach to teaching reading. Later, when a greater variety of materials was available, the rapid progress of the i.t.a. taught children was obvious. The work of Sir James Pitman brought a glimmer of hope to those who had recoiled at the "viciousness" of our traditional English orthography and its detrimental effect on beginners at all age levels.

An alternative initial learning medium with phonemic consistency and greater compatibility has emerged. World English Spelling (WES), recently promulgated by Dr. Godfrey Dewey, adds new dimensions and promises to the concept of an effective initial learning medium for beginners in learning to write and read English. The use of only 24 of the familiar Roman characters lends many dynamic advantages and acceptability to the WES alphabet approach. With WES neither children nor teachers have to learn additional characters which are strange to our traditional English orthography, and which have to be abandoned during and after transition to T.O. Additionally, WES is compatible with the standard typewriter, thus making the preparation of learning materials easier and less expensive in the use of the typewriter in learning to write and read T.O.

Research and use sufficient to assure the effectiveness of a phonemically consistent initial learning medium is now history. There is no need for further demonstration of its effectiveness. This statement is not intended to insinuate that no problems exist in initiating and using i.t.a. or WES. The problems associated with an initial learning medium arise almost entirely from the mobility of the pupil populations. What happens to a child who has learned that each letter, or letter combination, is associated with a single sound and then is suddenly relocated in a school using traditional orthography where the teacher never heard of i.t.a. or WES? This problem is a major roadblock to substantial progress in teaching children to read. In my opinion, immediate and concentrated attention at the national level should be devoted to overcoming this obstacle to significant progress in solving America's reading problem.

The final contributor to the reading problem, which I want to discuss, is the lack of consideration given to the different learning styles of individual children. The door-ways to learning are the senses – seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting. A given sense is more highly developed in some children than in other children. Research indicates that approximately 40 of each 100 children learn best through visual means, 40 through auditory means, and 20 through the kinesthetic sense. Much time and energy can be wasted and frustration experienced unless this knowledge about learning styles is taken into consideration. Yet, little effort has been exerted to identify the dominant sense of an individual pupil and to teach accordingly. Actually, attempts to cater to the kinesthetic learner to date have been insignificant. Somewhat more attention has been given to the auditory approach to teaching reading, not because there are large numbers of auditory learners, a fact worthy of consideration, but because reading is auditory in nature. The vast amount of materials available today appeal most to the child who is visually inclined.
The kinesthetic learner may suffer most in early attempts at reading, but he does not suffer alone. The low level of muscular development of preschoolers and children in primary grades makes preciseness and consistency of letter formation difficult or impossible for them. Therefore, the letters which they write vary in form, making recognition even more difficult. This disadvantage could be most easily overcome through the use of the typewriter in teaching reading to the young child. The typewriter has been proved effective as a self-teaching device in all aspects of the language arts. An exciting and promising approach to initial learning to write and read English would be a combination of WES and the ASK typewriter. This pairing would remove many of the difficulties associated with learning to write, to read, and to project oneself creatively through legible writing. In addition to the pedagogical advantages of the typewriter for both pupils and teachers, for both cognitive and affective domains of total education, cost accounting analysts estimate that the typewriter will reduce total schooling costs up to 20% to 30%. In urging teachers to take notice of the differences in preferred learning styles of individual pupils and to capitalize on the greater learning efficiency of such predominant styles whenever they are clearly identified, and thus- enable individual pupils to learn more efficiently and pleasantly, I do not mean to suggest that a multi-sensory approach should be avoided in some types of important learning tasks in which the multi-sensory approach is clearly established as more efficient, or even necessary, as in learning touch-typing.

Generally speaking, for most children, the multi-sensory approach should be emphasized to the greatest extent possible if the materials or activities to be learned or practiced actually involve more than one sensory process (as most learning associated with speaking, listening, writing or reading do).

I have attempted to address some of the problems and promises of reading instruction in America. Other aspects of the problem could have been added, but an effort was made to strike at the heart of the major cause of public distrust of schools and of the inability of schools to fulfill the American dream – i.e., failure to help children learn to read well, or to like and enjoy reading.

I am reminded of the new Ph.D. holder who returned to his rural community to visit old friends who had contributed to his philosophical outlook on life. An old gentleman with whom he was talking noticed a flower in his lapel and asked the young graduate what kind of rose he was wearing. "That's not a rose, sir. It's a chrysanthemum," said the self-assured young man. The elderly gentleman, still gazing intently, said, "I would have sworn it was a rose." He hesitated momentarily, then suddenly asked, "By the way, how do you spell chrysanthemum?" The Ph.D. looked down at the flower and after a brief moment replied, "Sir, I believe you are right. It is a rose."

Just as the young Ph.D. had not learned to spell all English words during his training, neither have I learned all there is about reading. However, I am convinced that it is philosophically correct to place unlimited value on the life of each human being and to be concerned with his or her fullest potential individual development and fulfillment. I also know that a full and meaningful life is almost impossible without the ability to read well. Our job as educators is to find effective ways of helping children to learn to read. I am further convinced that great progress can be made if immediate and concerted attention is given to, first, the identification and teaching of specific prereading skills and concepts to children who are prepared to master them regardless of age; secondly, the adoption of a phonemically consistent initial learning medium for those children who cannot read when they enter school; and finally, designing ways to determine the dominant sense of individuals and then catering to the most efficient learning style of each child in learning to write and to read.

Just as bread is the sustenance of life for the masses of humanity, reading is the sustenance for our enlightened and technological society and our American way of life. The buck cannot be passed. It is our job as educators to teach all Americans to read well. Priority must be given to modifying the present materials and methods for children's learning to write and read so that all normal persons may participate in the American dream.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 p9 in the printed version]

An inextricable nebt

A man who was deeply in debt
Said, 'No matter whatever I gebt,
    My creditors claim
    A share of the saim,
Which makes me discouraged, you bebt.'

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp10,11 in the printed version]

6. Transition in Spelling

(Reprinted from *ita nuezletter,* Summer, 1977)

Many teachers have attended i.t.a. meetings and conferences at which Mrs Jessie Lintern, of Leigh Park Infants' School, has described her scheme for transition in spelling. At their request, we print below a slightly shortened version of Mrs Lintern's account of the scheme.

One of the chief advantages of i.t.a. should be a greater awareness of spelling as such. By the time children reach the transition stage of reading, they have a sound knowledge of phonics, including digraphs, ands they know that the written word consists of the spoken word 'sounded out.' They can 'see' a sound as well as 'hear' it, and their writing is thus purely phonic before the transition stage, and depends largely on the clarity and accuracy of their speech.

When transition to T.O. (reading) is complete, and sometimes before, children begin to notice that some words do not 'look' as they 'sound': 'What a funny way to write eight ... or high ... or play,' they say. Advantage must be taken of their interest in words and of their phonic knowledge to teach spelling, and this must be done carefully and systematically by the teacher through an ordered, well-thought-out process – not by a hit-or-miss copying of lists in T.O. as opposed to i.t.a., or even by the correction and rewriting of words in the child's stories or exercises.

Such correction seems to me wrong. It not only spoils the look of the story, but gradually reduces the quality and quantity of creative work. However, when a spelling rule or process has been taught and exercises on that rule have been done, a child continuing to use an i.t.a. symbol should have this pointed out each time, and be given frequent reminders.

The suggested scheme that follows should be taken systematically so that children moving to a new class or a new teacher can progress evenly, and so that teachers know which stage each child has reached in his transfer to traditional spelling. It will also be advantageous if junior staff follow this pattern with any children who have not completed the transition, either in reading or writing.

Lower and Middle School

As soon as children begin to write of their own accord, careful note should be made of the following points. In fact, it is worth keeping such notes in an appropriate page of one's record of work.

1. A symbol wrongly sounded – e.g., pet for pat, dig for big. Every opportunity should be taken to teach the child the correct sound-symbol relationship.
2. A sound wrongly made when speaking – e.g., chump for jump; fink for think. Show the child how to form the correct sound. Let him feel one's throat with the finger-tips to experience the difference between a voiced g, d, b, j and the unvoiced c, t, p, ch. Show him the tongue, lip, teeth positions for f and th, and for any other sounds giving difficulty. Help him to associate sounds and symbols with how we make them with our mouths.

Transfer stage

It is vital that at no stage is the child made to feel that i.t.a. is 'wrong' by having work marked as a mistake if written in i.t.a. Once the T.O. substitute for any i.t.a. symbol has been taught, if the child continues to use the symbol he should have this pointed out and be asked to rewrite the word himself, either at the foot of the page or by rubbing out the original. **Words should be corrected only if the appropriate rule has been taught and practised.**

1. A chart can be made showing i.t.a. digraphs and their T.O. equivalents. This can be used for practice purposes and also as a reference when mistakes have been made.

2. gate, like, hole, tune, etc. Demonstration on the blackboard will show how the i.t.a. symbol is 'split' and the e part goes at the end of the word in T.O. Practice from the blackboard and dictation 'games' help to put this over. There will be 50 per cent or so error at first – lite for light, rane for rain, bote for boat, fue for few. The important point at this stage is to eliminate easily and naturally the use of i.t.a. symbols while substituting a common T.O. spelling. Alternative ways of spelling digraphs will be dealt with in due course.
3. Simultaneously, 'funny' words should be taught by the names of their letters – i.e., those that do not conform to sounding but are in the child's everyday vocabulary: I, e, we, me, be, she;
so, no, go, to, do; come; was, of; and other similar short words occurring in everyday speech.

The next logical stage transfers the vowel 'sounds' at the end of words (may, boy, fly) and inside words (rain, boat, bean). Collections of words to fit the rules may be made by the children either individually or as a class list, and plenty of time should be taken over discussion so that the children may comment on words as they find them and so form the habit of looking at the composition of these words. Word collections can be made, and the children encouraged to comment on such T.O. forms as flow/floe, flew/flue, flee/flea, nice, wise. In the latter two examples, it can be pointed out that the e at the end does two jobs, forming part of the ie sound and also softening the c and voicing the s. Words ending in ge (rage), -tion and -sion also need attention.

Some words have a 'silent e' at the end (kettle, little, middle). Some have letters that are not sounded (friend, autumn, weather). Lists of these may be made as the children come across them while reading. An enthusiastic approach on the part of the teacher will stimulate in the children a sense of discovery, both in the correct spelling of words and in an enlargement and enrichment of their vocabulary. Each stage should, however, be taken carefully, with a great deal of practice in the form of simple dictation, 'muddled word' games and other devices. We need to avoid at all costs a sense of spelling failure, by mistaken correction of a 'good try' or by muddling the child by presenting too many rules too quickly.

The English language being what it is, there are many words which do not conform to any simple rule. When a child tries to spell such a word, he should be praised for his attempt, and told that this is a 'spelling' word, the letters of which must be learned by heart in their correct order by name. A time could be set aside for the learning of one or two such words commonly met in the children's writing. The spelling aloud of such words can be of great help to children with poor visual but better auditory memory.

Children will now learn the use of dictionaries to find spellings as well as meanings; they can be told that adults often look up words in the dictionary to make sure of the correct spelling, and that there is no disgrace in doing so. In fact, it is the quickest way to check spelling when in doubt, and the more practice children have in using a dictionary the quicker they will become.
Most spelling transfer work will be done in small groups with those children who are reading fluently in T.O. If the work is demonstrated on the blackboard, it may arouse interest in some children who have not yet reached the transfer stage. As the 'double sounds' are still joined in the children's own writing, I can see no harm in their trying to drop the use of i.t.a. symbols; but I must emphasise that this should be on the child's own initiative, with no suggestion or compulsion on the part of the teacher for any child who has not progressed to the natural fluency of reading which denotes a natural transition to traditional orthography.

It is essential for a smooth and easy progression from class to class, and to the junior school, that this scheme is followed by all teachers as soon as a small group of children show by their reading in T.O. that they are ready to transfer their writing. The reading must be fluent and expressive, and the child must show an interest, by his remarks, in words, their meaning and composition. If the scheme is followed carefully and thoroughly, the children's general knowledge of spelling should be sound, and it should be easy for the next teacher to assess how far each child has progressed.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 p11 in the printed version]

7. Who Teaches Transition?

By Doris A. Cox, Ed.D. and Virginia Belascos
Livingston Public Schools, New Jersey

Reprinted from *I.T.A. Foundation Newsletter, Fall, 1976.*

First and second grade teachers who use the i/t/a Publications Early to *Read Series* say they teach transition to students as a part of an i.t.a. program. But can they take credit for the children's success?

"Peculiar" things seem to be happening to many children in the Livingston Public Schools' first grades. Teachers and librarians observe students reading books in traditional orthography-books self-selected for personal reading. Each classroom is amply supplied with i.t.a. library books, and these children, who are still reading in i.t.a., are choosing T.O. books! It is true that some of them have had minimal reading skills prior to grade one, but this does not account for the majority. Are these children teaching themselves to use the phonemes of the language and using their own ability to get the message from the written page?

Since i.t.a. enables children to read a flexible flow of language similar to their normal speech patterns, they understand the reading act. They have not had to read short, choppy sentences contrived to stay within the boundaries of a controlled vocabulary. To them, language is language - written or spoken. They may miss some words, but they get the author's meaning. This, the linguists tell us, is the reading act.

Some i.t.a. students question T.O. spelling. For example, one student came to the teacher and complained that the book was wrong since there was an "e" at the end of "little." She could, however, pronounce and understand the word. She seemed satisfied and went on her way when the teacher explained that this was the "grown-up" way of spelling.

So we make the assumption that the children teach themselves. Two occurences give credence to our assumption.

Six students reading in Book 5 of the *Early to Read Series* wanted to read books in T.O. Since these children learned at a slower pace, they were beginning an informal transition when starting Book 5. They began with learning the capital letters and changing some of the more similar characters, such as breaking the ligature in *ng, ch. sh,* etc. Using an old Scott Foresman 2 [1] Book to identify the capitals, etc., the children began to spontaneously read the stories aloud. They had not heard these stories because this test is not currently used in any of the second grade classes in the Squiretown school in Livingston. The teacher had not taught them the vocabulary prior to reading the book, but they read it to themselves faster than the teacher could write the vocabulary on the board. There was considerable evidence that they "clozed" when a word was unknown.

Perhaps there is a good deal of learning going on in the classroom other than direct teaching. They may be learning from other children and from watching the teacher as she instructs other groups. We all know there is significant commonality of words in the basal textbooks, so they could be getting some "instruction" without the teacher.

The real clue came in March, 1976 when Dr. Albert J. Mazurkiewicz was granted permission to use our students as the i.t.a. group in a research study under his direction. In order to identify those reading at a 3.1 or better level of comprehension, all first grade students instructed in Book 5 of the *Early to Read Series* were to be given the Gates-MacGinitie Test, Level A (for grade 1). This test is available in traditional orthography only. None of the four classes in Squiretown school were involved in transition, so there was no instructional contamination. These children attacked the task with no apprehension. They did not even raise a question that the test was in T.O. The scores ranged from 3.5 (a perfect score) to 1.5 in vocabulary and 3.7 (a perfect score) to 1.4 in comprehension, with a median of 2.7 in vocabulary and 2.8 in comprehension.

Who teaches transition? Who taught these 50 first-graders? There are too many scores in the grade 2 to 3 range40 students in comprehension and 44 students in vocabulary -for this to be pure chance. For those who fear confusion resulting from the use of an orthography different from the traditional orthography, we have evidence in this testing situation that these i.t.a. – taught youngsters are far from confused.

Does all of this mean that we should not provide a formal "transition"? We feel there is a definite need to teach it, and, based on our two recent occurences, perhaps we should begin to think of transition in terms of teaching spelling irregularities. In fairness to all children, they should have structured guidance in our variations of spelling until such time as a spelling reform removes the need for it.

Editor's note: The above article was written about the first edition of the *Early to Read Series.* In the second edition, the transition was programmed to take place starting with the introduction of capital letters in Book 6, and breaking the ligatures into separate letters when they are identical with correct spelling. The first half of Book 7 completes the transition and the second half of Book 7 is all in T.O. Workbook 8 is called "Spelling in the traditional alphabet."

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp12–15 in the printed version

8. Dictionary Respellings of English Words, by Gertrude Hildreth*

* Sea Cliff, N.Y.

According to the alphabetic principle, spelling is intended to evoke the sounds of printed words in a regular, consistent manner. This principle is frequently violated in the mis-match of English language phonology and orthography. As a result, attempts to pronounce words from their letter sounds is often misleading and written spelling tends to be impressionistic.

To bring some order out of chaos, English dictionaries supply Pronunciation Keys based on phonetic principles that are used for respelling every main entry in the alphabetical columns. With these auxiliary spellings, an English-speaking person has immediate access to the accepted pronunciation of words in print, foreign speakers learn the sounds of English words, and young people are guided in pronouncing unfamiliar words in their reading.

The Beginnings of Dictionary Pronunciation Keys
The emergence of dictionary respelling keys has a long history dating back to the early 1800's. The origins of these schemes in the U.S. is found in the work of Noah Webster, American lexicographer and patriot (1758-1843), who sought to promote better American-English usage through standardizing pronunciation in the new nation and advocating a reform of English spelling.'

Webster set about achieving his goals through publishing a slim paperback. The cover shows:

The American Spelling Book
Containing
An Easy Standard of Pronunciation [4]

This little book, nicknamed "The Blue Back Speller," first published in 1783, continued to be the leading school text for 100 years. The book consisted primarily of drills in word pronunciation to prepare for oral reading. It was not a *speller* in our present-day meaning of the term: lists of words in graded lessons dictated by the teacher for practice in spelling words from memory. In Webster's day, to "spell out" meant to pronounce words clearly, syllable by syllable. School reading was primarily an oral exercise, reading aloud distinctly, to prepare for accurate reading as adults. Easy reading text was introduced after 33 pages of word lists for pronunciation practice; then came lists of longer words of various classes interspersed with more extensive reading selections.

Webster's Respellings of Irregular Words
In the earlier editions of "The Blue Back Speller," a list of words irregularly spelled, "hard nuts to crack" because they were not pronounced as spelled, was included – 31 items in all.

Here are Webster's simplified, regularized spellings of a sampling:

Word	Respelling	Word	Respelling
any	enny	colonel	curnel
beau	bo	isle	ile
bureau	buro	said	sed
bury	berry	sugar	shoogar
busy	bizzy	women	wimin
rightous	richus		

Later editions of "The Speller" contained a Key to the pronunciation of the long and short vowels and consonants, differentiated by means of diacritic marks such as those in use today. Each letter sound is illustrated in the key in a short list of words, and at the top of each double page, 21 of the commonest sounds are illustrated in words, with marked letters for k, j, z, and sh sounds.
The pronunciation key of "The Speller" was used in Webster's *Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* (1806) and the larger volume of 70,000 words (1826). The English spelling reforms that Webster sought to introduce are described on pages 13-14.

Early Dictionary Respelling Keys
The earliest dictionary pronunciation aids were phonemic key systems like Webster's, together with descriptions of English spelling rules, more or less elaborate.

The Century Dictionary (1889-1891). The ten-volume *Century Dictionary* contained the largest collection of English words, definitions, and derivations ever published at the time of the first edition. A key to pronunciation used for phonemic respelling of word entries served as a pattern for later developments of the device. The key is given in the introduction to Volume 1.

The editors of the *Century* explained that word respelling was needed to avoid the ambiguity of English orthography due to representing different sounds by the same letter and using different letters for the same sounds. The individual word respellings, set off by marks, follow each boldface print entry, preceding word origins, definitions, and accepted alternative spellings.

In the respelling system there are 19 letter symbols for the vowel sounds of English words, the symbols differentiated by diacritic marks; as well as 16 consonant symbols, except for c, q, and x which were represented with other alphabet letters.

A mark under the consonants t, d, s, and z indicated variable sounds of ch, j, sh, and zh in certain words. Symbols for several sounds in Scottish, French, and German words were also included in the key. The neutral vowel sounds in unaccented syllables were indicated by single or double dots beneath the vowel letter.

During the summer of 1903 the National Education Association of the U.S. held a conference for the purpose of drawing up agreements for an improved respelling notation, called a Revised Scientific Alphabet. The American Philological Association alphabet was accepted in 1905 for this purpose and an improved system was adopted by the National Education Association (N.E.A.) in 1910. This alphabet was used in the Funk and Wagnalls dictionary of that period and in later editions.

Pronunciation Keys of Contemporary Dictionaries

The Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Clarendon, 1928, 1933. 12 volumes.
The key to pronunciation given in the preface of Volume I is used for respelling every main word in the 12 volumes. This key is the most extensive and precise of any that have been devised. There are 23 consonant signs plus standard letter forms for 11 other consonants that have their usual values. There are 61 symbols for vowel sounds including diphthongs and foreign language sounds, making a total of 95 signs. The standard ABC's were augmented through the use of older letter forms, reversed letters, foreign language symbols, and others especially contrived for the Key. The mid-medial vowel is indicated by the conventional sign, ə, illustrated in the words *ever* and *nation.* The ng ligature is from the Phonotypy of Messrs. Pitman and Ellis, in two forms illustrated in *singing* and *finger.* Each sign of the Key is illustrated in common words.

Alphabetical entries are in bold face type with initial capitals and lower case letters, followed in parenthesis by respellings in lower case, minute type.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. First edition, 1932; second edition, 1936. Oxford: Clarendon Press. This dictionary includes a key to pronunciation for respelling every main entry. The *Oxford Universal Dictionary* uses the same Pronunciation Key for respelling. The sounds represented, omitting foreign word sounds, are: 54 vowels, 16 consonants, a total of 70. Frequent use is made of digraphs and there are 7 slightly different variant schwa symbols.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary. Fifth edition, 1964. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
This volume contains a phonemic scheme for vowel and consonant sounds, but furnishes respellings only for those wads recognized as "irregular."

All comprehensive American English dictionaries subsequent to the *Century* furnish pronunciation keys for respelling all main word entries in addition to accepted alternative spellings in some cases.

Dictionaries that are most apt to be found in U.S. public libraries, educational institutions, and private households include: *Webster's International, Funk and Wagnalls International;* college dictionary editions of these volumes: *American Heritage Dictionary, Random House College Dictionary,* and the *Thorndike-Barnhart Intermediate Dictionary.* The respelling keys are found in tables in the introductory material, often conveniently on the covers, and in abbreviated form at the bottom of right hand page columns.

The standard of pronunciation in these books, like that of the *Century, is* based on clear-cut oral enunciation such as an educated or professional person would use, approximating N.B.C. radio standards.

World-wide acceptance of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) furthered the development of dictionary pronunciation keys and their application to word respelling. The Smith-Trager symbols derived from a phonemic analysis of English pronunciation have been widely adopted as the basis for phonemic translations of English words (Trager and Smith, **[3]**)

Webster-Merriam International and *Collegiate Dictionaries.* Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam. The *Webster International Dictionary* of 1933 has a pronunciation key containing a total of 65 symbols used for respelling all basic words with each symbol illustrated in common words. The schwa sign is not used; instead an apostrophe indicates the omitted vowel, e.g., *basin* becomes *bas'n.* The word *schwa* does not appear in the alphabetical list of word entries in the book. The numerous alternative spellings for each sound are illustrated in words, and a list is furnished of 69 spelling rules plus 35 rules for forming plurals.

The *Webster Third International Dictionary of the English Language,* unabridged edition of 1961-1966, uses 63 pronunciation symbols including 5 for foreign word sounds. Symbols for several variations of the schwa sound are also included. There are 18 letters having diacritic marks above or below the letters to augment the standard 26 letter alphabet.

The 1973 *Webster* has 54 symbols in the pronunciation key of which 16 are digraphs of letters used for other sounds. The ligature of ng, combined as in the IPA, is included.

The Webster Collegiate Dictionary. All editions of the *Webster Collegiate Dictionary* include the Guide to Pronunciation feature of the unabridged editions. The Fifth Edition, 1936, used a key of 66 signs including 4 symbols for foreign languages. Most differentiations among vowels are indicated

by diacritic marks. There are 14 digraphs. The book also gives a ten-page description of the sounds of spoken English. The earlier Collegiate editions supplied tables showing the principal variant spellings of each sound illustrated in common words.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1973, uses a 54 symbol pronunciation key for respelling all main entries.
The key is printed on the front and back inside covers of the book, and an abbreviated key appears at the bottom of every right-hand page.

The *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary* of *the English Language* (1965) contains what the editors describe as the sounds and symbols for a Revised Scientific English Alphabet. The *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary* of 1966 has a pronunciation key consisting of 46 symbols. There are 11 digraphs, a schwa and schwa "r." Each major entry is respelled with the pronunciation key symbols. The *Funk and Wagnalls College Dictionary* of 1973 uses a word pronunciation key of 43 symbols including 11 digraphs and schwa. The letters x and q are omitted.

The American College Dictionary, C.L.Barnhart, Editor-in-Chief, 1961 edition, furnishes a pronunciation key of 44 symbols, 17 of which have diacritic marks and 10 are digraphs. A table is given of common English spellings for each of the respelling symbols, illustrated in common words. The schwa symbol is included in the key and the word *schwa* with its derivation is listed in the dictionary.

The American Heritage Dictionary, 1969, uses 45 symbols for respelling with a pronunciation key that is claimed to be the most complete and easiest to use of any key so far published. This key is based on the Smith Trager analysis of *the* phonemes of English. The 45 symbols include 15 digraphs.

Junior Dictionaries for Students
Dictionaries designed primarily for young people follow the practice of comprehensive dictionaries in supplying pronunciation keys and respellings for all basic words. *The Thorndike-Barnhart Junior Dictionary* uses a pronunciation key of 43 symbols reproduced in part at the bottom of every right-hand page with the signs illustrated in words. There is also a *Webster's New Student Dictionary,* 1961, 1969, and 1975, based on *Webster's Seventh Collegiate Dictionary.* with a key of 51 pronunciation symbols, including 13 digraphs, 2 schwas, a schwa "r", and 6 symbols for French and German sounds.

The World Book Dictionary, Clarence L. Barnhart, Editor, 2 volumes, 1967 edition, designed for grades 3 to college, gives the meaning, spelling, and pronunciation of the most important and frequently used words in English. Accepted alternate spellings are given for appropriate entries. A "complete" pronunciation key includes 43 symbols illustrated in common words. The list includes 4 a's, 2 e's, 2 i's, 3 o's, and 4 u's, as well as 7 digraphs and schwa. Diacritic marks are used to distinguish among vowel symbols represented with the same alphabet letter. A table of Common Spellings of English Words illustrates 251 different spellings of 45 English sounds, including 9 digraphs. This dictionary also takes up the subject of common spelling errors and contains a spelling-sound quiz. A list of 30 spelling rules is given with illustrations of each rule.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary is the only one cited above that limits respellings to selected irregular words.

Progressive Changes in Dictionary Respelling Keys

From the *Century Dictionary* onward, the features of pronunciation keys used for respelling words have changed steadily, especially in the direction of economy and simplicity. Respelling keys most frequently use a specially devised alphabet with point-for-point relationship to English phonemes. The number of symbols has varied in editions of the same era, with trend toward unanimity in translation symbols during a period of 80 years or more. The number of sounds represented has decreased as different systems come closer to unanimity. 43 or 44 signs are now considered sufficient for all practical purposes, but greater refinement in representing English sounds requires the larger number of distinctive signs of the *Oxford English Dictionary.*

A major question confronting spelling reformers is how best to augment the 26 Latin ABC's to represent 43 to 45 sounds, each with its own distinctive symbol in a phonemic system, with c, x, and q reassigned in some cases. The use of digraphs, though regularly pronounced, is not much of an improvement, and diacritic marks added to letter signs are difficult to distinguish in small print and a nuisance in hand writing.

The sign for the vowel sound in unaccented syllables known as schwa, illustrated by such words as *before* and *surface,* has been standardized in dictionary pronunciation keys with its own distinctive symbol, a mirrored, inverted lower case "e," ə. This symbol has proved to be more satisfactory than the dots beneath vowel letters of the *Century* and the apostrophe for an omitted vowel in other respelling systems.

The schwa is actually the most commonly heard sound in English. The word *correspondence* has two schwas, *accomodation* and *ridiculous* each have three (see Webster).

All major dictionaries from the *Century, Webster,* and *Oxford* onward have printed main word entries in bold-face type followed by respellings in the lighter, slightly smaller print used for definitions and other material, set off by punctuation marks. Standard lower-case print is invariably used.

Making Use of Dictionary Respelling Keys

The most frequent uses made of a standard dictionary are: 1. to check the spelling of a particular word, 2. to discover the meaning of words, and 3. to determine the pronunciation of words in print. Respelling systems are useful only for the third purpose.

During silent reading, children who are fluent in oral English seldom need to pronounce common words for sentence comprehension. Exceptions are certain "problem words" that a dictionary respelling key assists in pronouncing, for example:

view	they	giant	should	weather
knight	guess	choir	neighbor	voyage
bridge	thought	circus	cautious	surgeon
island	national	photograph	thorough	chemistry
straight	soldier	separate	strength	business

Beyond the elementary school years, experienced readers know the meanings of high frequency words and have various means of comprehending less frequent words, but the p may be held up by words such as: *pharmicist, psalmist, gimlet, scholastic, pneumatic, conscience, knickers, rheumatism, psychiatry, phlegm, apothecary.*

Learning to Use Dictionary Pronunciation Keys

Typical adults with a high school education should be able to learn to use dictionary pronunciation keys after some study and practice, but school children would be unable to use a phonemic key for word pronunciation without specific instruction regarding the sounds of strange looking symbols and how they are used as clues to pronouncing wads. The standard order of symbols in the key must be learned as in the case of: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, . . . Learning to use the keys in student dictionaries is considered to be a part of instruction in school dictionary work. *The Thorndike-Barnhart Student Dictionary* furnishes sets of drill materials for learning to use the respelling key for word pronunciation.

English Dictionaries and the Question of Spelling Reform

Noah Webster proposed a series of spelling reforms designed to reduce anomalies and exceptional cases. These changes were 'included in his dictionary of 1806 along with the restoration of some earlier forms, but in the larger work of 1828, the author reverted to orthodox spelling in many cases due to opposition from the dictionary publishers who feared adverse public opinion. In fact, a contemporary critic accused Webster of "unsettling our admirable spelling." Thus, the far-sighted reformer was forced to go against his better judgement and bow to tradition.

Editors of English dictionaries of the past 70 years have mentioned the need for spelling reform and the problems involved in a change-over, but they are inclined to make cautious statements on the issue to avoid endorsement, and have disavowed any connection between respelling keys and spelling reform proposals.

The *Century Dictionary* authors stated that in spite of sympathy with spelling reform efforts, the office of a dictionary was not to propose or adopt proposed spelling improvements that had not yet won acceptance. The dictionary's function, they said, is merely to record and reinforce present practice in usage, not to change it. The spelling throughout the volumes was that of well-established usage, and the respelling scheme was regarded as a means of showing pronunciation without change in lexical listings.

The Webster Third International Dictionary also observed that the purpose of the dictionary in spelling, as in other matters, was to record usage rather than to create it.

Features of Dictionary Respellings Adaptable to Reformed Spelling

Although none of the pronunciation keys of modern dictionaries are appropriate for permanent English spelling reform, they point the way toward an improved English orthographic system. First of all, dictionary respelling systems have a regular phonemic basis, with each simple sound represented by a single symbol used consistently. In this unitary matching scheme, written symbols regularly stand for oral units, the phonemes of the language. Some systems exclude the letters "x" and "q", and sometimes "c" standing alone.

Common means of augmenting the pronunciation symbols to represent a total of 43 or 44 different sounds are the use of diacritical marks added to the standard ABC's and the formation of digraphs or letter groups, adoption of the standard schwa sign, a, letters borrowed from other languages, and the construction of new letter forms.

English dictionaries uniformly use standard English pronunciation of accepted educated speech, that of the R.C.A. or N.B.C. in America, the B.B.C. abroad, as guides to respelling without respect to variations of local utterance or dialect. In comprehensive volumes, however, dialect sounds of English are discussed and illustrated.

Summary of "Dictionary Respellings. . ."

Respelling of the lexicon with phonemic pronunciation keys has become a standard feature of all general English dictionaries during the present century. Although respelling keys vary from one publication to another in the number of phonemes represented and the signs or characters used to represent them, there is considerable unanimity among systems of the leading dictionaries. Through the years, the number of different sounds represented has gradually decreased, there is close agreement among the different signs used, and the format of respelled entries is similar among dictionaries. As a part of dictionary work, school children are taught how to use these pronunciation aids. Respelling keys have implications for a system of simplified English spelling that would save having to learn two systems-conventional standard dictionary spelling, and auxiliary respelling of all words.

Note: No need to elaborate on the use of dictionary signs for simplified spelling – that's been done over and over again.

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 p15 in the printed version]

9. The Gide, by Frank T. du Feu

For nearly forty years, I crave permission to recount,
Our greitest naeture poet made his home at Ryedal Mount.
The liebrary – of meny faemous authhors not a trace;
An egotist, he gave his own acheevements pride of place.
Thiss lattice is a coign of vantaje, ay, and no mistake,
Recaulling wun hoo cuod enjoy the beuty of the lake.
Thiss fascinating Highland girl (a portrait true to life)
Provided inspiraetion for the poem to his wife.
The vellum seen reposing on the middle of that shelf
Contains an ode that Wurdswurthh never understuod himself.
The poët wore thiss gorjus dress, at least a size too smaull,
When summond to the palace, sir, for Queen Victoaria's baull.
These articles he baught at sales within quite easy reach,
Whie, those buff chairs with cuoshons cost but wun-and-sixpence each.
He studid in the oepen air and pland "The Daffodils"
While roaming like a partridje oever hether-cuverd hills.
He luvd alike aull natural sounds, the singing of a lass,
The clarion of a cockbird and the braying of an ass.
Sum neighbors thhaught him crazy, caulld it profitless, jejune,
To stand about for ours simply gazing at the moon;
But uthers sed that William, offen out extremely late,
Wos sponsoring activitis subversiv to the state.
He made no mark at Caembridje, but I venture to surmise,
At Oxford, nou, "The Convict" wuod hav wun the Newgate prize:
Thow at his best, his verce wos aulways, yoo'll vouchsafe to own,
Immeediately distingwishd bie its filosofic tone;
He lackd a sense of hue mor and saw merely a rebuff
When writers dared to criticize sum uninspired stuff.
Compare the "Ode to Duety," nou, with verce like "Peeter Bell;"
No uther foe mous poët's wurk affords a paralel.
His poëtry in consequence wos treated with contempt
From which his finest lyrics wer not aulways unexempt.
"A primrose bie a mossy stone, haaf hidden from the eye!"
Yoo can't misquote a jem like thiss houever hard yoo trie.
For meny years his publicaetions soeld bie wuns and twos,
Not erring him sufficient to buy laces for his shoos.
But recognition came at last, for Oxford, yoo must know,
Conferd, mid acclamaetions, the degree of N.C.O.
They begd him to be Laureate when Robert Suthy died.
For literary merit, sir, the Guvernment supplied
A pension from the civil list. Indeed, his long life ends,
In Kipling's wurds, "with onors, luv, obeedience, troops of heads."

Americans might not know that the poetry prize awarded annually at Oxford is the Newdigate – a *distinguished winner was Matthew Arnold. There is, of course, no such degree as N.C.O., and Kipling didn't write the lines credited to him here.*

Pronounce

th as in this and that	y as in mystery	oo as in foolproof
thh as in th(h)irty-fourth(h)	ea as in bean feast	ou as in roundabout
a as in acrobat	ei as in eight reigns	ow as in slow bowler
o as in correspond	ie as in ties supplied	uo as u and oo in pussyfoot
u as in understudy		

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp16,17 in the printed version]

10. Book Review, edited by Newell W. Tune

Dictionary of Pronunciation. Lass, Abraham & Betty.
New York: Quadrangle/ The New York Times Book Co., 1976. 334 pp. $12.50.

Since the authors have already prepared an introduction which when condensed does justice to this interesting and useful book, we will let them speak for it:

People talk far more than they write, yet they are often self-conscious about their speech, They experience a helpless, perplexed feeling when they ask themselves-or worse, when someone else asks them – "How do you pronounce. , , ?" They even avoid certain words for fear of mispronouncing them and being branded as uneducated or less than literate.

Most people believe there is just one way to pronounce a wad, and they assume that any good dictionary will give them this pronunciation for every word. But, actually, there are many English words that have *more than one* acceptable pronunciation. In this *Dictionary of Pronunciation* the authors list acceptable pronunciations for over 8,000 hard, easy, common, unusual, and "problem" wads as shown in four widely used dictionaries: the *Random House College Dict.,* the *American Heritage Dict.* of *the English Language, Webster's 7th New Collegiate Dict.,* and *Webster's, New World Dictionary.*

These four dictionaries record the pronunciations they find most frequently used by educated people all over America. The authors explain how each dictionary chooses acceptable pronunciations. For each word, they indicate their preference.

The *Dictionary of* Pronunciation is an invaluable guide and reference to words whose correct pronunciation all too frequently eludes even the best-educated speaker.

Can you acquire a pronunciation vocabulary that will not embarrass you? Yes, you can, with the aid of this *Dictionary of Pronunciation,* which we have designed to enable you quickly and easily to check your pronunciation with the country's foremost authorities on the English language.

First, we drew up a list of over 8,000 words that pose various kinds of pronunciation problems for all sorts of people-the elementary school or high school pupil, or college graduate, the doctor, the lawyer, the radio or TV announcer, or even the college professor. At one time or another, these words will confuse and embarrass most people. Some of these words you see, hear, and use frequently. Some you recognize immediately. You know what they mean, but you don't use them often in your speech, and you don't often hear them spoken. Others you may run into infrequently or not at all.

We compiled this list of words from various sources: tested "word lists" which indicate how frequently you are likely to meet them in your reading, scholarly pronouncing dictionaries, source

books of words frequently mispronounced, and our own and friends' experiences with the fascinating unpredictabilities of American pronunciation of the English language.

Then, for each of these 8,000 or more words, we set down the pronunciations recorded in each of the four major dictionaries mentioned above. We chose the desk dictionaries rather than the unabridged dictionaries because most people own and use desk dictionaries, and because they are authoratative without being overwhelming.

A great many words have more than one acceptable pronunciations; however, all the dictionaries do not list the same number of acceptable pronunciations. So we compiled a "box score" for each acceptable pronunciation of each word, and next to each pronunciation we placed a figure that tells you how many of our four desk dictionaries record that specific pronunciation. For example, the figure 4 at the right of the pronunciation tells you that all of the four desk dictionaries recognize this pronunciation as heard among educated speakers, and hence record it as accept able. The figure 3 at the right of the pronunciation tells you that only three of the four desk dictionaries find this pronunciation acceptable.

The desk dictionaries do not list all the pronunciations (called "variants") that their experts have recorded for each of our 8000-plus words. They list only those that they believe are the most frequently used and heard. As our box score makes clear, the dictionaries do not always agree, thought many variants seem to differ only very slightly from each other. If you hear one of the less frequent variants used among educated people in your part of our country, you should feel perfectly comfortable in using it, no matter how it rates in our box score – 4, 3, 2, or 1.

Many modern dictionaries avoid indicating any preference among pronunciations. They simply record the pronunciations they hear most often among educated people.

Who decide which pronunciations are "correct" or "standard"? Offhand you might say, "the dictionaries." But you would be wrong. Today's dictionaries do not really decide. They do not tell you what to say or how to say it. Here is how they see themselves (italics ours):

"Dictionaries are not lawmakers. They are merely *law recorders.* A pronunciation is not 'correct' or standard because it is given in a dictionary; rather it should be found in a good dictionary because *good usage has already made it standard.* There is no single hypothetically 'correct' standard for all speakers of American English (in the sense that Received Standard English is the guide for British English) since *the usage of cultivated speakers in any region or locality constitutes a .standard for that area.* Hence since the scope of a desk dictionary prohibits inclusion of every possible acceptable variant, the editors of such a dictionary are justified in recording *those pronunciations used by the greatest number of cultivated speakers. . .*

The reader can be assured that although no single standard exists for the whole nation, the kind of pronunciation here indicated is acceptable anywhere in the United States. . . The pronunciations recorded in this dictionary are those used by cultivated speakers in normal, relaxed conversation." (W*ebster's New World Dictionary*)

"The pronunciations recorded in the Dictionary are *exclusively* those of educated speech. No pronunciation is given that would be regarded by any large group as a mispronunciation. . . In every community, educated speech is accepted and understood by everyone, including those who do not use it." (*American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*)

"The function of a pronouncing dictionary is to record as far as possible the pronunciations prevailing in the best present usage rather than to attempt to dictate what that usage should be. Insofar as a dictionary may be known and acknowledged as a faithful recorder and interpreter of such usage, so far and no farther may it be appealed to as an authority. In the case of diverse usages of extensive prevalence, the dictionary must recognize each of them." (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*)

". . . any pronunciation shown is common to many educated speakers of the language." (*Random House College Dictionary*)

Here is how John K. Bolland, assistant editor of G & C Merriam Co. and his staff decide which pronunciations to list in their dictionaries:

Many words in English have two, three, or even four different pronunciations, all of which are perfectly acceptable. *In our dictionaries the pronunciations represented are determined by the files we have built up over the years of actual pronunciations used by educated speakers of English* (italics ours). When it comes time to transcribe the pronunciation in a dictionary entry, we examine the files for that word and we include the variants which appear frequently enough to show that they are widely used. In general the variants which appear most frequently are entered first, followed by less frequent, but still acceptable, variants. With many wads, however, two or more variants are so widely used that no one can be said to be more frequent than another; but of course one of them has to be printed first and another last. Thus the order of variants does not necessarily indicate significant difference in frequency or preference. A variant that is noticeably less common is prefixed by also, as at the entry rabid in Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. These less common variants are still acceptable and are used by many educated speakers, but not as many as use the preceding variants. Occasionally regional labels are used to indicate the geographic restriction of a variant pronunciation if that variant differs significantly from other variants and if its distribution may be described succinctly.

On every other page of the *Dictionary of Pronunciation* there is a Pronunciation Key with Key Words as examples of the use of that symbol in words which seem to have a more standardized pronunciation. The system has only 8 diacritic marks: the macron over the long vowels, the dieresis over the Italian a, a dash through the ur to indicate the stressed sound. It also has the schwa, ə, and ər for the unstressed r-flavored vowel sound. The distinction between the two th-sounds is made by using an italic *t* in the *t*h for the voiced th-sound. The ng sound is shown by the I.P.A. symbol. And all digraphs and trigraphs used are joined to indicate a unit sound.

Dictionary makers have not been able to agree on a universally accepted set of symbols. But they do agree about the sounds they want to present. To simplify, we have, with the permission of the publisher, adopted the Pronunciation Guide and Key Words used by Webster's New Dictionary, and have transcribed the pronunciations recorded in other dictionaries into the equivalent symbols.

Here, then, in brief, is what the four major desk dictionaries we have consulted agree upon when they record their pronunciations:

- They "reflect the pronunciations of cultivated speakers" all over the country as accurately as they can determine these with their present instruments and techniques. They do not know how many cultivated speakers are employing their pronunciations. At best theirs is an informed guess.

- There is no single standard American pronunciation. There are a number of regional pronunciations used in different areas of our country. These differ from each other in some respects. But individuals from one region have no difficulty understanding the pronunciations of cultivated individuals from other regions. "It is accepted here that cultivated speech can and does exist in all regions. . . " (*Random House College Dictionary*)

- All living languages change. In the last two generations our language has undergone many changes. These changes have been set in motion and accelerated by two World Wars, vast population shifts in our country, the pervasive influence of the mass media (the press, radio, television, movies, etc.). Our dictionaries have tried to reflect the way educated people all over America use our language today. As Philip Gove, the late editor-in-chief of the Merriam-Webster Dictionaries put it in a letter to *The New York Times* (Nov. 5, 1961), "Whether you or I or others who fixed our linguistic notions several decades ago like it or not, the contemporary English language. . . the language we have to live with, the only language we have to survive with, is not the language of the Nineteen Twenties & 30's."

- Today's dictionary-makers derive their "acceptable" pronunciations from a vast number of recordings of radio, TV, public addresses, transcriptions of interviews, etc. These provide them with a record of actual pronunciations in a natural context – "the only sound basis for determining pronunciation." No dictionary records every pronunciation used by educated speakers for each word it lists. Those they do list you can use with confidence. "An omitted pronunciation does not necessarily imply its absence in the educated community." (*Random House College Dictionary*)

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[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 pp17–19 in the printed version]

11. Our Readers Write Us

The English Language for World Wide Commerce.

Sen. Warren G. Magnuson, Chairman, **Harvie Barnard**
Com. on Commerce, Science & Transportation,
United States Senate, Washington, D.C.

Dear Sen. Magnuson: Has anyone brought to your attention the importance to international commerce, science and industry, of utilizing the English language for world-wide commerce? This subject has been raised repeatedly among scientists, engineers, international business men and students of linguistics, all of them being enthusiastically in favor of taking steps to establish English-regularized to suit American usage – as THE World-Wide second language.

For all practical purposes this usage is already quite widely accepted, altho because of the absence of official sanction and/or adoption by government action, there are many "loose ends" hanging which, if corrected, would go a long way toward improved international communication.

As you undoubtedly are well informed on the problems of international radio communication, which is of course *verbal only*, there are parallel problems with written communication. Since commerce in all its ramifications depends upon the written word, some adjustments and corrections would be of great benefit in this area also.

It has been proposed by numerous educators, linguistic authorities and exporters that a commission be established and authorized to edit and publish a Commercial Dictionary in regularized and simplified business English for the purpose of establishing English as the universal Second Language.

Do you see merit in such a proposal, and would you favor its implementation? Your advice and comments are welcomed,

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Answer by Sen. Warren G. Magnuson.

Mr. Harvie Barnard, **Sen. Warren G. Magnuson**
Pacific Research & Development Assoc, Tacoma, Wa

Dear Mr. Barnard:
Thank you for your recent letter proposing the establishment of English as the Worldwide second language for international science and business activities.

Perhaps the publication of a regularized, American usage, commercial English dictionary would aid in the improvement of international communication. Your recommendation of a commission to study this possibility will be taken under consideration.

I appreciate receiving your views,
Sincerely,
Warren G. Magnuson, Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

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Searching for a better I.L.M.

Newell W. Tune, Editor, **Ed Starrett, 11-26-77**

Dear Newell: I don't know if I am progressing or regressing in my thinking about spelling reform, but I have changed my approach. I really think that in the past I was too much concerned with consistency and a one to one sound-symbol relationship that I forgot about other aspects of reading. I still believe in spelling reform but have toned down my concerns a little. Instead of asking what has to be changed, I am now more concerned about what does not have to be changed. My course work in Linguistics, Phonology and Morphology have been helpful in that regard.

Now that I am finished with all my course work and final exams, 1 would like to make a contribution to spelling reform. I feel that if I can get a good i-t-m that is not too radical and is well thought out, I could begin writing stories in it and try to get a publisher. The stories I wrote in WES were fine but they weren't all that good either. I also feel that all the changes proposed by WES are not necessary – especially as an i-t-m. So what I am saying is I am still looking for a better medium. Maybe WES is the answer, but I am hoping that others will agree with me that all the changes are not necessary and provide me with some assistance to make it better. I have enclosed two copies of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. One was written in WES and the other written in modified WES, or modified T.O., for comparison. I have also sent a brief rational for my thinking. I hope that you will read my version and comment – good or bad. If you like what I am trying to do, I thought that maybe you might know someone who could help me out or with whom I could communicate.

Thanking you for all the aid you have given me in the past, I am, yours sincerely, Ed. Starrett

Rationale for some of my changes:
There are times when one must distinguish between what constitutes a reading problem and what constitutes a spelling problem. There is no doubt that WES would be easier to spell; there is some question, however, whether it would be easier to read, especially for those who have had some experience with T.O. Since I am thinking of using it as an initial teaching medium, there are good reasons for not making so many changes. When one considers that a transition to T.O. is necessary and the necessity of getting acceptance from the general public, one must be concerned about not making unnecessary changes just for the sake of phonetics. There is much more to reading than just a sound system.

1. Use of "c" instead of "s" or "k": There is a phonological rule that explains the soft and hard sounds of "c". This rule can be taught with great consistency.
2. Retain double consonants (letter, struggled, address, etc.) Double letters, per se, do not cause reading problems.
3. Use of "s" (es, ies) instead of "z". Again a fairly consistent phonological rule explains the change in pronunciation. Having two plural markers on the other hand may be more confusing and cause other problems.
4. Use of "ed" as a past tense marker instead of "d", " t – The final "ed" is a clue system to assist comprehension. Three past tense markers again could cause more problems.
5. Final "y" is retained because in monosyllable words it consistently has the sound of long i; in words of more than one syllable it consistently has the sound of long *e.* Thus very familiar adverbial endings can be retained. The few exceptions should be changed if needed.
6. Use "th" instead of "thh"- I do not feel that this distinction (voiced and unvoiced) is worth the effort. A little irregularity here does not seem to matter that much. Again it could create more problems than it solves.
7. Allow alternative spellings of certain sounds provided they are consistent. The final "ay" is a good alternative spelling for the long a sound, for example, "oi" and" oy"; *ew* and *eu, all, ill, able, ible, irk, ark, tion* (*cion, sion*) and many others can be defended because they

consistently represent a sound. The respelling of the word "quit" to "kwit" is a good example of what I mean here. Why change it because "qu" is always pronounced "kw" and "kw" never appears in the same syllable in any English words. Many alternatives can and should be tolerated provided they are consistent.

I could go on and on, but this should be enough to show you what I am attempting to do. I realize that I still have a lot to learn and some of my reasoning may be faulty, but what I want to do seems important – to find a better i-t-m.

-o0o-

Reply, SR-1 used

Mr. Ed. Starrett, Deaborn, Mi. **Newell W. Tune, 12-1-77**

Dear Ed: Thanks for your letter of 11-26. I hav red both versions of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Then it dawned on me – what are you trying to accomplish? Is it to develop the best system to use as an initial leaning medium, or is it to develop a system that the present literate adult will tolerate? (He could care less!) Whether or not it is a better system than W.E. is a debatable question and one that probably will not be decisively answered by academic tests. But theoretical considerations should indicate the answers. Which is the simpler and easier for 6 or 7 year-olds to understand, and hence the easier to teach? Are rules for the use of irregularities easier to teach than a system with no irregularities, based entirely on phonetics? Disregard for the moment that eventually a transition must be made to our irregular T.O. because that can be postponed until the pupil has gained confidence in his ability to read in the I-L-M. and has had reading practice enuf in it to be facile. As in the Pitman *Early-to-Read* series, the transition is programmed in an orderly manner so that the stride of the pupil is not broken by introducing the irregularities eny faster than they can be assimilated.

Going back to the use of rules: there is little doubt that 1st and 2nd graders will find it more difficult to understand and digest or assimilate the rules needed to understand all the intricacies of T.O. Some rules, such as the doubled consonants to show short vowels, would be acceptable *if* they wer consistent and reliable. But unfortunately in T.O. they ar not.

Rule # 1, the use of *c* insted of *s* or *k* – this rule removes the system from the usefulness of phonics and puts teaching in the relm of rules for pronouncing and writing words (and some will say: a vast gessing game). Albeit this rule is fairly consistent, there ar a few exceptions, which when encountered, will jar the pupils" self-confidence.

All the rules you suggest ar barriers to the use of phonics because they ar non-phonetic. Just how far or how long can you use phonics as a means of word attack when the rules ar contra-phonetic and in addition, all the rules hav exceptions?

There is another thing – another point in the discussion, that needs *to be* understood. Reading-wise, T.O. with its rules followed consistently, can be taught with a fair amount of success (if enuf time is used to hammar it home). But writing-wise (spelling), it is a much greater problem. Even well educated persons hav to consult the dictionary more frequently to be sure of the correct spelling than for meaning. So how do you expect a young, immature pupil to be able to master spelling?

In re: the two *th*-sounds; some foren languages (viz. Spanish) do not hav both sounds. Hence children of foren extraction find one symbol for both sounds to be confusing.

Look back in the *SPB* for the article on the two *th*-sounds. Once persons hav learned to speak English properly, they ar not confused in reading by the same symbol (*th*) for both sounds, but in the *learning* stage, the distinction is *really* needed, especially by foren extration pupils. And after all, you must plan for them.

The use of four plural markers would be less confusing than two or three because the four would be based upon phonetics which the speaker alredy knows and not on rules which he seldom remembers. Non-phonetic spellings ar often a source of difficulty in remembering.

As for 2 or 3 symbolizations (*cion*, *sion, tion)* for one sound, this is no handicap reading-wise but obviously it is spelling-wise. Which one to use?

The whole point of this discussion seems to be: will the immature pupils of 1st and 2nd grade be aided more by a purely phonetic system, or by a composite system that includes phonics, look-n-say, and rules governing the irregularities. The whole premise of the i.t.a. idea is that such immature pupils ar not redy for the anomalies of English and that a detour around these obstacles makes for an easier, smoother learning period before having to tackle the irregularities. To me, that seems more logical than the composite method of teaching reading. Which of the three methods does he use to analyze new words?

It seems to me that due to the courses you hav taken in linguistics, you hav succumbed to the wiles of their pet interests – to preserve the anomalies of English and to justify them by a complicated set of rules that only a Philadelphia lawyer can understand and use. They ar the enemies of spelling reform. They ar not concerned with the difficulties of teaching-only with preserving the complicated structure of English so they will hav a good job of teaching it.

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Rationale for devising a better I. L. M.

Dear Newell: **Ed Starrett, 12-4-77**

I appreciate your quick response and evaluation of the work I sent you last week. Having read all of your articles in *SPB* for the past 13 years, I sort of expected your reactions to be a little more tolerant. I got the feeling that you feel that I am not a spelling reformer at all. If I'm not, don't tell my friends and family – I've got them all fooled.

Although I do not entirely understand some of your comments, and disagree with others, I will not attempt to answer them point by point. Let me just try to explain where I am coming from.

For reasons you do not agree with, but which make sense to me, I have tried to look at the need for spelling reform from a different point of view. Instead of starting with a system (my original idea) that did away with all silent letters and based on a one sound-one symbol premise, I started to ask myself what sounds really need changing, and which do not. I tried to learn some of the phonetic rules of the language. I began to discover that many sounds I originally thought had to be changed serve a good purpose in their present condition, and really didn't need changing. In other words, I started searching for ways to save the good and reliable present spellings and a better system for changing irregular or confusing spellings. This led me to thinking about consistent rules.

Let me give you a few examples of what I mean:

1. *Final y's.* If I start with a spelling reform system in which long vowels can be represented in one and only one way, then I must respell thousands of common words to fit that system. If, on the other

hand, I think in terms of consistent rules for the use of final y, I soon discover that in monosyllabic words the final y is almost always pronounced as long *i*; in polysyllabic words it has the sound of long *e.* Whenever there is an exception to this rule, then the exceptions are respelled. Thus we can retain very common and familiar endings such as: *by, my, try,* etc., and all the familiar adverbial endings – which, incidentally, serve as a clue system for reading comprehension. You may claim that children can't learn rules. My point is that they can, if we make them consistent.

2. *Silent final e's.* As you know we cannot presently teach children a rule for the final, silent *e.* About 50% of the time it makes the previous vowel long, and 50% of the time it doesn't. Again if we think in terms of rules instead of systems, it is possible to retain 50% of the words unchanged. If we remove the *e* from words in which it does not make the preceding vowel long, we make some excellent changes *(hav, giv,* etc.). The net result of this one change (that just about anyone will accept) is that hundreds of words are easier to spell and read. We also establish a 100% rule for silent *e* words. We have also *not* eliminated ways of representing the long vowel sound as we would do with the phonetic systems approach. Armed with just that one rule, we could now write more interesting and natural stories for children.

It is only because the creators of these systems (WES, Diacritic Marking, etc.) think of reading as purely phonetics that they invent systems like these. Only in the mind of the spelling reformer, whose only concern is pure phonetics, is it necessary to respell "hur" or to use a "z". If reading were a simple matter of sound reproduction, then I would agree that we need these radical respellings. What is really more difficult for a child – a good and consistent rule, or a strange configuration that may well be unlike anything he has ever experienced before in print? And, pray tell, which system will be easier when it comes to eventual transition.

What I have been trying to tell you is there is a more realistic way of looking at spelling reform. I don't concoct things out of the top of my head – that's the easy way out. I had already invented a system of spelling reform which I junked several years ago. Just establish your consistent representation of each sound and then all you need is a dictionary. I've got at least ten different alphabets proposed for spelling, and if I tried a little harder, probably could find at least that many more. All of these alphabets have the same glaring fault – they try to do too much changing. I believe it was no less an authority of the English language than Mencken who warned against trying to do too much. If the way words look is not important, and if the average person could care less (as you contend), how come we haven't made progress on spelling reform?

Unless spelling reformers are in it for a hobby, I feel we are all concerned about acceptance. If we don't want acceptance, then why bother in the first place? And I don't think we can change everything just to agree with some system we've invented. Imagine a doctor saying, "You've got an inflamed appendix, so I'm going to take out your whole insides." Imagine a preacher saying, "Everybody is a sinner," or an auto mechanic saying, "Your car doesn't run as well as it should, so I'm going to put it in the junk pile." Imagine the Mayor of Detroit proclaiming that because of the slums he will destroy every house in Detroit. Well, in my mind, the spelling reformer who cannot see any good at all in the English spelling is using the same kind of logic. My point is that we should save the good or consistent features and attempt to get rid of the bad or inconsistent. This should be our first concern.

Despite the tone of your letter and the fact that we do not agree on some things, I want to tell you I still have the utmost respect for you and the work you have done over the years. Despite our differences I hope we can still communicate. Thanks for the help you have given me in the past.

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[Spelling Reform Anthology §12.8 p177 in the printed version]
[Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring 1978 p20 in the printed version]

Quo vadis corrector?

Mr. Ed. Starrett, **Newell W. Tune, Dec. 14, 1977**

Dear Ed.: I am sorry you misunderstood my intentions – I am sure you are a dedicated spelling reformer AND a concerned teacher of reading to pupils. I merely thought you should try to analyze your thoughts as to why you are proceding in the direction you are. I'm sure your ideas are influenced by two divergent means of attaining the goals of better education via reformed spelling: lst, getting it accepted by present literate adults, and 2nd, by getting perfection in the system. These two qualifications are mutually antagonistic. You cannot placate our literate adults who long ago learned to recognize non-fonetic words by sight and associate with them the spoken sounds of each word. So you must decide which way you (or the reform system) should go. Any system that is based on minimal change is not going to be fonetic or as easy to teach as a more radical but more reliable system. Any system that is based on *rules* for spelling and pronunciation will not be as easy to teach as a system that is reasonably or nearly perfected fonetically. Do you really think you can teach reading in T.O. by the rules you suggested or even in T.O. modified by regularizing rules?

But you may be able to put forth your ideas as a means of getting our present literate adults to *tolerate* a gradual use of *some* regularizing rules for spelling, as the examples you gave. This idea may take hold if presented in a manner that shows the intention to upgrade teaching methods as well as making it easier for semiliterate adults to read what they see in the newspapers and magazines. Try putting forth these ideas in articles to editors of newspapers and magazines who are receptive to innovative ideas: 1. I think the first step should be to make the silent terminal *e* reliable. 2. The second step to be S.R.-1. 3. Drop the unnecessary silent letters in some 880 or more words (see my article in Spring 1970). 4. Use doubled consonants consistently to indicate the preceding vowel is short.

The use of these 4 rules wou1d produce a Regularized English that is reasonably close to T.O. (so much so that no one would have the slightest difficulty in reading it) but would remove quite a few of the freak irregularities that cause a lot of trouble for beginners.

I don't like introducing the final *y* rule to 1st and 2nd graders. This rule allows 4 different pronunciations for *y*: 1. long *i* as in terminal *y* in one syllable words, 2. long *e* at the end of polysyllable words, 3. short *i* when *y* is in a syllable and, 4. consonant *y* in words where *y* is at the beginning of a syllable (which is difficult for adults to recognize – let alone immature children).

One thing you have overlooked: children, when learning to read, are not acquainted with the spelling practices of more than a few words. Those few they have seen on the grocers' shelves are usually spelt fonetically. They do *not* know about the irregularities of English or that they need to learn *rules* in order to be able to spell a new word. Children who learned to read in i.t.a. made much faster progress, wrote longer, more interesting themes, tackled longer words, than children who were taught in T.O. by any of several methods (see the Bullock Com. Report). They did not find the transition to T.O. to be difficult, but it did take some time to assimilate all the anomalies of English, which had to be learned one-by-one. Even Pitman was greatly over-concerned about the transition and made several unnecessary concessions (I thought), such as *tch* in *catch,* etc. But the case of transition by pupils has amazed all who taught via i.t.a. And the ease of reading in i.t.a. by literate adults has amazed almost all who have tried it. These points have been conveniently overlooked by opponents of i.t.a. But openminded persons should not.

Here is some reasoning that you should consider seriously – everyone who is learning to read has a spoken vocabulary that is many times as big (perhaps a hundred times) as his written language. Therefore the spoken language is overwhelmingly important in his learning to read. The natural inclination of a pupil (child or adult) is to associate the sounds of words with the spelling. This is proven by noticing and analyzing spelling errors. (See Mary Johnson's articles in *SPB.)* Almost half of all spelling errors made by boys are because of attempts to spell fonetically. The other half of the errors are caused by a half dozen or so reasons: carelessness, reversals, improper pronunciation, inability to visualize, association of the sounds with the wrong symbols, and a few other inexplainable causes.

Girls are less prone to fonetic errors than boys because they are more fotografically minded. They notice details and the shape of the word (its appearance) seems to tell them when they are wrong.

I did not say the way a word looks is not important. I quoted Louis Foley, who said the appearance of a word *is* important – and I agree, that if it doesn't look right, the spelling needs to be checked. I merely used that to show how much importance literate adults attach to the appearance of T.O. words and how their reading speed might be upset by a radical spelling reform such as W.E. But that does not mean that because of this we should not use W.E. as an initial learning medium to avoid all irregularities and the need for rules to be learned and considered every time the pupil tries to write a sentence.

Another point you have overlooked: It is far easier to *read* in T.O. (difficult as it is) than it is to *write* in T.O. Everyone eventually learns to recognize words by sight (by configuration and the arrangement of consonant letters because they are more reliable than the vowel letters), but when it comes to writing, many times the writer will have to look up the spelling because his visualization of the word is not sufficiently accurate to decide its correct spelling.

Have you ever contemplated, just how does a child learn to read? (see *SPB* winter, 1977). Is it by associating the sounds in words with the spelling (phonics), or by constant repetition of the spelling of each word (the old Blue-back speller), or by look-n-say? Or by a combination of all of these and other methods? (because no one method works well with T.O.'s irregularities). But the tests in England and U.S.A. have demonstrated rather strongly that the *method used* is immaterial *if* the medium used is reliably fonetic – and conversely, 3 different methods (with the attendant confusion caused by not knowing which method of attack to use on new words) are required when the orthography has some words that are fonetic, some that follow rules (part of the time) and some words that do neither but must be learned individually as in look-n-say. Would a system with your 4 or 5 rules overcome these difficulties?

As to an agreement among spelling reformers, or among educators as to the best medium to use, I'm sure it would be impossible to get any sort of an agreement, but one system might be tolerated if sufficient practice materials were available. I attribute the fair amount of success of i.t.a. to the more than 400 different children's books available. Its chief limitation is its special typefonts and the lack of many typewriters with i.t.a. symbols. World English, which uses almost the same spellings as i.t.a., does not have that limitation. And W.E. has been given permission by Sir James Pitman to use paste-overs in W.E. on i.t.a. textbooks in a comparative classroom test. This should show which system is superior, or if neither, the advantages of each, over T.O.

Yours cordially, Newell

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