Spelling Progress Bulletin Spring, 1980

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

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1. Report on the 1979 SSS Conference, by Kitty Furst.*

* NSW, Australia.

The writer enjoyed the Conference convened by the Simplified Spelling Society, which has been in existence for more than a half a century and is at present under the patronage of his Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh. The Conference was attended by about 40 persons, at Nene College, Moulton Park near Northampton, England. It was held from July 27 thru July 30, 1979. In view of the large number of papers presented, it was necessary to limit each speaker to 25 minutes, with 15 minutes for discussions which followed each paper.

Thruout the English-speaking world one hears complaints about the ever falling standard of literacy. It would be futile to put the blame on educators or on the young people's lack of desire to learn. It is the system of traditional orthography itself which is to blame, with its inconsistencies and vagaries. Where

a language is phonetic, knowledge of the sounds of the alphabet is all that is needed to be literate, whereas in a language which is so constructed that sounds and letters do not agree, school-children have to learn the written form of each word individually, with the result that it takes years to master the basic skills of reading and writing-time which otherwise would be utilized in order to gain knowledge in other fields.

Whilst most of the speakers favoured a reform of English spelling, a fair hearing was given also to traditionalists, who presented information on the frequency of certain spelling errors found with school children, and showed means and ways to overcome the difficulties of the existing systems, some of them very ingenious. But the very fact that one has to resort to elaborate devices clearly demonstrates that only a thoro reform of the system of spelling itself can bring about the advantages enjoyed by speakers of phonetic languages. The Initial Teaching Alphabet, devised by Sir James Pitman, is in fact, one of those stepping stones towards literacy in traditional orthography. Experiments have shown that when students are first introduced to a system that is based on phonetic principles (even if it is not perfectly phonetic), the ability to read is acquired with such a speed that switching over to traditional orthography these students are better readers than those who learned to read in traditional orthography right from the beginning.

Among the different systems of reformed spelling presented at the conference, there are some that tend to avoid radical changes and merely aim at abolishing certain glaring absurdities. There are others that emphasize the acceptance factor and only aim at dropping silent letters. The objections to these suggestions is that with such trifling amendments one fails to get at the toot of the matter. The new set-up would still require memorizing the written forms of each word individually. It is, of course, possible to frame rules which cover a large proportion-possibly a majority-of words and earmark for change of spellings those words which do not comply with the rule. This task was carried out in a scholarly fashion by Prof. Axel Wijk. Unfortunately he died earlier in the month and his paper was read by his widow, Pia.

An entirely different approach is based on the phonetic principle. As there are some 40-odd distinctive phonemes (essential sounds), and the alphabet we use has only 36 letters, the alphabet is deficient and needs to be augmented. New symbols can largely be avoided by using digraphs for certain sounds as we do now but consistently.

Elaborate rules are difficult for the school child to master, and going beyond the limits of the Latin alphabet would cut off English not only from its past, but also from the rest of Europe as well. Between the two approaches – the cautious one and the radical one – there should be a compromise. Such a compromise should, on the one hand, create a situation in which it is always possible to deduce from the written form of a word an acceptable spoken form and likewise, in most instances, to deduce from the spoken form of a word, its written form; on the other hand it should avoid introducing new symbols or unusual combinations of letters and, generally speaking, be based upon current practices as far as this is compatible with the principle of phonetic accuracy. A system in which phonetic accuracy,

modified by practical considerations, is achieved leads to a situation in which a foreigner who is ignorant of the language in general, but has been taught the pronunciation rules would be in a position to read an English text presented to him almost faultlessly – almost, not entirely, because some aspects of pronunciation, such as sentence stress, cannot be shown, with the result that the reading of such an imaginary foreigner would be slightly pedantic, tho fully intelligible.

Some of the papers presented at the Conference demonstrated that the lack of logic inherent in traditional orthography stifles the power of reasoning in children and adolescents; dyslexia and some aspects of juvenile delinquency can be attributed to this factor. One of the speakers was Prof. Abraham Citron who went so far as to assert that traditional orthography is psychic child abuse, since the fundamental law of consistency does not apply.

In recent years, money has been decimalised in Australia and in Great Britain, and gradually the Metric system of weights and measures, as well as the Celsius scale on the thermometer are being introduced in English speaking countries, doing away with complicated systems which were discarded in other countries long ago.

It appears appropriate to point out that just as money, weights and measures have been simplified, spelling, too, could and should be simplified.

In two years time there will be another conference on spelling reform-probably in Scotland. Supporters of spelling reform do not delude themselves into believing that spelling reform will come about quickly or easily. The public has to be educated in the merits of reform and the differences between the various schemes bridged. The hope, however, can be confidently expressed, that whatever emerges in the end will afford the maximum advantage to speakers of English as well as foreign learners, with the result that there will no longer be any cause for complaining about illiteracy or semi-literacy, since literacy will be within the reach of all, and no longer the prerogative of those who are endowed with a good mechanical or photographic memory.

Let us hope that the United Nations Education Council has the wisdom and foresight to endorse such a proposal because it should be right in the realm of their objectives.

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2. Program of the Second International Conference on Reading & Spelling, held at Nene College, Northampton, England, July 27–30, 1979.

The order of the papers presented at the Conference has been rearranged in three categories-[See **papers from all SSS conferences**.]

A. Present English spelling and its teaching.

1. *Analogy in English Spelling,* by Dr. D.G. Scragg, Univ. of Manchester, Eng. Pub. in SPB, Winter, 1979.
2. *Research on Spelling Reform,* by Dr. John Downing, Univ. of Victoria, B. C. Canada. Pub, SPB, Spring 1980.
3. *Phonographic Relationships in English Spelling and their Implications,* by Fergus McBride.
4. *Implications of Spelling Reform for Certain Phonemes. Graphic R,* by Dr. Emmett A. Betts, Research Prof, Univ. of Miami, Fla. Pub. SPB Winter, 1979.
5. *Language, Orthography and the Schwa,* by Dr. Katherine P. Betts. Pub. SPB, Summer, 1979.
6. A *Pedagogical Purview of Orthography,* by George O'Halloran former Education Officer, The Gambia, W. Alf. H. M. Overseas Education Service. Pub. SPB, Spring, 1980.
7. *Patterns in Pupils' Spelling Errors,* by Dr. David Moseley, Univ. of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Eng.
8. *In Defence of Conservatism in English Spelling,* by Dr. Philip Smith, Projektgruppe fur Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen, Netherlands, Pub. SPB, Summer, 1980.
9. *A Multisensory Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Spelling,* by Alun Bye, Head, Remedial Teaching Service, Northamptonshire, Eng. Pub. SPB, Spring, 1980.

B. The Case for Reform.

10. *The Cultural Impediments of English Orthography, by* Vic. Paulsen, Publisher, San Francisco, Ca.
11. *Traditional Orthography as Psychic Child Abuse,* by Dr. Abraham F. Citron, Wayne State Univ, and Cloyzelle K. Jones, Univ. of Mich. Pub. SPB, Fall, 1978.
12. *The Effects of a Simplified Spelling on Children Readiness to Read,* by Dr. Derek Thackray, Editor of *Reading* (UKRA). Pub. SPB Spring, 1980.
13. *Modern Technology and Spelling Reform,* by Dr. Helen B. Bisgard, Pub. SPB, Winter, 1979.

C. Practical Aspects of Spelling Reform.

14. *Is Spelling Reform Feasible?* by Mrs. Elsie Oakensen, Head, Daventry Teachers Centre, Eng. Pub. *SPB* Summer, 1980.
15. *Spelling Reform and The Psychological Reality of English Spelling Rules,* by Dr. Robert Baker, Univ. of Southampton. Pub. SPB Summer, 1980.
Principles of reform – some proposals:
    a) *The Right go Read,* by Dr. Axel Wijk, formerly Stockholm Univ. Pub. SPB, Spring, 1980.
    b) *Some Proposed Principles for Simplifying English Orthography,* by Dr. John R. Beech, New Univ. of Ulster, Coleraine, N. Ireland. Pub. SPB, Summer,'80.
    c) A *Transitional Spelling Reform for Adults and Learners,* by Valerie Yule, Child Psychologist. Aberdeen, Scotland.
    d) *On the Choice of the Right Symbol,* by Dr. Walter Gassner, Translator, Randwick, Australia.
    e) *The Phonetic Representation of Speech, Ess Ess Ess Fonetik,* by S. S. Eustace, Sec. Simplified Spelling Society.
    f) *Reading and Writing in English,* by S. Bakowski.
17. *Practical Aspects of Implementing a Simpler Spelling,* by Valerie Yule, Child Psychologist, Aberdeen, Scotland.
18. *Conclusion and Comments.* Plans for the next conference in 1981, by Valerie Yule.

3. Abstracts of papers presented at the
2nd International Conference on Reading & Spelling

Baker, Robert G. *Spelling Reform and the Psychological Reality of English Spelling Rules.*
Proposals for reformed orthographies for English have generally been the brain-children of individual linguists or educators or of committees of such individuals. Thus such spelling systems conform to the sophisticated linguistic intuitions of the experts. The systems are designed, however, for use by non-experts and it is non-expert opinion which holds political sway in terms of the adoption and implementation of any proposed spelling reform.

An experiment is described in which linguistically naive literate native adult speakers are asked to reform the spellings of selected English words according to their own notions of orthographic rationality. Results are discussed in terms of the psychological reality of particular spelling rules and by implication the intuitive plausibility of particular dimensions of orthographic change. Subjects were also interviewed and asked to explain their behaviour toward spelling reform. Results provide a picture of attitudes towards English spelling and a framework of considerations which should be borne in mind by would-be spelling-reformers.

Bakowski, S. *Reading and Writing in English.*
A foreigner like myself is very much aware that learning English is like learning two languages – the spoken language and the spelling – and yet, in spite of this, what advantages English has might help it to be the international language of the world were it not for its unreliable spelling.

In my own attempt to tackle this problem, I put forward a proposal I call system B, but since this is very different from what literate English people are accustomed to, a supplementary proposal, 'system Z', modifies system B by admitting move features of familiar spelling.

Beech, John R. *Some Proposed Principles for Simplifying English Spelling.*
There would be several advantages for everyone learning to read to changing our present spelling system to make it more accurately represent our present pronunciation of words. However, there would be many problems with changing to a completely phonetic system.

The following guidelines for regularizing traditional orthography are proposed.
1. Where several rules apply, adopt the most frequent one.
2. Retain frequently used but non-phonetic combinations (e.g., *-tion*).
3. One should tolerate cases in which one letter, or a multi-letter combination may represent more than one phoneme.
4. Subtle distinctions in sounds should be ignored (e.g., s and z sounds should be represented by the common letter 's').
5. Ambiguous vowel sounds, particularly at the end of words, should be omitted.
6. Double consonants and the letter 'k' should be abolished.
7. In cases of spelling ambiguity, a spelling should be based on most frequent spelling responses by laymen.
8. Spelling reform should take place simultaneously over all English speaking nations and it should be made standard.

The aim of these guidelines is to retain as many as possible of the rules of traditional orthography but to employ these rules in as regular a fashion as possible. A system to which any adult can transfer without much difficulty is far more likely to be acceptable to everybody and consequently from the political point of view is far more likely to be implemented.

Betts, Emmett A. *Graphic R.*
Graphic r represents both consonant and vowel phonemes and, therefore, is a maverick for both phonemicists and orthographers. Hence, it provides frustration par excellence for educators concerned with phonics – the relationships between graphemes (spellings) and phonemes (sounds). Perhaps this and succeeding reports on graphic r will have served one primary purpose: to spotlight traps and, at the same time, to offer a rationale for regularizing spellings for beginners in reading.

Betts, Katherine P. *Language, Orthography and the Schwa.*
This discussion has focused on a somewhat exhaustive examination of the schwa /ə/: its definition, phonemic basis, occurrence in syllabic *1, m,* and *n*, morphophonemic alternations, variability in dictionary respellings, graphemic basis, and a mini-study of its interpretation in 48 proposed orthographics for English. However, the undercurrent of this discussion propels the schwa in terms of its broader implications for reading and writing. Thus the schwa has served as a classic example of several controversial facets of the English phonemic-graphemic system, as well as an example of the morphemic basis of English spellings. Also pondered upon – but briefly – have been the effects of syllable and phrase stress on English phoneme-grapheme relationships which shift in discourse (as they should). Furthermore, syllable and phrase stress combine with pitch and juncture to form the melody - or intonation – of language.

Consistency and simplicity of phoneme-grapheme relationships in the English language are viable objectives, worthy of pursuit, particularly for the beginner attempting the acquisition of reading and writing skills. That English spellings are notoriously complex in their representation of speech, is a valid premise. That several languages (e.g., Spanish, Greek) have a more nearly consistent phonemic representation in their writing systems must also be accepted. However, a one-to-one phoneme-grapheme correspondence is a goal in conflict with the melody of the English (or most any other) language and the many dialects it represents.

In any event, may our efforts be guided by empirical evidence in the classroom, by professional objectivity, and by the practical application of a sound theoretical structure. To bring complex, worthwhile goals to fruition requires the collaborative efforts of many and, above all, a genuine concern and love for mankind.

Bisgard, Helen B. *Modern Technology and Spelling Reform.*
The introduction mentions the significance of certain developments in the past 100 year history of the Phonemic Spelling Council and its antecedent organizations as they encouraged investigation of all aspects of phonemic spelling of the English language. The Council's recommendations for making easier the learning of writing and reading range from merely making initial learning of standard spelling emotionally satisfying to promoting permanent reform for public acceptance as soon as possible.

The likelihood of the computer's causing this change is exemplified by the reading machine for blind people now available in a few libraries thruout the nation. A reverse process may perfect a device which will "hear" spoken messages and write them on paper using phonemic spelling. Such a system of spelling would become familiar and eventually acceptable to the public.

The standard of pronunciation used by the machine will be the generally accepted one now used by a dictionary. This is the General American speech used in Voice of America world-wide broadcasts.

The task of organizations such as the British Simplified Spelling Society and the Phonemic Spelling Council is to assure the certainty of success. A strategy must be developed for becoming experts in computer linguistics.

Bye, Alan *The Teaching of Spelling.*
Working from the premise that many poor spellers have poor powers of visual memory and visual imagery for words, this paper suggests some principles for training these subskills by teaching careful word study and encouraging the use of spelling mnemonics.

Citron, Abraham F. and Jones, Cloyzelle K. *Traditional English Orthography as Psychic Child Abuse.*
In the international year of the child we should look more insistently for the sources of the difficulties which block great percentages of children in English-speaking lands from learning to spell, to write and to read.

The law of consistency or of reliability is basic to all learning. We are consistent with almost all symbols (traffic, directional symbols, time-telling symbols, musical notes, numbers, etc.) which we desire children to learn. Only in our orthography do we abandon consistency; and it is precisely here that we encounter grave academic problems.

Through a long and varied development, English orthography has evolved into a form which too often abuses the basic alphabetic intent and purpose of its origin, which is signifying or calling forth the sounds of speech.

Three main defences of inconsistent spelling are put forward by the reading establishment: the dialectal argument, the etymological argument, the lexical argument. Under scrutiny, all of these arguments collapse. Experience with i.t.a. and with Unifon demonstrates that children learn to read more easily, with lower failure rates, with regular orthographies, than children using traditional orthography.

Insistence on the maintenance of traditional spelling as a necessary guarantee of high level written communication constitutes a huge educational hoax.

Pounding irrational forms into the heads of children is not education; it is the action of a mindless tradition acting with iron authority. Stripped of its elaborate traditional rationalizations, this practice can be recognized for precisely what it is, a form of child abuse.

Downing, John *Research on Spelling Reform.*
The members of the Simplified Spelling Society are united in their belief that the traditional orthography (t.o.) of English should be simplified, but they are divided in their ideas about the manner of the simplification. Research in human psychology can help the Society in two ways:

(1) Psychological research findings contain the proof that the general objective of simplifying English spelling brings great benefits in the education of children whose mother tongue is English and in the teaching of English as a second language.

(2) Psychological research on human motivation can be used to plan a practical strategy for spelling reform that will satisfy the divergent views of different members of the Simplified Spelling Society. This paper will summarize the evidence on both of these matters.

Eustace, S. Sinclair *Ess Ess Ess Fonik.*
A phonetic system of representing unambiguously all the sounds of European languages by means of letters available on typewriters. Not intended as a system of reformed spelling.

Gassner, Walter *On the Cboice of the Right Symbol.*
The English language needs a reform of its orthography because at present there is no reliable relationship between the sounds and the letters. To those who, in principle, support reform, but wish to tread warily, it has to be pointed out that it is not enough to concentrate on certain glaring absurdities. If there is to be a reform, it has to be a thorough going one, a reform that creates a situation in which it is always possible to deduce from the written form of a word, an acceptable spoken form of that word, and like-wise – subject to certain qualifications – to deduce from an established spoken form, its written form.

With all the disadvantages it exhibits, traditional orthography can still serve as a basis for a reformed system that complies with these requirements. In this reformed system, only the letters of the Latin alphabet are used.

It is sometimes argued that indicating the pronunciation is not the sole purpose of writing, and that etymology and the way in which words are related to each other should be decisive factors. But if spelling is to provide certain additional information, it should never do so at the expense of its chief duty – that of indicating the pronunciation.

The fact that certain words have different meanings in different contexts is sometimes a disadvantage. With regard to cases in which traditional orthography does not discriminate between them, it has to be borne in mind that a spelling reform cannot do away with all disadvantages; it should solely aim at doing away with the disadvantages that are due to the unphonetic character of traditional orthography. But the reform should not create new disadvantages that cannot be anticipated.

It should not be advisable to introduce spelling reform in a large number of small steps, for this would, on every occasion, require reprinting of dictionaries, etc. and would render obsolete all matter previously printed. This is too much of a handicap to overcome.

Jamieson, Hugh V. *One Sound-One Symbol: the Sensible Solution to Simplified Spelling.*
What is functional literacy? According to one modern dictionary, it is the ability to read well enough to function in a complex society. A functional ability in mathematics, citizenship, science, and health has, by the very nature of things, to be accomplished by a functional use of reading and writing. However, the broad use of misfunctional symbols to form words has been a tormenting handicap during the whole development of language.

A child is born with an amazing instinct for logic, starting with how he gets his first meal and lasting until he begins learning to write words he has just learned to speak. From then on he is forced to cultivate illogic by our present spelling system. By a 30,000 word count in' One Sound-One Symbol' dictionary, it is shown that there are over 60,000 misuses of symbols in our present spelling system. That is why it takes from kindergarten through high school for the average child to become functional in reading and spelling.

I have discovered that our alphabet has an even 40 symbols that are each recognized universally for one particular sound. Unfortunately, they are used so very often for other sounds in other words that our spelling has to be learned by rote and not by a system.

In this presentation, I will describe a workable 'One Sound-One Symbol' system for spelling the English language.

McBride, Fergus *Phonographic Relationships in English Spelling and their implications.*
Simplification of the writing system is required much more from the writer's point of view than the reader's. Experienced readers of traditional orthography can cope with almost any innovation using the conventional alphabet because, in reading, we have cues from a variety of levels to draw upon in order to get the message. By contrast, in writing, the cues to "correct" spelling are few and unreliable. The difficulties in spelling arise when one has to make a choice between alternatives which are acceptable on phonemic grounds. The existing rules, commonly thought to assist the speller in making these choices, cover a minimal number of cases are invalid (i.e. do not operate) in even a majority of instances, and in addition are difficult to understand and apply. Almost 70% of Scottish teachers use them. Interestingly, the rules covering the inflexions are generally dependable. The morpheme referenced rules are more useful than the phoneme referenced ones.

We can determine the spellings which present most difficulty, i.e. where there are plausible alternatives. We must either produce effective rules (I've found this impossible), or reform phonemically.

More generally, we need much more communication between reformers who tend to be isolated with tunnel vision concentrated upon their own ideas or spelling system. Conferences may help to do this. Is it too early to ask for a Government Commission to hear views and reach a consensus? Could we prepare a questionnaire for reformers on their views on major issues such as gradual or all at once?, representation of the schwa?, additional letters to the alphabet, etc. in order to get a consensus upon which way to "progress."

Moseley, David *Patterns in Pupil's Spelling Errors.*
Abstract not available.

Oakensen, Elsie *Is Spelling Reform Feasible?*
The origin of spelling: Originally spelling was the true matching of spoken sounds each with a different symbol. It began when symbols were first used to represent sounds instead of pictures.

English is a composite language. Although the individual spellings which have been incorporated from other languages may have been systematic, they are incompatible with each other.

English, although richly endowed with many advantages has, in comparison with other languages, one serious defect – its unphonetic spelling. One letter may vary in many ways with regard to its pronunciation, while one particular sound may be spelt in an equally large number of different ways. Additionally every letter of the alphabet is silent in some words.

Four definite advantages are seen for a reform of our spellings. The opposers of spelling reform see five insuperable obstacles to its use. The proponents of spelling reform offer in rebuttal six arguments. But still there is the problem: if it were decided to introduce a reformed spelling, which type of reform would be selected, and how?

O'Halloran, George A *Pedagogical Purview of Orthography.*
The English language has long been used as a means of class discrimination, until this century when it was decided that all (or nearly all) children ought to be able to read and to spell. A spelling reform would make it easier for children to learn reading and spelling. But which pronunciation should the new spelling be based upon? It seems unlikely that there will ever be a unification of the various dialects of English.

If we were to change to a phonemic script, could we retain the diaphonic property of the present English spelling? The author's experiences in The Gambia in trying to devise a phonemic script are detailed. His theory is that the later in its development a language is written down, the better for all concerned. English was probably written down too soon. He also thinks that a phonemic reform would contain in itself the germ of the dissolution of the English language.

Vic Paulson *The Cultural Impediments of English Orthography.*
Inspired by the failure of the Federal Government's ten-year "Right-to-Read" program, this paper by the designer of TORSKRIPT is a comprehensive package which

(1) relates English illiteracy to the so-called "correct spelling" now in use,
(2) traces that "system's" historic origins,
(3) analyzes the nature of its deep-rooted investiture, and,
(4) presents novel strategy for displacing it.

Evidence is presented to support the author's proposition that conventional spelling is a pathogenic reflexive cultural entity that makes prisoners of those conditioned by it. The incapacity to escape from that bondage is classified as a collective mental disorder of societal proportions. A psychotherapeutic approach to the dispersal of it is suggested, beginning with the use of the clinical term "pathography" to describe conventional spelling.

Three additional steps in the strategy are as follows:
(1) large-scale comparative tests of a variety of alternative writing systems designed for Modern English.
(2) A dynamic legal attack against conventional spelling as exclusive usage, on the grounds of anti-trust violation, environmental pollution, consumer fraud, and sex discrimination.
(3) The publishing of vital public information in bi-literate form, with an improved alternative writing system side-by-side with the old.

The author does not mention any particular alternative system.

Scragg, D. G. *Analogy in English spelling.*
English orthography has a history of ten centuries – longer than any other language using the alphabet. English spelling has grown organically – not haphazardly. Understanding how our spelling evolved betters our chances of seeing why it went wrong, and how to right the anomalies it contains. Analogy is a powerful factor in language – especially so in spelling. Spelling errors are often due to analogy. Analogy is sometimes blamed for interfering with etymology, and correctly so. Visual links to closely related words are important but some such visual links to the past have outlived their usefulness. Wijk has applied the principle of analogy systematically and this author applauds it. But analogy must be applied with caution and scientific study.

Smith, Philip T. *In defence of conservatism in English spelling.*
This paper reviews recent psychological studies of reading and spelling. It will be argued that, on the evidence available, the best characterization of the reading process is one where the reader creates many different levels of linguistic representation in the course of reading the text (phonetic, morphemic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, etc.). Because English orthography contains information pertinent to many of these levels (unlike a phonetic alphabet, which, by definition, provides only phonetic information), it is suggested that current English spelling is of more help to a fluent adult reader than, most of the alternatives offered by spelling reformers.

Thackray, D. V. *The Effects of a Simplified Spelling on Children's Readiness to Read.*
Lack of experimentation in England until recently was due to a lack of published reading readiness tests.

In the author's first experiment, the earlier reading readiness results were correlated with the later reading achievement results, visual and auditory discrimination correlated significantly with later reading achievement.

Because of its simplicity in its visual and auditory characteristics, protagonists of i.t.a. have suggested that children using i.t.a. should be ready to read at an earlier age than if learning to read with the more complex t.o. The author, knowing of the importance of visual and auditory discrimination for reading readiness, investigated this hypothesis using 300 children in 16 schools over a period of three years. Matched groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children were established.

The results showed that children learning to read with i.t.a. were ready to read six months to a year earlier than the t.o. children. The Bullock Report was discussed.

Wijk, Axel *The Right To Read.*
It is suggested that an experiment should be undertaken to test whether English reading and writing can be caught more efficiently and successfully by the aid of the proposed new method than by the various combined Whole-word and phonic reading schemes that are now in general use. Owing to the confused spelling system, a large proportion of English children experience immense difficulties in learning to read. In this connection, we should further draw attention to the "Right to Read" movement in the U.S.A.

An approach to the reading problem which will enable children to learn to read more or less exclusively by the aid of phonics methods is by the aid of a regularized spelling. Regularized Inglish Spelling offers such a possibility, and deserves a full investigation.

The reading scheme consists of two parts: Book One for the introductory stage and Book Two for the advanced stage. Each book indicates the phonic details in the progress of the reading ability of the pupils. The Manual is written in Regularized Inglish so that the reader can see that anybody who can read traditional English can easily read in the new regularized form.

Yule, Valerie *A Transitional Spelling Reform for Adults and Learners.* The scheme recognises the need to find the 'best fit' spelling for the sometimes conflicting requirements of learners, machines and fluent users, the educated elite and the 'educationally handicapped,' native speakers and second language learners, the changing English language and the maintenance of continuity with present English spelling.

A very simple initial learning spelling follows the lines of World English Spelling. Learners then progress to a Transitional Spelling which achieves a regularised approximation to conventional English spelling by modifying Lerner's Spelling with 12 rules and 12 sight-words.

Transition Spelling is immediately readable by today's readers, and as with Lerner's Spelling, the rules can be programmed for electronic machines. It can be introduced into print and learnt for writing, in four straightforward stages which, if unmodified by the 12 rules, would lead directly to Lerner's Spelling. As it is reform by stages, it can begin now, with Harry Lindgren's SR-1, and later forms can be modified as research and experience determine.

The full scheme includes proposals for more effective techniques to teach reading and writing once present unreliable spelling no longer complicates 'the reading process.'

Yule, Valerie *The Practical Matter of Implementing Spelling Reform.*
Spelling reformers must consider the needs, attitudes and abilities of the people who are to use a reformed spelling. A theoretically perfect phonemic spelling might prove impracticable for general and technological use even if public resistance to its introduction were overcome.

This paper looks at aspects of 'the psychology of spelling' – practical criteria to consider in designing a more efficient orthografy and planning its introduction, with techniques of consumer education and marketing.

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4. The Right to Read, by Axel Wijk, Docent*

* Stockholm, Sweden. Presented at the 2nd International Conf. of S.S.S. at Nene College, July 29, 1979

Introduction

I would like to tell you how much I appreciate having the opportunity of reading my husband's lecture to you.

My husband, Axel Wijk, passed away July 2 this month.

The thought of coming here to deliver his lecture never occurred to me at first, but then I got a call from three of Axel's colleagues, professors of English at the Univ. of Stockholm, urging me to do so.

I feel honoured and deeply grateful to be here today.

For so many, many years my husband has been working on and devoting his main interest and thinking to the same problem that you all have come to Northampton to discuss and try to solve.

My husband's lecture is entitled:

The Right to Read

In my book, *Regularized English/ Regularized Inglish,* published in 1977 by Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, I have described the outlines of an entirely new approach to the English reading problem. It is suggested that an experiment should be undertaken to test whether English reading and writing can be taught more efficiently and successfully by the aid of the proposed new method than by the various combined whole-word and phonic reading schemes that are now in general use. In view of the wide-spread dissatisfaction with the results of the existing methods of teaching reading it seems to me that we owe it to our children to leave no stone unturned in order to make it easier for them to learn to read and write. Since there can be no denying that the principle cause of the difficulty of learning to read English is the confused and antiquated spelling system of the language, it seems highly probable that a temporary regularization of the spelling for the period during which children are learning to read, may offer the most effective solution to the problem. In the proposed new spelling system, Regularized Inglish, we may have the tool that is required to solve the problem. By the aid of this spelling system which preserves the present spelling in from 90 to 95% of the vocabulary and only changes the present spelling in from 5 to 10% of the words, we shall be able to teach all the regular phonic units of the language before starting to teach the numerous exceptional spellings. In spite of the impression of hopeless confusion that the English language at first makes on the young beginner, a closer examination reveals that its pronunciation and spelling are not nearly so confused as most people are apt to think. It is only among the 3,000 commonest words that we find an exceptionally high percentage of irregular spellings, amounting to between 20 and 30%.. Since the majority of the important anomalous spellings – between 400 and 500 in all – are to be found among these 3,000 words, it is actually a comparatively simple matter to change the present irregular spelling system into a fairly regular one. This is what has been done in the proposed transitional spelling system called Regularized Inglish.

Analogy Spelling

The great jester, G. B. Shaw, who took a keen interest in the science of phonetics and who when he died bequeathed some of his money to try to bring about an English spelling reform, once stated that the spelling of English was so grotesque that the word 'fish' could be rendered by the spelling *ghoti.* There can be little doubt that he made this statement with his tongue in his cheek, but a great many people and even scholars have evidently regarded it as a statement of fact. Actually the spelling *gh* for the f-sound which we find in such words as *enough, laugh, cough,* is never used in English at the beginning of words. The spelling *o* for the short sound of *i* is only found in one single word: 'women', and whereas the spelling ii for the sh-sound is found in a large number of words, such as 'nation, action,' etc., it is never found in final position.

The spelling *ghoti* can only be regarded as a grotesque, humerous invention by Shaw, but there are a very considerable number of actual spellings in English which deviate from the general rules of the spelling system and which will therefore have to be learnt by heart, such words for example as the following:

any, many/ half, calm/ talk, water, want, was, wash/ scarcely, says, said/ aunt, laugh/ pretty, there, where, were/ bread, head, pleasure, weather, ready, heavy/ break, great/ bear, wear, heart/ eye, key, seize/ give, climb/ friend/ do, who, lose, woman, women/ come, son, among, one, once, love, move/ word, work/ broad, does, shoe, blood/ enough, though, through/ could, should, would/ you, young, four, journal/ pull, put, bury, busy/ debt, sugar, two, whole, etc.

Since the spellings of the above words, and of a great many more, constitute infringements of the general rules, it is no wonder that children who have often a strong sense of logic, are bound to get the impression that there are no reliable rules for the connection between spelling and pronunciation in their language. The question then arises whether they should be told openly that the words are irregular or whether they should be told to learn them by heart, as is usually the case in the existing reading schemes. The latter procedure which implies a kind of indoctrination, leads to the harmful effect that the children cannot distinguish between regular and irregular spellings.

Owing to the confused spelling system, a large proportion of English children experience immense difficulties in learning to read. According to an official investigation into reading ability which was carried out in 1948 by a committee of experts at the request of the then Minister of Education, Mr. George Tomlinson, and which was reported in the Ministry of Education Pamphlet no. 18, entitled *Reading Ability,* no less than 307 of all 15-year-olds were classified as backward readers, i.e. as having reading ages 20% below their real ages. Furthermore 1.4% of these were illiterate and 4.3% semi-literate with reading ages of below 7 years and between 7 and 9 years respectively. Very similar conditions occur in America, as may be seen from Rudolf Flesch's book, *Why Johnny Can't Read,* published in 1955, which became a best seller, evidently because so many parents had found that their children had great difficulties in learning to read. Judging from recent official investigations into reading ability, we have no reason to think that conditions have materially changed since the above-mentioned investigation was carried out about 30 years ago.

In order to try to find a solution to the reading problem, special organizations have been founded in recent times. Thus the International Reading Assoc., IRA, was founded in USA in 1956 through amalgamation of a number of separate associations in various American states, and soon after, in 1963, the United Kingdom Reading Assoc. was founded in Great Britain. Besides other activities, these

associations hold annual conferences, which are intended to provide an opportunity for discussions of common problems and at which members may present papers concerning research that has been done in the field. So far, however, it can hardly be said that these activities have led to any tangible results as regards an improvement in the general standards of reading and writing in the various countries.

In this connection we should further draw attention to the "Right To Read" movement which was started in the USA towards the end of the 1960's and which has set up as its goal solving the reading problem and hoping to do away with virtual illiteracy in the course of the 1970's. A brief account of the movement will be found in the article, "The Right to Read," by Prof. Alton Raygor, published in the proceedings of the UKRA conference in Manchester in 1971 (pp. 21-23). According to this article, the American educational authorities were planning to spend about ten million dollars of federal money and in addition some 460 million dollars from the various states for the fiscal year of 1972 in order to help solve this problem. Similar sums were probably intended to be spent for each of the following years during the 1970's, but there seems to be no reason why this immense expenditure should stop by 1980, since new millions of children desiring to learn to read will continue entering schools every year. The problem of reaching children to read English is, however, not one that requires an enormous expenditure of money for its solution in the first place. It is instead a question of hitting upon the best method to deal with the problem.

Experiment Needed

Since it is generally recognized that the principle cause of the reading problem is the exceptionally large number of irregular spellings among the commonest words, the most rational and very likely also the simplest and most efficient solution to the problem would seem to be to eliminate these irregular spellings and replace them by regular ones for the period during which children are learning to read. That's why I have suggested that an experiment should be carried out to teach reading by the aid of Regularized Inglish which can be used as a transitional stage before passing on to ordinary English spelling. Unfortunately my proposal has not so far met with much response from the British and American reading associations. No one has, however, maintained that I am wrong in my ideas, nor has anyone tried to refute my arguments. Seeing that the associations have been founded for the purpose of finding a solution to the reading problem and seeing that they have no other solution to offer than the existing unsatisfactory reading schemes, it is difficult to understand why they should be unwilling to carry out an experiment with a regularized system of spelling. It is perhaps not altogether unlikely that such an experiment might lead to demands for a reform of English spelling, but since there is nothing in the plan itself that must of necessity lead to reform, this can hardly be regarded as a serious objection to the experiment. In view of the enormous difficulties to which the existing reading schemes expose a very large proportion of the children and considering the immense pedagogical and financial advantages of a satisfactory solution to the problem, it is difficult to see why we should hesitate to undertake the suggested experiment.

A New Approach

One may of course feel sceptical as to the possibility of discovering an approach to the reading problem which will enable children to learn to read more or less exclusively by the aid of phonic methods, but since Regularized Inglish would seem to offer such a possibility, there can be no valid reason why the suggested solution should not be investigated. In order to try to convince sceptical teachers, I will give a brief account of the main features of my suggested reading scheme accompanied by references to the copy of the scheme on view at the Book Exhibition.

The reading scheme consists of two parts, Book One for the introductory stage and Book Two for the more advanced stage. For each book there is a table of contents which indicates the phonic details in the progress of the reading ability. The reading scheme is accompanied by a Teachers, Manual which offers running comments on the General Plan to be followed for teaching reading by the aid of the new method. The whole manual has been written in Regularized Inglish so as to illustrate that anybody who can read traditional English will be able to read the new regularized form of the language without any difficulty.

Book One

Book One is intended to lay the foundations of the art of reading by first teaching the commonest sounds of the alphabet, i.e. the short sounds of the five simple vowel letters and the normal sounds of the 21 simple consonant letters. When these have been taught, it will be convenient to pass on to the sounds of the various consonant digraphs and further to the sounds of the combinations *ar* and *or* at the end of words and before consonants in stressed syllables. Towards the end of Book One we may finally also deal with the vowel and consonant sounds that are found in the unstressed endings *-y, -ies, ied, -er, -ed* and with the sound of the combination *et* at the end of words and before consonants in stressed syllables. As will be seen from the Table of Contents, Book One comprises, besides the introductory page displaying the English alphabet in small and capital letters, just over 80 lessons in all, generally of one page each.

The first 25 lessons are devoted to teaching the short sounds of the simple vowel letters in combination with various consonant sounds. The pace is extremely slow. For each vowel there are four pages with three short words only, illustrated by pictures in colour and ending in the consonant sound. The short lists of additional words at the bottom of the page should at first be omitted altogether. When reviewing the lessons, some of the words enumerated at the bottom of the page may, at the discretion of the teacher, be added to increase the vocabulary, but great care should be taken not to force the pace. Although these lessons are mainly intended to teach the short sounds of the five simple vowel letters, it goes without saying that the children are bound to get familiar with a fair number of consonant sounds as well, both in initial and final position.

From the short sounds of the simple vowel letters, we pass on to a systematic study of the consonant letters. As may be seen from the Table of Contents, the consonants have been divided into four groups of from 4 to 7 consonants each. The first group compromises lessons 26-32 and deals with the letters *m, n, r, h,* voiceless and voiced *s,* z, which can all easily be joined to vowel letters. Each letter is illustrated with examples of the different positions in which the letters occur. It should be pointed out that for nearly all the words which have been illustrated by pictures in lessons 1-32, the spellings are the same in regularized and traditional English. Generally speaking this is actually characteristic of the whole of Book One.

It should be further emphasized that owing to the regular spelling system and to the slow steady progress, it ought to be very easy to teach children to read by the aid of this reading scheme. It seems indeed highly probable that by the aid of a regularized spelling system, parents would themselves often be able to help their children to learn to read without the assistance of trained teachers.

Having become familiar with the short sounds of the five simple vowel letters and with a fair number of consonant sounds as well as with a fairly large number of short simple everyday words, the children should now be ready to learn their first two sight words, the indefinite and definite articles, and to join

words together into short phrases and short simple sentences. Lessons 33-38 are devoted to their first exercises in reading with such words as *'and, in, on, Tom and Ann, Jim and Sal, has,'* etc.

In the three next following sections of Book One we pass on to the remaining consonant sounds. In lessons 39-45 we deal with the fricatives and liquids: *f, v, w, 1, -le,* in lessons 46-54 with the plosive consonants, *b, d,* hard *g, p, t,* hard c, *k, ck,* and in lessons 55-60 with *j,* voiceless and voiced *x, y,* soft *c,* soft g. At the end of each section follows a number of sentences for reading practice.

The remainder of Book One is devoted to a similar systematic account of the various consonant digraphs, *ng, nk/ sh, ch, th/ wh, qu,* to the sounds of the combinations *ar, or, er,* in final and preconsonantal position and to the vowel and consonant sounds that are found in the unstressed endings *-y, -ies, -ied, -er, -ed.* With the continued increase of new phonic units, it becomes increasingly easier to compose suitable material for practice in reading.

Book Two

Book Two is mainly devoted to a similar systematic account of the long sounds of the five simple vowel letters and to the sounds of the various vowel digraphs, the details of which may be studied at the Book Exhibition.

If English speaking children were to learn to read by the aid of Regularized Inglish during their first, school years, I am personally convinced that the great majority would learn to read just as easily as children who have other European languages as their mother tongue. In all probability they would in this way save a whole year's work. The spelling systems of Swedish, Italian, German, Spanish and other European languages are fairly regular. -- Knowing from experience how much easier it is to learn to read by a regular spelling system, I created Regulariz Inglish.

So far, *my husband's words.*
And now, allow me to add a few words.

There are in this society so many members who have shown great interest in Axel's work, and who have encouraged him, who believe in his theories and who in this way have helped him to think it worth while struggling on. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.

During the last few years Axel realized more and more that he would never during his lifetime have the great satisfaction of seeing an experiment with Regularized Inglish carried out.

But by no means did this affect his fighting spirit for a cause in which he believed so firmly. He was convinced that sooner or later, maybe sometime in the future, his system would be adopted, or at least given a fair trial.

I sincerely hope so too. Thank you for listening.

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5. Research on Spelling Reform, by John Downing, Ph. D.*

*Victoria Univ, B. C., Canada
*A talk presented at the 2nd International Conference on Reading and Spelling by the Simplified Spelling Society at Nene College, July 1979.

Psychological research can help spelling reformers in three ways. Firstly, there is a substantial body of scientific research evidence that supports the view that a Simplified spelling of English would bring very great benefits to children's education in the English-speaking world. Secondly, research shows that simplification would improve the effectiveness of students learning English as their second language. Thirdly, the psychological study of human motives for changing spelling conventions or preserving them provides guidelines for spelling reformers' strategies.

1. English-speaking children's education
Debates in the British Parliament led the Minister of Education to give her support to a scientific experiment to test the effects of simplifying English spelling. The experiment was conducted by England's two foremost educational research organizations: the National Foundation for Educational Research and the University of London Institute of Education. The experiment was conducted in a large number of state schools in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The experimental classes used a simplified spelling of English and their progress was compared with control classes using the traditional orthography of English. Both groups of schools used the same reading books and teaching methods. The two groups of children were matched in intelligence, social class, and several other variables. The only difference between the two sets of classes was the way in which their reading materials were printed – the experimental group's in simplified spelling, the control group's in conventional spelling ' This research was probably the largest and best controlled scientific experiment ever conducted in British education. It was also one of the longest. The same children were studied for five years. The detailed description of the experiment was published in one of my books (Downing, 1967).

The results of the experiment were quite unequivocal. The children using the simplified spelling made much more rapid progress in learning to read, write and spell. The incidence of failure in reading, writing and spelling in the experimental group was less than half of that of the control group.

The conclusion from this large scale scientific research is inescapable. The traditional spelling of English is a very serious cause of failure in the development of literacy skills. More than one half of the children who are failing in their school work today would be saved from this disaster if English spelling were simplified. (For detailed statistics see Downing, 1967, 1969, 1977; and Downing Latham, 1969).

2. English as a second language

Several scientific studies have been made of the effects of simplifying English spelling on students learning English as a second language. For example, Abiri's (1969) subjects were 1000 Yoruba-speaking children in Nigeria. The half of these students who learned English in simplified spelling were significantly superior to the half that learned with the conventional spelling. Several studies in Britain and America with non-English speaking minorities have confirmed the conclusion that the traditional spelling of English is a serious handicap in the teaching of English as a second language. (For a detailed review, see Downing 1979).

3 Strategies for spelling reform

A psychological analysis of the spelling behaviour of English speakers over the past ten centuries reveals the causes of changes and stabilities in English orthography.

There is a strong desire for stability among producers of books. The desire is based on the belief that readers prefer to find a word always spelled the same way. The first period of stability was in the West Saxon standard for old English in the reign of King Edgar (959-975). It was a period of economic prosperity and peace. Books were in demand and the masters of the scribes maintained strict conformity to the phonemic spelling of English of that time. This stability fell into ruin when English ceased to be the language of power, following the Norman invasion. Then, about, 1430, English revived through its use in the Chancery. This revival was accompanied by revisions to make English more phonemic. But it was far from stable. It was Mulcaster in 1582 who argued for the level of stability of English spelling that we know today. He proposed that words which already had a stable spelling should continue to be spelled that way. But words that were spelled in a variety of ways should be given a fixed spelling. The most phonemic spelling among the alternatives should be chosen. However, Mulcaster accepted non-phonemic spellings that were reasonable analogies with other stable spellings, and he also considered that homophones should not be homographs. Cooke's spelling primer of 1596 brought about the stability of English spelling that Mulcaster sought. By 1700 stabilization was complete, and it only remained for Dr. Johnson's dictionary to record what the printers and publishers had already accomplished.

The important psychological point here is that there is a strong motive for stability of spelling in periods of peace and prosperity when books are in demand. But note that the basic motive is economical. Publishers and printers want stability of spelling because they want to sell their books to readers who prefer such stable spellings. As we shall see below, if other economic factors becomes stronger than the desire for stability of spelling, then stability will be sacrificed.

Therefore, let us consider what has caused changes to occur in the history of English spelling. Seven motives for change can be traced:

(1) Immediate financial gain. In the Middle Ages, lawyers' clerks were paid for their writing by the

inch. As a result, words were given longer spellings and the clerks got paid more.

(2) Aesthetics (a) tidiness. Alternative spellings were used for the same word in order to achieve a near right-hand margin on the page (for example, *pity, pittie,* etc., according to the amount of space to be filled).

(3) Aesthetics (b) fashion. For example, the letter z has always been unpopular. Hence, the sound /z/ is often spelled with s, for instance.

(4) Etymology. Spelling words to show their linguistic origin has long been a motive for modifying English spelling. But it was especially prevalent during the Renaisance. Unfortunately it led to so many etymological errors that modern English spelling is an unreliable guide to the origins of English words. Nevertheless, etymology remains an important argument against spelling reform, despite its invalidity.

(5) Visual morphemes. A number of English spellings are deliberately non-phonemic. For example, *ed* for past tense and *s* for plural have been consciously introduced as being more useful than phonemic spellings in these grammatical contexts. The avoidance of homographs for homophones also was a deliberate decision by Mulcaster, for example, *rite, right, write, wright.* Also some other interesting visual morphemes seem to have developed through unconscious motivation. For example, when Caxton had the monopoly of printing in England, he changed many g spellings into *gh.* "Girl", "goose", "goat", "ghost", and "ghastly" were all spelled with g before Caxton. Caxton spelled them all with *gh.* As more competing printing presses were introduced, the gh's reverted to g's – but a few words kept Caxton's *gh,* for example, *ghost, ghastly, ghoul, ghetto.* They all seem to have some connection with the emotion of fear.

(6) Domination through language. The year 1066 marked the beginning of the ruination of the stable English spelling of the Saxons. The scribes' customers became less and less interested in written English and more and more interested in written French. English spelling consequently was neglected and many errors crept in that have been preserved to the present day. From the truly conservative point of view, today's spellings of *monk* and *cinder* are errors. The original spellings were *munk* and *sinder.* The domination of French over English during the Norman period produced another curious anomaly in English spelling. As the Norman rule became settled, many educated people in England became not only bilingual but also biliterate. Therefore, there was no reason to change French spellings into English spellings when a French word became adopted into English, the biliterate could read the French words in an English text. Thus, unlike most other languages, it became traditional in English to preserve the foreign spellings of words adopted into English.

(7) Simplification. Throughout the past one thousand years of English spelling, there have been recurring demands for its simplification. The most frequent change that has been demanded is a return to a more phonemic representation. Also changes that have actually occurred have often been phonemic.

These are the chief motives that have inspired changes and preservations in English spelling during the long history of its development.. Despite the rather lengthy period of stability that English orthography has experienced till lately, we should never overlook these dynamics. English spelling has changed frequently in the past and the same forces for change are all around us still today. Two currents of change are clearly discernible.

Firstly, Harry Lindgren's *S. R. 1.* proposals are becoming increasingly popular and have found favour among teachers of English in Australia. Here, we see the age old demand for a return to the simple phonemic spelling of the Saxon English of a thousand years ago.

The second wind of change that is blowing up may become gale force. That most powerful motive of all is stirring again – the economic one. Graham Greene has proposed a page in the *Times* of London for the *Guinness Book of Records* for its huge number of spelling errors. Why so many errors? Why is stability of spelling collapsing? Because the stability of conventional English spelling is becoming economically unfeasible. Money is being saved by computerized typesetting and reduction in proof-reading. Thus the desire for stability of spelling is being set aside to save money.

Spelling reformers can use this knowledge of human motives for change and stability in spelling to plan strategies for bringing about that simplification of English spelling that scientific research has shown to be necessary for improving English language teaching.

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Preserving traditional orthography is only essential to prevent poor people from getting a good education and taking away good jobs from us well-educated people who think we are so superior to the masses of people. N.W. T.

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6. The Effects of a Simplified Spelling in Children's Readiness to Read
by D. V. Thackray, Ph.D. *

This report falls fairly naturally into three parts. First I would like to give you the background to the research, then go on to describe the investigation and finally to present the results.

Background to the Research

I have been interested in the field of reading readiness for a number of years. In my first research I tried to determine the relative importance of the generally accepted reading readiness skills, such as visual and auditory discrimination, mental ability and vocabulary development, in learning to read and making progress in reading. Research of this kind has been carried out by American research workers over a period of almost fifty years, from the time reading readiness tests were first published; in England however, to the best of my knowledge, mine was the first experiment of this kind. The reasons for this lack of experimentation in England are firstly, English children begin school when they are five, which is felt to be rather too young an age for widespread testing, and secondly, until recently there were no published British reading readiness tests.

In my first experiment I followed the approach commonly used by American research workers. A representative sample of 183 children was tested in a number of reading readiness skills using an Anglicised version of the American Harrison-Stroud Reading Readiness Profiles (1956), when commencing their second term in school (average age 5 years, 4 months); the children were also tested for three other important factors in reading readiness, namely general ability, home environment, and emotional and personal attitudes. Later when commencing their fourth and fifth terms (average age 6 years; and 6 years, 4 months respectively) the children were given the Southgate Group Reading Test 1 (1959), to measure reading achievement.

The earlier reading readiness results were correlated with the later reading achievement results. And the individual reading readiness skills, which correlated the most highly with reading achievement, were those of visual and auditory discrimination. These correlations were higher than the one for mental age, showing that in this experiment, the readiness skills of visual and auditory discrimination were as important ? perhaps more important ? than mental age in learning to read in the early stages.

In England, 1961 saw the start of the main i.t.a. experiment under the direction of Prof. John Downing. When describing the differences between i.t.a. and traditional orthography (t.o.), both Pitman (1961) and Downing (1964) have stressed that i.t.a. is simpler both in its visual and auditory characteristics. It is simpler visually because in i.t.a. there is a constant visual pattern for each whole word or sentence; it is simpler from the auditory standpoint because each symbol in i.t.a. stands effectively for its own sound.

Because of its simplicity, protagonists of i.t.a. have suggested that children using i.t.a. should be ready to read at an earlier age than if learning to read with the more complex t.o. Knowing from my first experiment the importance of visual and auditory discrimination, and from the literature that i.t.a. was

simpler visually and auditorily, I felt that this hypothesis was a reasonable one and in my second experiment ? the one with which this paper is concerned ? I decided to test it experimentally.

Purpose of the Research

So the main purpose of my research then was to test the hypothesis that children learning to read with i.t.a. are ready to read at an earlier age than children learning to read with t.o.

The Investigation

The method of approach was to enlist the co-operation of 16 schools ; 8 schools where the children were learning to read with i.t.a. and 8 schools, matched as well as possible with the i.t.a. schools, where the children were learning to read with t.o. The original total sample was 300 children with 150 in each group, but family removals and the matching of the two groups reduced these numbers to 119 in each group during the first two years of the experiment and to 102 children in each group during the third year.

The children in the experiment were studied over a three year period, during which time the children learning to read with i.t.a. had transferred to t.o. and had been given the opportunity to make good any setback in reading achievement experienced after transfer. Reading readiness considerations were the main ones in the investigation, but it was realised that true reading standards, needed for comparison with standards on reading readiness measures, are not established until the children who started to read with i.t.a. have been reading for a reasonable length of time in t.o. after the transfer. So this meant testing and observing the children who were taking part in this experiment over a period of three years.

After being in school for approximately six weeks, all the children in the sample were given the Harrison-Stroud reading readiness tests of visual and auditory discrimination, and also tests of visual and auditory discrimination that I constructed. They were also given the W.I.S.C. (1949), and my own test of vocabulary. At the same time, class teachers of the children were asked, firstly, to rate each child on a five point scale for a number of reading readiness evaluations including mental abilities, physical attributes, social and emotional traits and language development ; and secondly, to give the fathers' occupations and details of any homes which were other than normal. This information gained from tests, evaluations and teachers' reports enabled the later matching of the i.t.a. and t.o. groups and sub-groups to be made.

At the beginning of the children's third term in school, two of the reading readiness tests, my tests of visual and auditory discrimination, were given to the whole sample. These two tests were given firstly, to measure progress made in these two skills and secondly, to see if the children learning to read with i.t.a. had in any way developed these skills differently from the children learning to read with t.o. This comparison was made because the results of a small experiment carried out by Sister John (1966), suggested that i.t.a. might develop perceptual skills to a greater extent than t.o., and it was decided to test this hypothesis. Also at the same time a first reading achievement test, the Schonell Graded Word Reading Test (1959), was given to all the children. The usual form of the test was given to the t.o. group, but a transliterated version of the same test was given to the i.t.a. group. In this way initial progress in learning to read was assessed.

After a further term, that is at the beginning of the childrens' fourth term in school, the same reading achievement test was repeated together with a second more comprehensive reading test, the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (1963) ; transliterated versions were used with the i.t.a. children.

Reading achievement and progress was again measured at the beginning of the children's sixth term in school. At this stage, it was found that many children had transferred to t.o. and where this had occurred, the children concerned were tested in t.o. Those children still reading with i.t.a. were tested both in i.t.a. and t.o.; in these cases the t.o. test was given to the children first. As being the more difficult, it was felt that the taking of the t.o. test would not affect the i.t.a. scores to any great extent. A comparison of the i.t.a. and t.o. scores made by the same children, at the same time, on the same test, provided interesting evidence regarding the ease of transfer from i.t.a. to t.o.

The final reading achievement tests of the investigation were given at the beginning of the children's ninth term in school, when some of the children had moved to Junior Schools or Junior Departments, and all but four had transferred to t.o. reading. The same two reading achievement tests were given, but this time only the t.o. versions were used.

Analysis of the Data

In order to compare the reading readiness requirements of children learning to read with i.t.a. and t.o., two groups of children were matched for age, sex, reading readiness skills of visual and auditory discrimination, intelligence, vocabulary and social class. The two matched groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children were then compared in three main ways. Firstly, the mean reading achievement scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. groups were compared throughout this experiment. Table 1 illustrates this approach.

Table 1,

showing a comparison between the mean scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. groups on the Schonell Graded Word Reading Test given for the first time (given in i.t.a. to the i.t.a. children ; given in t.o. to the t.o. children).

GROUP	NO.	MEAN SCORE	S.D.	DIFF. IN MEANS	S.E. of DIFF.	C. R.	STATIS- SIGNIFI.
i.t.a.	119	6.8	9.55				
				3.25	.94	3.46	.1%
t.o.	119	3.55	3.6				level

This table is just to illustrate my first approach which was to compare the mean scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. groups on the Reading Achievement Tests given from time to time throughout the three years. Column 1 indicates the two groups; column 2 the number in each group (119) and column 3 – the important column – shows the mean reading achievement score of each group on the Schonell Test given at the end of the first year in school. Column 5 shows the difference in the mean score of 3.25 in favour of i.t.a. The other figures need not delay us, as I am only trying to illustrate my approaches.

Secondly, five levels of performance achieved by sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children on the various reading measures were taken, and for each level the mean scores attained by the sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children were calculated and compared. Table 2 illustrates this approach.

Table 2,

showing a comparison of the mean scores attained on the Schonell Graded Word Test, by sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children who attained similar levels of performance on the writer's Visual Discrimination Test.

Range of scores	Group	No.	Mean score	S.D.	Diff. in means	S.E. of diff.	C. R.	Statis-signif.
			Visual Discrimination – Thackray. Schonell Graded Word Reading – first time.					
28-34	i.t.a.	8	24.00	15.81	19.75	3.61	5.47	.1% level
	t.o.	24	4.25	3.74				
21-27	i.t.a.	53	7.92	9.27	4.04	1.58	2.56	5% level
	t.o.	33	3.88	5.39				
14-20	i.t.a.	26	4.96	6.40	2.66	1.37	1.94	N.S.
	t.o.	27	2.30	2.83				
7-13	i.t.a.	23	1.87	2.50	.58	.63	.92	N.S.
	t.o.	28	1.29	1.90				
0-6	i.t.a.	9	1.33	.95	1.04	.41	2.54	5% level
	t.o.	7	29	.46				

This table illustrates my second approach which was to compare the mean scores attained on the Reading Achievement Tests by sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children who attained similar levels of performance on the measures of reading readiness skills given soon after the children entered school.

In this particular table, column 1 shows the range of scores possible on my Visual Discrimination Test, divided into 5 levels of performance, 0-6, 7-13, 14-20, 21-27, and 28-34. Column 4 shows the mean reading achievement scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. children who attained similar levels of performance on Visual Discrimination. Column 6 shows the differences in the mean scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. sub-groups and a clear pattern can be seen – the mean scores of the i.t.a. groups are consistently higher than the mean scores of the t.o. groups although they had the same level of performance on the Visual Discrimination Test given initially. From such an approach it is possible to see that i.t.a. children with a lower level of performance in Visual Discrimination than t.o. children could reach the same reading achievement level in the same time. For example with the range of scores 28-34, the t.o. reading score was 4.25 (column 4). If we enter the range of scores 14-20 we see the i.t.a. children's mean reading score was similar (4.96), but this with a lower level of performance in Visual Discrimination. I hope this indicates the way in which I obtained my results.

Thirdly, a comparison was made between the mean scores attained on the reading achievement measures by sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children, with similar mental ages. Table 3 illustrates this approach.

Table 3,
showing a comparison between the mean scores attained on the Schonell Graded Word Reading Test, given the first time, by sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children with similar mental ages.

Mental ages (years, months)	below 3-6	3-6 3-11	4-0 4-5	4-6 4-11	5-0 5-5	5-6 5-11	6-0 6-6	6-5 6-11
No. of i.t.a. chn. in each mental age grp	2	5	15	23	36	30	7	1
No. of t.o. children in each mental age group	4	7	14	20	25	27	20	12
Mean score of i.t.a. children on Schonell	.5	2.0	3.13	3.69	6.69	10.93	11.71	20
Mean score of t.o. children on Schonell	0	1.71	1.8	1.65	2.24	3.0	5.22	12

This table illustrates my third approach which was to compare the mean scores attained on the reading achievement tests by sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children with similar mental ages.

Across the top of the table you see eight mental age ranges from below 3 years, 6 months to 6 years, 11 months.

If you look at the column headed 4 years, 6 months to 4 years, 11 months, you see 23 i.t.a. children fell into this mental age range, and 20 t.o. children fell into this range. The mean scores of the i.t.a. children in the group was 3.69 and the mean score of the t.o. group was 1.65. This is a common pattern indicating that with similar mental age levels i.t.a. children score consistently higher than the t.o. children, and it follows that with lower mental age levels, i.t.a. children can score the same as the t.o. children

Main Findings

1. In my sample, i.t.a. had no more favourable effects on the growth of perceptual discrimination skills than had t.o. so Sister John's earlier findings were not borne out.

2. Regarding the first statistical approach in which mean reading scores of the matched groups were compared throughout the experiment, the following results were established :

i) When the i.t.a. group was tested in i.t.a., there were significant differences between the mean scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. groups, in favour of i.t.a. As the two groups were well matched, the children in my sample learned to read more easily and made better progress with i.t.a. than with t.o. Conversely, the traditional alphabet and spelling of English used with an eclectic approach was a more difficult medium for the teaching of reading than i.t.a.

ii) When the two groups were tested in t.o. at the end of their second and third years in school, there were no significant differences between the mean scores of the i.t.a. and t.o. groups. When i.t.a. children read in the relatively more difficult medium of t.o., the average score was lowered and the i.t.a. group lost its early lead.

iii) At the end of the second year, a comparison was made between the mean scores attained on the i.t.a. and t.o. versions of the two reading achievement tests by 50 i.t.a. children who had not transferred to t.o. There was a highly significant difference between the mean scores on the i.t.a. and t.o. versions of both tests, indicating that for these 50 children at this stage, the t.o. version of the test was much more difficult for them to read than the i.t.a. version and again shows that in my experiment there was a setback in reading progress during the transfer stage.

3. Regarding the second statistical approach which compared the mean reading achievement scores of sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children who attained similar levels of performance on the reading readiness measures given initially, the following results were established :

i) When the i.t.a. group was tested in i.t.a., the results show that for nearly all levels of performance on the reading readiness tests, the mean reading achievement scores attained by the i.t.a. sub-groups are greater than the mean reading achievement scores attained by the t.o. sub-groups and in many cases

significantly greater. This pattern of results indicates that i.t.a. sub-groups with lower levels of reading readiness than t.o. sub-groups can reach similar levels of reading achievement to those t.o. sub-groups, whilst reading in i.t.a. If i.t.a. children can learn to read with lower levels of reading readiness than t.o. children, then i.t.a. children, on average, will be ready to read earlier than t.o. children.

ii) When the two groups were tested in t.o. at the end of their second and third years in school, and a comparison *again* made of the mean reading scores of i.t.a. and t.o. sub-groups who attained similar levels of performance on the reading readiness measures given initially, a new pattern of results emerged. The mean reading scores of the sub-groups were similar, again providing evidence of the setback in the progress of i.t.a. children at the transition stage.

4. Regarding the third statistical approach which compared the mean reading achievement scores of sub-groups of i.t.a. and t.o. children with similar mental ages initially, the following results were established :

i) When the i.t.a. group was tested in i.t.a., the figures indicated that i.t.a. children were able to learn to read as well as t.o. children with an average mental age of six months to a year less than the average mental age of the t.o. children.

ii) When both groups were tested in t.o., the results indicated that the i.t.a. and t.o. sub-groups with similar levels of mental ability initially had similar levels of reading ability, again providing evidence of the setback in the reading progress of i.t.a. children during the transition stage.

I feel that my research showed experimentally that :

a.) i.t.a. is simpler than t.o. in its visual and auditory structure ;
b.) i.t.a. children are ready to read earlier and make quicker progress than t.o. children taught with an eclectic approach ;
c.) there is a setback for the i.t.a. children during the transfer stage which resulted in similar mean reading scores for the i.t.a. and t.o. groups at the end of three years in school.

Conclusion

If firstly, children learning to read with i.t.a. were taught with confidence at a rather earlier age than is normal for the teaching of reading with t.o., and secondly, the transfer to t.o. could be made easier in some way, then i.t.a. children could keep their lead and reading standards could be raised.

In the discussion of i.t.a in the Bullock Report (1975), the Committee made the following two comments, which are relevant to this paper :

" . . . we have already noted the bewildering complexities of the English spelling system, and it is self-evident that a simplification of the relationship between sound and spellings must make it easier for a child to make progress in the early stages. If there are fewer items to be learned this alone must reduce the time required, and if there are fewer ambiguities there will be less confusion. All this is amply confirmed by research."

"As a Committee we are not unanimous on the value of i.t.a. but we believe that as there is no evidence of adverse side effects at a later stage, schools which choose to adopt it should be given every support. We also feel that teachers should examine the question of i.t.a. on its merits."

The Bullock Committee is encouraging teachers to look again objectively at i.t.a., and I would endorse this view.

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⅄ This paper was presented at the 2nd International Conference on Reading and Spelling at Nene College, Northampton, England, on July 27-30, 1979. Sponsored by the Simplified Spelling Society.

* Rugby, Eng.

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7. A Pedagogical Purview of Orthography, by George O'Halloran

London, England. Presented at the 2nd International Conference on Reading and Spelling at Nene College, Northampton, Eng. July 27-30, 1979. Sponsored by the Simplified Spelling Society.

The English language has long been used as a means of class discrimination in English society. This is how it works. One reads, say, the applications that have come in for a vacant job. One then sorts them according to their spelling errors and, perhaps, their use of the subjunctive. A certain effectiveness in spelling shows, in general, a certain type of education, and so, again in general, a certain type of class background. In this way one can be reasonably sure of sorting out the right kind of middle-class young man for one's office or factory. The next step was to write a letter to *The Times* complaining that school-leavers cannot spell. Some folk were, as usual, more equal than others.

But then, as is common in England, the middle-class conscience began to twitch. It was felt that all (well, nearly all) children ought to be able to read and spell. A spelling reform movement set out to make spelling easier for the lower classes. Then the fun started and it still goes on. Which pronunciation of English should be used for the brave new spelling? Various suggestions, made in all seriousness, were put up: educated speech, the Edinburgh dialect, the Dublin dialect, R.P. (Received Pronunciation, and believe it or not, the pronunciation of the English gentry! What was lost sight of in all these solemn deliberations was that the selection of any particular dialect would put all the others at a disadvantage and so frustrate the original purpose of the exercise: to produce a system easy for all. There is still no agreement on this question and probably never will be. But it doesn't really matter and it never really did.

When Pitman and I worked together we sometimes disagreed about the pronunciation of English words. On consulting Daniel Jones we often found that my pronunciation was labelled as correct but also as 'old fashioned' or by some such tag. Yet it was perfectly good English sound transmigrated from the English midlands to the Irish midlands (together with the usual complement of English settlers to form an upper class) in the reign of our good Queen Mary in the 16th century. The real difference was that my dialect had remained in its pristine state and had not developed on the same lines as its cognates in England. This atavistic knowledge of English really does give Irishmen an advantages kind of insight over natives in prognosticating the direction of evolution in British English.

All this disputation made up the controversy (confusion might be a better word) about the *what* of spelling reform. Soon, however, it blossomed into the argument about the *how*. Hereabouts we began to lose sight of the forest for the trees. Nobody seemed to consider that it was not the *sound* which was put on paper that was important but the *sense* being read from it – as the Chinese had discovered several thousand years earlier. They had solved the problem for their own culture by the use of a pasigraphy.

In England in the beginning there was *Nue Spelling* and the various phonetic alphabets. The problems associated with these were soon recognised and then we began to hear *about phonemic solutions.* There was an enormous proliferation of both kinds of alphabetic solution. I am told that over 700 have been counted. Sinclair Eustace in his 1974 publication states that he and his sub-committee of the Simplified Spelling Society 'examined about eighty.' it is a pity he did not include a list.' It would have been useful to later workers in the field.

The phonemic alphabets also seemed to produce problems and we next saw the arrival of the *'two-stage'* solutions of the problem. Chief, and for some time the most popular of these was i.t.a. – the Initial Teaching Alphabet. At one time over 4,000 British schools were using i.t.a. and many thousands in other countries. One country, The Gambia, agreed to put all its elementary schools over to i.t.a. but inactivity in the I.T.A. Foundation frustrated this hope. It now seems that two-stage solutions are no longer widely accepted as the answer to the problem, except in TEFL-teaching English as a Foreign Language.

It is, I think, probable that there will never be a unification of the pronunciation of the various dialects of English. If, therefore, we are to continue to seek a universal writing system for English, it seems likely that we shall have to eschew both phonetic and phonemic approaches. We shall have to go for a medium in which folk all over the world will be able to read off, in their own local pronunciations, what is printed or written.

Take a look at the following sentence:
He had fair hair.

Think how it might be sounded in London, Los Angeles, Liverpool, Lagos, and Dublin – and a few other places, too! If the different sounds of this sentence in each variant dialect were to be represented in a phonetic or phonemic script, the written versions would differ quite considerably from each other (and, of course, from the traditionally written version).

At present, all readers learn to read this line into what ever are the appropriate sounds in their own dialects. And, indeed, it should be pointed out here that all the spoken interpretations of traditional orthography (T.O.) are still universally comprehensible to all speakers of all English dialects. In other words, all spoken English dialects can be understood still by all English speakers. But this kind of resolution of written symbols into variant but inter-understandable sounds is usually known as diaphonic. Our traditional orthography (T.O.) is diaphonic – although catalectically so in places. Teachers in all English-speaking lands have always used T.O. diaphonically and described its use as 'phonics' or 'the phonic method.'

If we were to change to phonetic or phonemic script could we, in fact, retain the unifying diaphonic property of T.O.? Or would English just dissolve, phonetically or phonemically, into dozens of written dialects? – just as Latin did some two thousand years ago. Was it not really the writing down, perhaps phonemically, of slightly variant dialects that brought about the dissolution of Latin into French, Spanish, Italian? Is not T.O. now actively preventing this kind of dissolution of English?

I am, for example, able to read with fair case the meaning of most things written in the Kiriyo dialect of Sierra Leone (an English dialect perhaps three hundred years old) when this dialect is written in a script similar to our T.O. But when this dialect is put into full phonetic script by a scholar, I find it difficult to read. Is this phonetic script, because it is different, the start of a new language? Is this what happened in the genesis of the Romance languages from Latin? Is phonemic spelling the new road to Babel for English?

It seems to me that we are beset by scholars – and pseudo-scholars. From Mulcaster, and even before, onwards they have done us a lot of damage. From a base of small Latin, less Greek, and no feeling at all for English, persistent and enduring attempts have been made to pervert the naturally evolving spelling of English into a Latin pattern – in the same way as other scholars had already spancelled English grammar into a Latin strait jacket. New Spelling (Nue Speling) set a bad fashion and the

subsequent systems that have all been derived from it suffer from the same main defect – a compulsion to multiply letters and/or rules to cover up inconsistencies. None of these newer systems has paid much attention to the way in which English spelling was evolving naturally, nor to the special genius of the English language which produced this spelling.

An orthography should work according to the nature of its own language and not according to the Latin language, nor the International Phonetic Alphabet (I.P.A.), nor, indeed, to any preconceived ideas. When in 1947 I was given by the Gambian Government the task of writing down the Mandinka language for the first time in a script suitable for the production of books for speakers of the language, I had not yet learned this simple truth. I started work in the Africa Script – sometimes called the Westermann Script. This is a variant of the International Phonetic Alphabet (I.P.A.) prescribed for African languages by a group of scholars in London and Berlin. Up to a point this script worked well enough but there were some problems. As well as making an orthography for the language, I was at the same time composing a literacy primer. To test the primer, I had a gang of boys aged about ten+ years from the nearby village of Jenyer who would come to my mud-and-grass hut in the evening to learn to read. They had some trouble in coping with my first attempts at orthography. We ran into the word for 'cloth' which I had written as baio. My students kept obstinately saying *ba-i-o* as three syllables. (I could not speak Mandinka at this time so could not explain.) After a little experimentation, I found the answer. This was simply to write *bayo* as two syllables. This was read accurately at first attempts. This was the first change in my prodromal alphabet.

We also had a problem with doubled vowels in expressions like *a taata* (he/she/it went), *a boota* (he/she-it came/went out). Here by trial I found the remedy was simply to undouble the vowel to *a tala, a bota,* and so on.

After some time I found that where I had started off with an alphabet, I was now working with a syllabary. We had adjusted to the genius of the Mandinka language. Our new approach made accurate soundings out of sentences possible from simple juxtaposition of syllables and their sequential utterance. I had also found out that a rigidly consistent system was not needed. Readers were able and willing to adapt (even unconsciously as they became more expert) where adaption is logical and not excessive.

From these boys I learned many things about practical orthography. A general conclusion was the need for practical trial in the field with consequent adaptation to the learning habits of students. There is a need for testing – NOT to prove one orthography to be better (whatever that may mean) than another but to find out *how* an orthography works for learners. In summary I might say that from my trials I learned (a) to follow the genius of the language and (b) to be guided by the learning habits of its speakers. Little heed has been paid to the genius of English spelling by its hordes of reformers.

I have a theory that the later in its development a language gets written down, the better for all concerned. It gets a chance (like cheese or wine) to mature. Let me give a few examples of what I mean. Many African languages have complex and complicated systems of syntax and accidence. They get much of their effect by changes in word shape – perhaps several changes in the same word – (Twi) *asu* (water, loose in a lake or river), *nsu* (water, controlled in a receptacle) *osu* (water, in the form of rain). Prefixes often complicate the scene: (Temne) *Rabomp rami rabang* (My head is aching). The forms these changes take are very numerous.

These languages still have to work their complications out of their systems and, of course, they will do so if the scholars will only allow them to do so.

Mhndinka has already cleared most of the complications from its linguistic system. It has shed all of the inflections except one: -*lu* to show plurals and this rule, like all of the very few rules the language has, has no exceptions to its working. The analytical tendency in Mandinka has gone far past that even of English. The Mandinka third person pronoun has, for example, coverage for all possible third person senses. The little word *a* means he/she/it in the nominative; him/her/it in the accusative, and his/hers/its in the genitive.

Nouns, adjectives and verbs (so far as these terms are applicable) are used interchangeably as appropriate.

Mandinka has also worked out all 'difficult' sounds, e.g. the velar fricatives present in its neighbours, the cognate but more primitive dialects of Bambara and Wongara. Bambara *tagha* [1] has become *ta* in Mandinka and *sighti* [2] (*sit)* has become *si*.

Mandinka has also preserved and developed an agglutinative utility. For example, it has no difficulty in coining new words where these are called for in life: *jiokono-moto* (in-water-motor): launch; *kaluntila* (boat-fly-maker): aeroplane; *sisibondirango* [2] (smoke-make-go-out-instrumerit): chimney. It also borrows freely from other languages which offer useful words, and such words become indistinguishable from real Mandinka words. Examples of borrowings are: *champiyongo* [2] (English): champion; *kalaso* (French): ice; *tura* (Portuguese): bull; *alimani* (Arabic): headman; *duntung* [2] *(*Fulaani): cockbird; *nyeta* (Jolof): three-penny piece, etc.

We know all this has happened in Mandinka for several, reasons. First, Mandinka is surrounded by Bambara, Wongara and other cognate dialects in which these changes have not taken place. There is also internal evidence in the Mandinka language.

English was, perhaps, written down too soon. Before it had time to develop and mature as fully as Mandinka, the scholars and pseudo-scholars got hold of it and began to pervert its spelling. They have continued to do so until this day.

A very reasonable system of putting sound on paper (or vellum) had begun to evolve in English – one which is both acceptable and interesting to young learners. I know about this. I teach it every day. Its beginning works (for me) in graded steps as follows:

1. We have five basic vowel signs: a, e, i, o, u.

2. They are sounded as these words: *bag, beg, big, bog, bug.*

3. The names of the vowels are: e:i (ay), i: (ee), ai (ie), o (ou), yu.

4. Sometimes the names of the vowels are uttered in words instead of the sound values given above. When this happens the different sound is cued by the addition of 'e' to the syllable, as in *mate, mete, mile, mote, mute.* This supervenient "e" is not itself sounded. It is there merely as a signal. Children are interested in this kind of change. A little magic has been worked. It gives them a feeling of expertise. They will look harder at words. Some will even start to collect examples perhaps minimal pairs.

5. Then we have the soft pronunciations of 'c' and 'g'. The soft sound of 'c' always precedes 'e' and 'i'. The *soft* sound of 'g' sometimes precedes 'e' and 'i' at the beginning of words; it often does so in the

middle of words and it always does so at the end of words: *cement*, *gem, engagement, cage* but *begin.*

6. We have consonant doubling to cue short vowel sound: can, canned, canning but cane, caned, caning.

7. We have various consonant clusters which cue vowel sound, for example, 'ck': *sack, seck, sick, sock, suck.*

8. The magic 'e' works for these also but one consonant has to be left out as always to change the vowel sound: sack: sake; lick: like; pock: poke.

9. What happens when the other consonant of the cluster is left out? rack, cake, race; mack make, mace; lick, like, lice, etc.

This is only the beginning. There are other ploys of this kind which stimulate interest in the working of words and lead to questions, explorations and dictionary drill. This is a much better system of inculcating literacy in the young than the drudgery of unrelieved phonetics or crude phonemics. Children enjoy this way of working, especially when it is used with a cued key sentence approach. One group of our children, measured on the Schonell Test, was four years better than the local average and two years above the Schonell norm.

This system is natural to English. It is the lineal descendent of the way in which English folk began tp adapt the Roman alphabet to their own language, indeed, just a little earlier than the Mandinkos of West Africa began to adapt the Arabic alphabet to their language. Oddly both encountered the same kind of problem.

Below is a table of some vowel sound representation in English in a cuing frame with 'p' and 'l' bounds:

vowels	pal	pel	pil	pol	pul	5
longer vowels	pall	---	pill	poll	pull	4
magic 'e'	pale	Pete	pile	pole	pule	5
oddments	pawl	peel	---	pool	purl	4
	Paul	peal			pearl	3
	(palm)					1
(pele is an obsolete spelling of peel)						22

The vowel combinations above occur as discrete syllables in English. In these syllables 22 vowel sounds are cued – and no need for any other characters. And of course, other vowel combinations do occur. The ingenuity shown reminds me of the inventiveness of the Mandinkos in their rather simpler adaptation of Arabic letters to their own language. It is true that the English system now needs tidying up a bit. Mere physical difficulties of communication in the roadless Britain of a thousand years ago made it inevitable that local variations would arise. Since then the scholars and pseudo-scholars of later days have been at work and stirred things around a bit. The net result of all this is that much that was simple has been made complicated. There is need for some measure of re-simplification, perhaps, (mainly as a result of the labours of the pseudo-scholars) but none for massive, and to most folk unacceptable, reformation. The resolute wisdom of the man-in-the-street in rejecting most forms of reform proposed up to now, gives hope for a rational future.

But the latest research is beginning to look again at the old system. Out greatest living linguist, Chomsky, has said in *Sound Patterns of English* (New York, 1968) that the traditional English orthography (T.O.) comes very close to being an optimal orthographic system. Another major scholar of international repute has recently published detailed findings of a method of building on the ancient natural system of our ancestors to achieve a modern evolutionary alphabet for English. I refer, of course, to our friend and colleague, Prof. Axel Wijk of Stockholm.

Phonetic or phonemic reform contains in itself the germ of the dissolution of the English language. The inter-understandable slightly variant dialects of the Latin of the old Roman Empire were written down phonemically for local use in France, Spain, Italy, and other places. They became progressively more variant deprived of the influence of the traditional Roman orthography and, in the end, they became separate languages. The same can easily happen with the various dialects of English – and Babel will once more ensue! It has already happened with the Kiriyo English dialect of Sierra Leone which has been given its, own orthography by Thomas Decker. I understand that the Gulla Negro dialect of the Southern East coast of the United States and the islands off-shore has also been given a variant script. The French Creole dialect of Haiti has officially been written as an open syllable language by UNESCO in a variant script and has lost all resemblance to French in appearance. In the back streets of Monrovia, Lagos, Accra, even Douala, and many of the other larger cities of Africa, new dialects of English are emerging – even into literature. Plays, novels, and the Bible have been written into them.

Nobody wants to try to prevent any people from having its own language, even an evolved language, but when one compares the relative uselessness of Swahili to its speakers – as compared with English – one begins to see the value of preserving the best point of the writing system which seems destined to preserve English as a world utility.

If we want to keep any unity in English, spoken or written, we must forget phonetic for phonemic reform. Unless we wish to allow English to degenerate into a multiplicity of dialect – in time, even into different languages – and thus lose its great usefulness as an international medium of communication, let us cling to the spelling system which began to evolve to fit the sounds of English some six or seven centuries ago. This traditional orthography (T.O.) is a good script eminently suited to English with its wide dialectal variety of sounds. By all means let us tidy up our spelling into regularity and consistency and also keep it in line with developments in the language, but let us make sure also that we keep any simplification along the well-known traditional lines.

Notes:
[1] *gh* represents a velar fricatiye consonant.
[2] *ng* represents a velar nasal consonant.

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8. What do we really need in teaching reading?, by Sir James Pitman, KBE, London, England.

It is odd and sad how persistent have been quite wrong ideas on READING READINESS and even odder and sadder, how absent has been awareness of the right idea – that the most important, indeed the only essential element of reading readiness for all is to have skill in the mother tongue, which, before reading begins, must necessarily be skill in oracy-: i.e., to be able to understand words spoken to them and, even more important, to be able to form and to speak sentences which others will understand.

Why for so long have we supposed that "children lack visual discrimination"? Children who have, from a very early age, been able to recognize their parents, brothers and sisters too, and to detect, and return, a smile on their faces? Surely it is a useless exercise to suppose that they need training in visual discrimination. If they fail to associate, the sight of any of the 42 spellings for the sound of /ae/ with that one particular sound, is it not most likely the learner will need no such training if he is learning in i.t.a. in which there is only one spelling, not 42? And furthermore, is not the *eigh* in /eight/ a very confusing spelling and an even more depressing experience for the learner, seeing that, if an *h* is put before *eight,* it does not spell the sound of /haet/ but spells the sound of /hiet/, and if a *t* is added to *though* /ħoe/, it becomes *thought* /ħaut/.

Why, too, for so long have we supposed that children lack auditory discrimination when they can not only recognize the 40 or more sounds which make up the words they understand but even speak them? The ears and speech organs of the vast majority of children must be beautifully attuned, first to receive sounds and not only to discriminate all of the over 40 sounds of English and so the words spoken to them, but also to choose and form the right sounds in their own local dialect for the words which their fathers, mothers and others will in their turn bear from them and understand. No wonder it is a misdirected effort to act as if their hearing was at fault. Is it not much more likely that if they cannot relate sounds to sight, they need a system like i.t.a., in which the sound in /wun/ is always printed as *wun* and never as beginning with the sound of /on/ and ending as /onky/?

it is indeed very odd, and very sad, that we teachers have so long been misled into supposing also that our children do not need teaching in oracy and in the meaning of so many words they hear and do not know and so fail to understand so many words. They "get by" instead with guessing, and not always correctly, the gist of the sentences they hear.

There is no justification for the very common *generalization* of unreadiness of young children as "five-year-olds" and more particularly of "pre-school children." They should be individualized not generalized. They differ in fact *enormously* in their knowledge of words. At one extreme we have the very well authenticated case of a 3-year-old who, having been stung by a wasp one day, was asked the following morning whether it still hurt and replied, "The agony has somewhat abated"! At the other extreme are even 5-year-olds who come to school knowing very few concepts and the words associated with the concepts. Such children in reality know very few, and have in consequence come to school with little if not virtually no skill in oracy. Indeed they have "contracted out" of expecting to understand communication by words. They have found that situational clues, even the tone of voice of the speaker and, in many cases, their observation of the effects of the speaker's utterances upon others

present, give them the gist of what has been said and allow them to deceive speakers into thinking they are skilled English listeners. The final educational disaster for the child is when he comes to accept that he will not understand language and it becomes habitual to skip over many of the words in listening, and will come, even when learning i.t.a. happily to skip all words he does not understand. And he may seem none the worse.

I know this well because, as I have become deafer and deafer, I find myself under compulsion of poor hearing to guess, often successfully, what have been the actual sounds of some of those words I have not heard and to begin "skipping" When the speaker does not take the hint from my repeated requests 'please say that again.' It is wonderful how well I can hold my own in a conversation nevertheless and how easily speakers are deceived that they can disregard my handicap. They so often continue nevertheless in *sotto voce!*

For much of the time I am hearing by context. My past skills in listening stand me in good stead. I am able already to guess what the next words are likely to be, even if later spoken too softly for me to have heard them. Equally words that I have misheard and so skipped are heard RETRO-AUDITORILY by reason of the words which followed, which fortunately I did manage to hear.

This experience of the value of language skill enables me to understand the apparent miracle of young children making so easily the transition from i.t.a. to T.O. 80% of the words the child reads in T.O. are actually or virtually the same as they are in i.t.a. *(and, for, but, did, had, it, in, on, up,* etc.) or are so alike that the skill of context need play no part (*th e, *th at, i*z, b*ee, y*oo, wi*th, hav); and of the remaining 20%, most of them are similar in many respects to the i.t.a. forms. Context takes over. Even the real shockers, *ought* and *eight,* end in *t* and at the end of *whose* there is an *os* which slightly resembles (*z). The Schonell Graded Word Reading Test with its single words (so that context is unable to act)and its high proportion of 'shockers' is no better than a look-and-say test, proving – what words have not been presented over and over again in "flash cards." It is certainly not relevant as a test at the transition for children who have learned to read in i.t.a. Nevertheless it was so used in some of the most important researches to compare learning in i.t.a. with learning in T.O.

Of course one of the reasons why the i.t.a. taught children, in all but the bottom section in the fourth test in Graph 5 page 75 of the i.t.a. Symposium (John Downing, The National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales) [1] are shown as so much better than those taught with T.O., was clearly the effect of the language teaching which i.t.a. had incidentally achieved. From the very beginning, the deciphering element in reading was accomplished so much earlier that the sentences came to be understood and context began to play its all-important part in reading.

Every i.t.a. teacher will know that those children who come from homes with the best environment in oracy are those who learn to read most quickly, who make the transition on their own, who then have at their disposal all the books which publishers produce for children. Those who lag behind do so only because the skill in language which they brought from their homes was only minimal., It is not that they are slow learners in literacy; rather they are poor listeners in oracy, but have not been found out. Reading, and depending upon context leaves gaps in sentences when children skip over words they don't know. Reading more and more books in i.t.a. and not understanding what is printed because so many words have been skipped – will do them little good. . The job is to teach them the English language as to a foreigner. *This is most important.*

It may appear irrelevant and a digression but the following story is in f act very relevant. In my shorthand teaching experience, I needed to go round the classes looking over the shoulders of the girls transcribing the shorthand that they had just written from dictation.

I was interested particularly in what words they had been forced to leave blank (i.e. were needing to skip); then I would read their shorthand notes and would find the place of the "outline" which they had failed to read successfully. I would find not only that I could read it with certainty but that it had been written in accordance with the rules of the shorthand system and had recorded accurately the sounds which the writer had correctly heard. The cause, over and over again, was that *that particular word was evidently not in their vocabulary,* even with the correct outline and the help of the context. They failed because the word, not being in their vocabulary, could not be read by them in its abbreviated form.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that shorthand teachers were persuaded not to blame the students for lack of knowledge of shorthand and not to put the student (not at all usefully) to deeper and more intense study of the principles of the system, instead of arranging for the student (and the teacher of English) to collaborate in learning and in reading the English language to better effect.

Fortunately there were a series of books published in Canada: "Words are Important." On each double page opening there was on the left-hand side, each line numbered, 20 words; and on the right hand side, also but differently numbered, each sentence with a dotted space, always of the same length, a sentence into which one of the 20 words could aptly be fitted – to make good sense.

The teaching took the form of inducing the students to look up in a dictionary each of the 20 words on the left hand page, to study the definitions carefully, then find the sentence on the right hand page into which that word would fit and would make good sense.

The six or eight books were graded in difficulty and by the time they had been worked through conscientiously, the student had added greatly to his experiences of concepts and to his vocabulary and had much less difficulty, in context, in reading successfully the outlines for those words, notwithstanding that in any shorthand system an appreciable amount of the identifications of any word is absent from the outline because of the need for abbreviation.

If the shorthand student was reluctant to collaborate with the English teacher, the task was to convince him of his weakness in English and of the value of so studying words in the dictionary and fitting them aptly into prescribed sentences.

For this purpose a number of illustrated cards or a related sequence of actions were provided (say taking dead flowers from a room, emptying the flower vase of its water, cleaning it,. putting it back in a cupboard, going into a flower shop, buying a bunch of flowers, entering a front door carrying a parcelled bunch of flowers, taking off the paper, getting a vase from the cupboard, filling it with water, arranging the flowers and finally replacing them on the same table in the living room on which their dead predecessors had been displayed).

The student was asked first to arrange the haphazard collection of cards in a right order, and then to write an account, in story form, of the actions portrayed.

Judging by a student's writing is the best indeed the only, reliable way of testing a student's skill in his

mother tongue. Basing a judgement on the student's reaction to words spoken to him can never be really reliable. What goes on in his brain by reason of what words strike his ear is secret, within a closed skull. What words come out his brain in writing have certainly come not from outside but from his own brain. Tape recording his speech is a lengthy, rather laborious process, and discussing the contents of the tape with the speaker is much less convenient to the teacher, and less helpful to the student too. 'The above test is most convenient.

All of this which is so relevant to the teaching of English to shorthand students in their turn needs to be applied differently and in a practical way to the teaching of language to non-linguistic young children (or even adults) – but with different applications, to remedial illiterates of all ages, up to the grave.

The first application is to recognize, as stated in the beginning of this article, that the most important, indeed the only essential element in 'reading readiness' is skill in the mother tongue and that, if that is deficient, the obvious tasks are first to diagnose the deficiency and then to plan deliberately to teach language rather than to waste valuable school hours encouraging the learner to read more and more i.t.a. books – which anyhow he will not properly understand.

The time for more books will come later, but only after he has made the transition; and then the books read should be in T.O.; by which time demands on his knowledge of English will have become more hopeful and the choice of books almost limitless.

It needs therefore to be a judgement for each teacher in the knowledge of each child's language skill to decide when to begin teaching language and when to stop teaching reading in i.t.a., because the basic language requirements have been proven to be absent and most important.

But how? How do we assess a young learner's skill in his mother tongue?

I suggest that the teacher ought, for every child, at the appropriate time even as soon as he has finished the first story book, (even its first pages), to insist that the child reads it through again to the teacher so that the teacher may stimulate the child to tell her the story of the different pages of the book, with each page open in front of them both.

Whenever the child, in respect of each page, uses, as he very well may, and indeed ought, a word on that page the teacher thinks he may have guessed at, she should then ask him to point with his finger at the word on the page and she ought also herself to point to a word and ask that that word be read *and* included in a different sentence.

Additionally the teacher should begin reading the page and then to judge the child's sense of context, stop abruptly and ask the child to supply the next word. If the child does not respond, the teacher may read up to that point again and substitute the word "blank" for the missing word, or even speak "missing word."

Those children who satisfy the teacher that however many times she repeats the process with variations, that particular child will produce the varied and correct responses, then she will know that that child will be among those who will very quickly make the transition and will be set firmly on the pathway to literacy and to a valuable career in schools and in life, because language and success in school at an early age are closely interwoven and are so important.

For those who, in varying degrees, are not able to satisfy her, she will need to group them and plug, plug, plug, language teaching.

But how do we best teach language? Sesame Street, so perfect for language teaching, was spurned by the BBC, claiming as it happened rightly in the case of those children with a good foundation of skill in English, that their own programmes were world-leaders; but they spurned it wrongly, because the BBC did nothing, deliberately for those whose language was not adequate.

We all know that picturable nouns like dogs, and *demonstrable* and experienced actions like *running, eating,* and *laughing,* and tangible qualities like *rough, smooth, hot* and *cold* which the child has or can experience, are easy to teach, but that the real trouble begins among words for abstract concepts and above all – *yet*, *yesterday and perhaps.*

Reading to the children, with discussions of the words in the paragraph which has just been read, asking for other words with the same meaning and for a sentence to be put in other words are all very valuable, but the most important point is surely *to be aware,* and for the children to be made aware, that the reaching is directed to making them able to communicate facts and ideas to others, and to receive communication correctly from others – or else why is it any good for them to come to school, and for the teacher or the book to give them words and facts if they are not able to understand.

Just as the teacher needs to know how skilled (or unskilled) in language each different child is, so too she needs to know how to teach each different child language.

I realize that individual teaching is not practical and that this, therefore can be done only in groups. I hope that some of these ideas and facts may be helpful to the teacher on whom necessarily lies the responsibility for doing the best for every child.

At any rate, the more successful a teacher is in teaching language, the bigger will be the group of children who will really enjoy school because they are not like a deaf child but are able to understand all or nearly all the words they hear from others and read in books of their own level.

The joy of learning, which success brings, will work away quietly and each child will need individual teacher-attention only for suggestions and stimulation, rather than for specific teaching, which after all are a teacher's two most important and most valuable functions and the ones most quickly and joyfully given.

Summary:
Before a pupil can be given training in literacy, he must have a certain degree of oracy with understanding of the nominative structure and the necessary syntax to be able to speak and to write sentences which will be understood by all.

Communication is a two-way street.

[1] There are good but lengthy reasons why that fourth test ought to have been omitted.

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9. A Multisensory Approach to the Teaching and Learning of Spelling, by Alun Bye

Northampton, Eng. Presented at the 2nd Inter. Conf. on Reading & Spelling, July '79.

Apart from the obvious irregularities and inconsistencies in our writing system, the main reasons for spelling disability seem to be poor visual memory for words, poor visual imagery for words, poor auditory analysis, poor muscular-memory, inappropriate handwriting style, poor self-image as a speller, and unsystematic teaching. These essential subskills are rarely, if ever, taught through the medium of the weekly spelling list, and too often the latter is mistaken for a methodical teaching system.

The student with a weak visual memory is easily spotted by his tendency to spell as if all words possessed phonic regularity. Despite seeing the correctly written versions many thousands of times, he continues to write them the way they sound. Written corrections by teachers are to no avail, and only confirm the student's depressing view of himself as a weak and never improving speller.

It is pointless for a teacher to write comments on a student's work exhorting him to improve his poor spelling. He probably already knows that his spelling is poor, and may even grow ashamed of it. What he needs is a sympathetic and insightful teacher who can systematically show him just *how* he can improve his spelling and enable him to remember difficult and awkward words. His spelling miscues may be a plea for help which pass unrecognized by an insensitive and unimaginative teacher.

It is wrong to assume that all children are born knowing how to study word spellings, and how to remember them, or that they will develop appropriate strategies for themselves given time. Many never do, and many cannot without careful guidance.

Training should begin by showing weak visualisers what to look for in words, by emphasising their spatial, acoustic and semantic components. A word's configuration may be studied for its number of double or treble letters, for the number of words within a word, for its balance of beginning against ending, for its pivot point, etc. Students who are very young or very weak visualisers may benefit from verbalising the shapes and spatial elements of letters, perhaps by referring to round letters, tunnel shaped letters, reaching up or dangling down parts, or ascenders and descenders, and letters with dots on, etc. When a word has been studied thoroughly in this way, it should be written from memory by the student, and this version compared with the original. Such comparisons aid memorization, and the word should be rewritten, again from memory, until the word is correctly spelled. At this point the word should continue to be written as many times again as there were trial attempts. This ensures that the word is practised beyond the point of bare mastery, and provides an opportunity for it to be embedded in long term muscular or finger tip memory.

It is important to avoid merely copying out a difficult word several times, for this makes no demands upon visual imagery or visual memory, and both faculties remain unpractised. There may also be little virtue in copy-tracing the word in the air or on sandpaper. Unless an effort is made to memorize and visualize and vocalize at the same time as tracing, there may be little real benefit apart from a pleasant tingle at the finger tip. It is far better to trace in sand, where the combined feel and appearance of the word may be appreciated. Attending to the acoustic properties by exaggerating the tricky syllable's sound can further help to stamp it into memory. When practising writing the word, it is useful to use a fibre-tip pen and sugar paper, for this combination increases the kinaesthetic feedback. The piece of paper may be folded before each attempt, thus concealing the previous effort, but permitting immediate comparison, recognition of error and knowledge of results. The benefit of the kinaesthetic flow is enhanced if the child learns as early as is practicable to join his letters together using the correct, efficient entry and exit points for each letter.

Poor spellers should be required to attempt a word of whose spelling they are uncertain before they consult the teacher or a dictionary. This creates a positive mental attitude towards good visualisation. Sensitive teaching can improve a poor self concept by praising for correct letter sequences and presenting for practice only those words which the student can reasonably be expected to spell without excessive difficulty.

As well as teaching children how to study word configurations, we should also provide tips on how to remember tricky words, especially those hoary perennials which we, as experienced teachers, know are likely to cause some problems. Surely this is move in keeping with the teacher's true role of distributing admonishments. Students should be encouraged to use their ingenuity to formulate their own mnemonics and to share them with one another. The more imaginative students may help the less creative brethren.

Contriving an element of meaningfulness into an otherwise arbitrary list can be very beneficial. For example, spelling families may be more effectively learned by stringing them together in sentences, such as: A thirsty bird chirped with mirth as he spied the pond from the first fir tree; or A curly haired nurse lost a purple fur purse in D'Urbeville Church; or I eat beans and meat at meals.

Such homophones as *beech/beach* can be learned by linking b*ee*ch to tr*ee* and b*ea*ch to s*ea*-side. An awkward word like 'necessary' may be linked to the need to wear one collar (one /c/) but two socks (two /s's/), or two ships sailing on one sea (c). Deriving 'argument' from 'argue' may be remembered as being stuck in an ar-*gum*-ent. The tricky word 'definite' and its 'ite' ending may be better remembered if it is visualised as 'defin!te'. And to end on a moving note, how about $l_o c_o m_o tive$?

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Section 6
Which way to go in Spelling Reform

This section presents various ideas for the kind and extent of reform, from the most modest ot the more extreme and suggests criteria for deciding on reform.

10. A Practical Approach to Spelling Reform, by Walter F. Cook.

Phoenix, Az, (For the general public, but not for the teachers.)

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute some new ideas for implementation of a spelling reform. As a businessman running a small computer company, I am undoubtedly in a very small minority among a group of educators. Yet I have been irritated by the difficulty of English, spelling and have been interested in spelling reform for many years. I had actually started an independent development of a set of rationalized rules for spelling before I became aware of the large amount of work done by this group and other groups.

As a person with a considerably different background, I believe I can provide a measure of some of the types of responses that may be encountered when these "radical" ideas emerge and are presented to the general public.

The real thrust of much of the work done in the name of spelling reform has actually been the introduction of simpler methods of teaching reading to school children. There is a large area of overlap in the areas of ease of spelling in that if words were spelled rationally, it would be much easier to learn to pronounce them. However, there is a difference between reading and spelling. When you consider the population that must be "sold" on spelling reform, it will be the adults and not the school children that must be sold. In fact there is some danger in starting the reform with children since the reformed spelling may become labeled as a "children's spelling" and not proper for adult communication. The person who is going to have to be sold on the reformed spelling undoubtedly has a speaking and reading vocabulary much larger than his spelling vocabulary. His real problem is to accurately spell the words he already can pronounce and read. Once this is accepted as the primary problem to be solved, it may be possible to simplify the spelling reform problem and ease the acceptance by the public. The specific point to be made is that if selling "rationalized spelling" is the primary goal, the basic criteria must be that each easily identifiable phoneme must be consistently spelled the same.

Note that the requirement was not made that each sound be spelled *differently.* This is a reading requirement. Clearly, it is aesthetically more logical to require a truly reversible, unique mapping of phonemes and graphemes and, in general, this should be the objective. However, in practice making this an absolute objective will make the spelling reform more difficult to sell. It may actually produce spelling problems for those sounds that the general public may not recognize as different. As an

example (not necessarily as a proposal), the WES distinction between "th" and thh" is required from the *learning reader's* standpoint but possibly not from the standpoint of the *spelling writer.* From a practical acceptance standpoint, the compromise of combining these two phonemes into one grapheme would probably enhance the acceptance of the rationalized spelling. A similar situation may exist for the "er" and "ur" phonemes in WES.

The primary point in the preceding discussion is to emphasize that *rationalized spelling* must be the primary focus of a spelling reform effort and that possibly certain minor compromises in ease of reading could be made to improve the acceptance of the rationalized spelling. These compromises would certainly not seriously detract from the case of learning to read. In any case, these significant reading benefits accrue only if the rationalized spelling is accepted by the general public.

A separate point that seems absolutely obvious to me is that any rationalized spelling must be designed to utilize the existing English letters in a manner that is similar in general style to current usage. Asking the general public to make spelling changes will cause more than enough disruption and controversy. Requirements such as the introduction of strange new characters, the necessity of throwing out old typewriters, and retraining typists would unconditionally and absolutely doom any effort to introduce a reformed spellings/

If a rationalized spelling plan is to be accepted by the public, it must provide the following features:

1. *Rational and Logical.* It must remove most of the inconsistencies and replace them with a set of simple, relatively uniform spelling rules.

2. *Easy to Learn.* The public, who is accepting this plan, has already learned (presumably) existing spellings. They are being asked to learn or at least recognize many new spellings of words. So it must be easy!

3. *No Mechanical Disruption.* The introduction of new characters is not acceptable.

4. *Transition.* No attempt should be made to define the rationalized spelling as "correct" and the old spelling as "incorrect". The public is the customer. They should be given a rationalized alternative spelling and they can switch as they desire. It will be much easier to learn to recognize new forms of words than to learn to write new words. For an extended period of time, it will be possible for the public to *read the new* and to *write the old*. Any pressure for the use of rationalized spelling should be directed toward dictionaries, style manuals, newspapers, and government agencies.

5. *Standardization.* There is a period of time during which study and change are desirable. After that time, stability of a well accepted rationalized spelling is a primary requirement. Lack of consensus or significant change among the experts will certainly prevent acceptance by the public. Also, if there are multiple proposals from different spelling groups, there will be confusion and no acceptance. There must not be several different ways to spell common words.

6. *Minimize Change.* Considering the state of the English spelling, significant change is certainly necessary. However, within the above objectives, deference should be given to current spelling forms. A program that is designed to introduce groups of new words periodically will cause continual turmoil and will undoubtedly be stopped after the second or third phase. Introduction of a set of spelling rules with the resulting new alternate spelling word forms means the public can make transition at their own pace.

An implementation plan could include the following major phases:
1. Study commission to select a good plan of rationalized spelling.
2. Academic review of commission recommendations.
3. Expanded review of results by publishers, editors, and other "experts."
4. Publish rationalized spelling rules.
5. Fund raising activity via direct contributions and government grants.
6. Publish comprehensive cross reference dictionary with old-to-rationalized and rationalized-to-old spelling lists.
7. Promote acceptance into existing dictionaries and style manuals the rationalized spelling of words as an acceptably correct, alternate spelling.
8. Media public relations campaign.
9. Promote the introduction in the state and federal legislatures of resolutions approving the rationalized spelling.

Clearly each succeeding step will depend upon the results of the preceding steps. As such, the first step is the most crucial. The study commission must be a relatively small group. It must effectively represent the input of the interested parties in the academic community who have been contributing in this field. The group must have a very well defined scope and charter, and a reasonable but challenging time limit for completion of Phase 1 (possibly 9-12 months). It appears that much of this work has been done and that the primary effort will be to adopt or make minor modifications to existing proposals. Of course there must be an active chairperson who is dedicated in time and belief to the commission's objectives. The chairperson and the commission must be able to make the effective compromises that undoubtedly will be required to achieve an end result. In the end, the group must be able to convince succeeding levels of critics that the results are the best set of compromises that have a reasonable chance of being adopted.

If I read the history of English spelling reform correctly, it is over 200 years old with very little to demonstrate in the way of tangible results. The mood of the people appears to be reasonably receptive to progressive change. Certainly many fundamental social and technical changes have occurred in the last two decades. Rationalized spelling reform, effectively presented, could easily fit into this environment.

As with any other movement: leadership, organization, and well directed effort are the essential ingredients that produce results.

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11. Where do we go from here?

Dear Newell: **Where do we go from here?**   **Dr. Wilbur J. Kupfrian**

This is in response to your letter in which you comment "that we are talking to ourselves – those already convinced!" I concur to the extent that we concerned individuals are convinced that we need simplification but I believe we are far from unified in our convictions as to how it should be done. With advocates strongly supporting programs that are incompatible with others, I do not see how, among ourselves, we can reach a consensus. I do not include myself among those who are technically schooled in the art (or science) of language or spelling simplification. Yet as a self-proclaimed pragmatist, I believe we must one day yield to a program that the people will accept, or our best-intentioned efforts become fruitless. One well-known characteristic of the species *homo sapiens* is a strong reluctance to accept change in their ingrained habits. Many people of the USA have shown strong reluctance in adopting the Metric system, despite its vast superiority and simplicity over the antiquated and cumbersome English system. I don't believe that there has been much quarrel over the merits of the Metric system. Yet despite an almost universal acceptance of the Metric system thruout the world, our country was until recently, a holdout in transposing to it, even over an extended period of time.

It is true that logical resistance has derived from the need for costly capital expenditures for new tools and machines, and from the difficulty of making a gradual transition in any industry. Nevertheless, one hears the frequently expressed views of individuals whose opposition to the proposed changes is based purely on a personal preference for the present standards and a somewhat arbitrary attitude toward accepting any change.

Someday, someone will need to cast the die on a desirable set of rules based not primarily on academic superiority, but on what eventually would likely be accepted by the English-speaking public. I once worked for a man who often said, "I would rather be effective than efficient." In our problem area, I would rather seek a solution that might offer a reasonable prospect of being adopted than a more logically superior approach that lacked any reasonable aura of eventual acceptance by the public. I think much profound research and innovation has gone into the proposals for modified alphabets, but if the changes go beyond what might be generally accepted, they appear to be exercises in futility.

For example, billions of dollars thruout the world are invested in sophisticated business equipment and typing machines employing a standard keyboard. I feel that any proposed system of change in spelling that necessitates a radical departure from or an addition to this keyboard will impose drastically-imposed resistance to acceptability.

A postman, so goes the story, once hesitated at the gate of a home because of a savagely barking dog inside. "Don't you know," admonished the owner, "that a barking dog doesn't bite?" "I know it, and you know it," replied the postman, "but does the dog know it? " I think you and I know there is a great need for simplified spelling, but does the average English-speaking person know it? I'm afraid a great promotional program would be required before the average citizen perceives the inconsistent and complicated aspect of our spelling "system" and of the advantages both at home and internationally of adopting move uniform spelling rules.

The cost of homing in on a readily acceptable system and of alerting people to its need is an immense task beyond the reach of our group or of any similar group with whom we share common goals. With

the implicit benefits to world peace and understanding, and with the huge economic and social impetus that would flow to Johnny (and Mary) in learning to read, we should have a cause to which one or more foundations could be persuaded to make a reasonable commitment. We should probably need a sponsoring group and eventually a government study looking to eventual legislation.

Speaking pragmatically again could we not in this way effectuate some studies looking to crystalize public thinking on a logical approach and some proposed solutions for implementing a system of simplified spelling that could stand some reasonable hope of eventual public acceptances If such a plan were to accept the present alphabet without significant change, an added impetus would be the publication of a revised spelling dictionary, or an annual list of revised spellings (with the governing rules) and wherein both new and old versions of spelling are listed, either of which could be considered acceptable during an indefinite transitional period. Johnny would thus learn to read quicker, and his elders need not feel that they had been legislated out of their time-honored system of spelling. It might take a generation or longer to take hold fully, but it would be a start on a program that has been needed for generations. The etymologists and the purists will fault most any system that obscures or hides word stems and their national origin as simplified spelling might well do, but we have in our present language many words whose stems have been thus altered while the historical derivation has been preserved. On the evaluation process, the huge economic, social, and political benefits of simplified spelling could be consistently envisioned as justifying required changes in time-honored practices,

Yrs Sincerely

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