

# Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, 1992/2. J13.

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[Inside the back cover was printed a repeat of the description of the journal cover words, first given in JSSS1 1985. See [explanation and image](#) and readable version published as [Pamphlet 15](#).]

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 13, 1992/2 p2 in printed version]

[Kenneth Ives: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Book](#)]

## 1. Editorial

### Issue Editor Ken Ives

With the recent publication of the *Cut Spelling Handbook*, this issue of JSSS begins with a symposium on *Cut Spelling*. There may be more responses to CS than can appropriately fit in the *Journal*, tho a few more are likely in our next issue. A separate publication may be needed.

Also timely this time is a report on the publicity about CS at and after its publication. A major problem facing spelling reformers is "marketing" their product. The publicity accompanying the launching of CS is a good example of this, as was the billboard campaign of BETSS in the Detroit and Washington DC areas, reported in the last issue.

#### TEXTS

This issue includes a popular short story, in a simplified spelling. One difficulty in popularizing reformed spellings is the scarcity of interesting readings. One of the reasons i.t.a. has not had more impact is that first grade pupils finished all the available readings in it well before the end of the year. There seem to be no reading materials available in "no new letter" simplified spellings (except Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, in World English Spelling).

Hence this feature can build up a collection of such materials. They may help readers become more fluent and at ease with simplified spellings. They can demonstrate to enquirers what a reformed spelling would be like. And they provide a more adequate basis for comparing various proposed reform systems.

#### STANDARDS

One of the first efforts in simplifying English spelling, to aid readers and writers, was standardization. In the 1600's, the Mainwaring family spelt their name in 124 different ways. Many people spelt the same word in different ways in the same document!

Samuel Johnson's Dictionary soon provided a standard, after its publication in 1756. However, that standard has not since been substantially revised and updated. And the emphasis on standardization has been used as an obstacle to simplification.

In the United States, Noah Webster's Dictionary of 1828 led to some standard spellings there which have differentiated US spellings from those in the UK. In the 1900–1916 period, the National Education Asso. and the Simplified Spelling Board (financed by Andrew Carnegie) produced a few

further changes (program ... ). And publication of Webster's third Dictionary in 1961 encouraged a few others (catalog ... ). Thus there have been minor revisions of the standard spellings in the USA, after Johnson's Dictionary, about 70, 80 and 50 years apart. It may be time for another and more substantial revision?

In the USA there is the *National Information Standards Organization* (NISO), which develops voluntary technical standards for libraries, information services, and publishing. Over 50 of its standards are in use, including Library Catalog Cards and International Standard Serial Numbers. It reviews each standard every five years.

NISO is controlled by representatives from member organizations: 24 associations including the American Library Association, 9 official organizations including the Library of Congress, 16 information service or network organizations, and 13 corporations, including IBM and the H. W. Wilson Co.

It may be possible for the three spelling reform organizations active in the US — *Simplified Spelling Society*, *Better Education thru Simpler Spelling*, and *American Literacy Council* — to prod this organization into setting up a committee to develop standards for the simplification of English spelling. These standards could be useful for teaching reading and writing, in elementary schools and in classes for adult learners (ESL), in this country and elsewhere, possibly as a basis for a simple, standard key to pronunciation in dictionaries, and perhaps for some business uses.

A technical committee to set up such standards would need representatives from Dictionary publishers, the US Office of Education, the Laubach Literacy organization, and others, as well as our three organizations.

This approach would require preliminary and ongoing consultations among our three spelling reform organizations. It would have a major advantage in bringing the issue to the ongoing attention of some major potential users, and then of presenting a "united front" to inquirers, at least on those aspects on which agreement has been reached.

An interim, partial set of standards is a desirable early product, presenting those simplifications on which there is a already general agreement. These simplifications should probably be accompanied by *reading rules* and *writing rules*. The next step would be to work toward additional agreements to include in the first 5-year update of the standard.

*[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, 13, 1992/2 pp3–8 in printed version ]*

[Valerie Yule: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Quarterly](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Personal Views](#) 10 & 16, [Media](#), [Books](#).]

## 2. Children's abilities and 'Cut' spelling reform

Valerie Yule

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**The advantages and disadvantages of a 'Cut' spelling reform for children aged 5–7 learning to read and write, in view of what is known of their needs and abilities.**

The prime purpose of spelling reform is to benefit the users of English spelling .

This is not the same as the benefit of spelling reform in producing a rational spelling system to replace the present conglomeration of contradictory principles and exceptions. Hundreds of rational systems for English spelling can and have been devised. Once you start asking "Who will benefit from these improvements?" the ball game changes its nature and even its playing field.

A reform of English spelling must benefit many different categories of users who have differing needs, and within each category there are extremes of expertise and incompetence. (Yule 1986). There are differences between the requirements of

- Readers and writers.
- Those already literate in present English spelling and those who are learning.
- Native English-speakers and learners of English as a second language.
- Those familiar with features relevant to literacy in English — such as an alphabetic orthography or Romance or Teutonic language, and those accustomed to a completely different orthography, or none, or a completely different language system.
- Electronic machines are increasingly close to simulating human operations, but are still dissimilar in their requirements of an orthography for optimum transliteration operations.

Many opponents of spelling reform have claimed that it would be impossible to produce a reform to benefit one group of users that did not disadvantage others, and hence spelling reform is not feasible. However, my research and reviews of research (1991) present evidence "to the point of overkill" (examiner's comment) that

- present English spelling is not "optimum" for any of these groups — not even for readers who are currently most expert in it.
- a "best fit" is possible, to give all groups the maximum advantage that is compatible with the least disadvantage.
- there are research methods and techniques to investigate these issues.

Rather than immediately trying to implement a spelling system that on the face of it is theoretically ideal, we must first ensure that it will be the best practicable spelling for the English language to meet the needs and abilities of these groups. The metric system is an object lesson — its measures are perfect in theory, but need to be supplemented to be really practical for housewives, carpenters, farmers, and baby-weighers. An example of the sort of practical compromise that may be necessary is the decision to retain the present Roman alphabet, despite its imperfections,

because it has world-wide currency in other languages too. The examples of writing systems devised in this century for illiterate peoples also show how modifications of the ideal are always necessary for practical purposes.

What, then, are the needs and abilities of human beings that are not met by present English spelling, and are of prime concern to spelling reform?

The first distinction must be made between the needs for writing and the needs for reading. Curiously, spelling reforms have traditionally been designed more for writers than for readers. "Spell as you speak" has been an ideal to help writers. The difficulties this presents for readers have not been fully recognized.

The next question is to consider the nature of the English language — since a writing system that suits one language may not be as suitable for another. We can look at a range of possibilities by surveying mankind from China to Peru as the great lexicographer Dr Johnson would have recommended. Reform proposals must be appraised for ease of immediate adjustment by those already literate, ease of learning to read/write, international facilitation of communication, effects on the universal literacy problem — the priority of whose needs should be served most, and whether a simplified solution might be accessible to all, that led into a spelling that gave the greatest efficiency possible to the experts.

### **Children learning to read and write**

The biggest argument for spelling reform is not that English spelling is imperfect, but that it is a barrier to literacy for millions. If a spelling reform does not make it easier to learn to read, its other aims have little force. In English-speaking countries, most people are taught to read between the ages of 5–7. A significant portion fail to learn, and may even leave school in adolescence as non-readers.

What sort of spelling reform could help prevent this by matching the needs and abilities of normal children aged 5–7? This article considers the needs of child learners, and focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of "Cut Spelling" proposals for them.

It is essential to realize that there is a strong and even "established!" line of thinking and practice that spelling is to be avoided in teaching young children to read, and so spelling reform is completely irrelevant. This influential doctrine has swung in and out of fashion for the past 150 years (see Chall, 1983). Thousands of teachers laugh out of court anyone wanting children to learn the alphabet and the relation of letters to spoken English. They believe words are to be recognized as wholes, and context helps to identify novel words (see influential works of Frank Smith, e.g. Smith 1982.)

There are good reasons for these waves of fashion for "Look and Say", "Sentence Reading", "Paired Reading" and other non-phonetic approaches to the teaching of reading.

- English spelling is too difficult for young children. The answer to this must be spelling reform. But the problem goes further too.
- Most children aged 5–7 do not intuitively understand how words are made up of sounds and
- methods used to try to teach this understanding and the sound-symbol relationships in

English ("phonics") have often been unsuitable, boring, and counter-effective. Some children never catch on, others have learnt simply to "bark at print", turning the printed page into blended sounds that might as well be Hindustani.

The critical problem is that altho all peoples naturally learn the complex cultural artifact of spoken language, the complex artifact of written language is not a natural development. It is an invention — or discovery — more closely resembling mathematics. Most languages of the world have never been written down, and most written languages today have been produced within the last 200 years, with outside help. Most writing systems until then have followed the most obvious principles — one symbol = one word, or one symbol = one syllable, with various permutations. The ingenious idea of the alphabet, one symbol = one speech sound, which allows any word at all to be encoded and decoded, has apparently been invented only once, in the Middle East, whence the various existing alphabets have derived.

There is good evidence that most children have to be taught to recognize sounds in words (see e.g. Liberman & Shankweiler, 1985), and not only that, but that illiterate adults cannot intuitively segment words into their constituent speech sounds (see e.g. Morais et al, 1979). It is quite a conceptual achievement — as the singularity of its invention suggests.

Nevertheless, there are many great advantages for literacy with the alphabetic principle, once it is understood. It is so economical and flexible, and more suitable for the English language than a character system like Chinese or a "syllabic" system like Japanese kana, that it may well be the writing system of choice for English spelling reform.

Even with English spelling as capricious as it is now, the "Look and Say" types of reading instruction are fashions that wash out as well as in, since they still do not solve the learning problem. Learning to read new words in English without any phonics is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for all except those with exceptional visual memories and language skills. Few children can remember more than 40 "sight words" without clues to distinguish them.

Chinese, which is acknowledged to be much harder to learn than English in any case, would be quite impossible without the clues of stroke order, radicals, phonic elements and other classifiers and mnemonics, and its gestalt qualities which contrast in visual memorability with linear strings of letters. "Look and Say" learners in English who succeed are those who can apply their alphabetic understanding from being taught to write, to learning how to read. Cognitive psychologists today have demonstrated convincingly the vital importance of "phonology" in learning to read, altho educationalists have not generally been aware of current work (see e.g. Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Ehri & Wilce, 1987; Fowler et al 1979; Liberman et al, 1985; Stuart & Coltheart, 1988).

It is essential therefore that English spelling reform is linked with instructional reform, that teaches children HOW to hear the sounds in words. Even the Initial Teaching Alphabet was not as successful as it might have been because the initial hurdle of recognizing sound in symbol is only partly overcome simply by removing confusing exceptions to general principles.

Researchers have demonstrated the importance of teaching children HOW to recognize sounds, not just presenting them with what they must learn (see John Downing's work on linguistic awareness, e.g. Downing & Valtin (1984) — altho sometimes psychologists' prescriptions have been pretty dull and drill-like.

However, others like Bradley (1980) and Bryant & Bradley (1985) have shown how very simple and clear the early introduction can be for young children, using singing, plastic letters, and principles of association, chunking and cognitive understanding. See also my video *Preparing to Read through Play* (1981), and Anderson et al's 1985 review of practices in successful classrooms that show how simple and basic the phonic comprehension needs to be in order to learn to read. Ninety-five percent of drills and worksheets in much "phonic" teaching is unnecessary. Even the simple strategy of "Sing as slowly as you can" has been the clue to understanding how to bear sounds in words and hence to learn to read for a surprising number of adults and teenagers I have seen who had failed previously to learn.

Establishing how children can easily be taught to recognize sounds in words is an essential step for spelling reform that regularizes the relationship of spoken and written language.

The next steps are to understand what sorts of sounds young learners do easily recognize in words, and what sorts of spelling they can read most easily. A "regular" relationship may still be difficult for them if it does not take account of their needs and abilities.

### **Children's writing**

Difficulties children may have in relating sound to symbol may not be obvious to adults. A letter written by Jessica, a bright five-year-old to the Queen illustrates children's principles of phonology that have been found by all researchers into pre-school writing, e.g. Carol Chomsky (1971) and Charles Read (1975).

DEAR QUEEN ELIZABETH I AM JESSICA LEWIS I HAV IN MI STAP BOOK LOTS OF STAPS  
OV YOU AND ON YOUR ENVELOPE THEIR IS A STAP FROM MI STAP BOOK BUT IT IS SKAP  
DO YOU NO SOPHOIN BIKOS I DO I LOVE MATNETAK ILOD DO YOU LIK THE WELD I DO MI  
HAWS IS IN BULEKPUPUN.

(Translated this reads — I have in my stamp book lots of stamps of you and on your envelope there is a stamp from my stamp book but it is scrap. Do you know [?word unknown] because I do. I love Magnetic Island. Do you like the world? I do. My house is in BaUkpapan. (Frequent letter reversals and switches of letter case are not shown.)

This letter illustrates — apart from royalist sympathies:

- "Rational" spelling is used to relate sound to symbol — e.g. HAV, MI, OV, NO, BIKOS. SKAP shows the preference for K rather than hard C.
- The great disadvantage of simply allowing "spelling as you speak" as a reform is that often readers cannot recognize what the words are meant to be. This can be seen in spelling in essays by school students even at the secondary level as teachers will attest.
- Children do not have difficulty in learning a limited number of very common sight words from their reading, from looking on while they are being read to, and from frequent requests for assistance in writing. In this letter we see DEAR YOU LOVE I BOOK. (The spellings of QUEEN ELISABETH and ENVELOPE were requested and provided.)
- Vowel discriminations can be difficult. Children do not hear the same phonemes that adults learn to "hear" once they are literate. c.f. BIKOS ILOD WELD MATNETAK HAWS. Young

children tend to reduce vowel digraphs to single letters, e.g. WELD and to make no distinction between long and short vowels, e.g. LIK ILOD MI NO.

Children have problems sorting out consonant strings and tend to omit or misrecognize consonants in them e.g. ILOD MATNETAK STAP SKAP. This difficulty can appear in their spoken language as well, showing that they are not always aware of the real "form of the word!". They are still learning vocabulary, and may waver in their versions of it. "Cut Spelling" therefore should not cut out any schwa ("obscure") vowel, however minimal, if it may change the nature of the word for children who are still learning vocabulary, and/or add to the complexity of consonant strings.

- Young writers may omit consonants, but usually do not omit schwa vowels that separate consonants. This again is an argument for retaining representation of these weak schwa vowels when they are heard in formal speech, however slightly.

From the evidence of how young children naturally write, when, a child-oriented spelling reform would cut out superfluous letters in order to prevent confusions, shorten words, simplify vowels, allow a range of phonemes to be represented by a single vowel, represent consonants and vowels consistently, have no more consonant strings than are absolutely necessary, retain representation of schwa vowels that separate consonants, and allow a limited number of very common sight words and suffix conventions (< - ION> for example is a quickly learnt convention) if it would assist compatibility with present spelling or international usages.

Further features of young children's writing, but not illustrated in Jessica's letter, are the use of letter names as spellings (e.g. RITN) and morphemic intactness i.e. they do not modify spellings when adding suffixes unless the sound also changes — e.g. PARTYS HAPYNES — i.e. Chomskian theory (C. Chomsky, 1970) applies to morphemes rather than to a lexical base that disregards phonology. This is part of children's remarkable linguistic capacity to generalize and reason which many spelling reform proposals ignore. Sound-symbol correspondence may require consistent modifications to allow for morphemic representation that shows the relationship of word families, particularly for built-up polysyllabic words.

This is evidence from how children write. However, it is well known that children can have difficulty in reading even their own writing. Spelling that is easy to read may not be identical to spelling that is easy to write. What features of words facilitate beginning readers?

### **Children's reading**

This question is bound up with the extent of vocabulary knowledge of beginning readers. It must be remembered that at each age level literates usually have far greater vocabulary than non-literates, largely because reading is how so much of their vocabulary is acquired. A spelling reform must make it easier to increase their reading vocabulary and also to be able to use it in their spoken language.

As everyone would expect, the longer the word, the harder children find it to read, unless it has particular salience and visual distinctiveness for them — e.g. most children learn quickly to recognize on sight memorable words like LITTLE, ELEPHANT, CROCODILE, CHOCOLATE, ROCKET that stand out among short words. In general, however, economy in word length is an advantageous principle for young readers. Superfluous letters are a nuisance. In these respects, "Cut Spelling" is excellent. For example, to take a page at random from *SSS Cut Spelling Handbook* (1992) p153.

1. Twenty-three Cut Spellings on p153 would probably make the words easier for beginners to read, since their main effect is to cut out superfluous letters that can confuse them, and the resulting spellings follow regular principles that are found in other words too:

AJECTIV ALREDY ALTERNATIV ALYND AR DUBLET FOREN GIV IGNORD ILLUSTRATED  
IMEDIAT NO PRACTIS PROMIS SERIUS SWICH SYTHE TH THRE U WEL WER WICH

2. Eleven Cut Spellings on p153 would also probably make it easier for beginners to read the words since the shortening results in "letter pronunciation" for the final syllables, which is often used by children in trying to read as well as write:

COMN EITHR FURTHR HOWEVR LETR PRACTICL READR RADICL RITN UNDR WETHR

3. Cut Spelling inevitably leaves some spelling difficulties because it does not by its nature attempt to address all the initial problems of TO for readers — some of which are fairly common conventions, once they are learnt e.g. /u/ spelt as <o> and <c> pronounced as /s/ cf. eleven words on p153:

SOM TWO ABOV OTHR VOICED APEARANCE ASOCIATED INCONSISTNCIS INTRODUCED  
CONCERNND OCURENCES

4. Some Cut Spelling conventions can be taught to older learners, since they are consistent and not confusing — but not for 5–7 year-olds.

RULE CHANJES ACORDNG SPELNG ENDNG INCONSISTNCY

5. Some Cut Spellings apply morphemic principles, and so in theory should not pose problems, e.g. SIMPLIFYD RELYBLY.

Some Cut Spellings would require explanation on initial exposure, since they are cuts that do not result in direct sound/spelling relationships — e.g. WUD AL.

Some cuts add to possible homophonic confusions — e.g. DISCUSD as DISCUS-D — altho the existing high proportion of homographic homophones in English spelling suggests this is not the big problem often supposed. This article itself has many such spellings that will not have been noticed — e.g. MAY SORT SOUND HIGH WILL.

Affixes which beginners should not be exposed to until they are familiar with the base words, since they include 3-letter consonant strings difficult for them to sort out, include RESOLVD CONSIDRD POINTD COMPOUND.

Spellings with alternate possible pronunciations — NUMERUS COZY FOLOS POESD — may not be a major problem if the correct version is established in one-trial learning, but this is subject to proof. It is seen as a problem in TO.

The major problem that Cut Spelling in its present form could present to learners of reading is in how to segment many of its polysyllabic words and relate them to spoken language. Experienced readers automatically use the strategy of segmenting polysyllables in novel words in order to decode them easily, read them aloud, or work out meanings from their roots and affixes. However, young children find it hard to segment words for decoding — another reason for shorter words, but also an argument for retaining CVC constructions (syllables in which consonants are separated by vowels) that make it visibly and phonologically easier to read the words. Cut Spelling therefore should not make "short cuts" that in fact can add to learners' difficulty, unless these are a version for more advanced readers (cf. Hebrew pointed scripts for learners and unpointed scripts for adults).

Cut Spellings may add a burden of consonant strings that learners could find difficult to sort out — e.g. on p153, DIFICLTY, INCONSTITNCIS, INTRCHANGEBL, EQUIVLNT, SIMLRLY.

Spellings that could confuse learners up to late secondary level, who still are learning new vocabulary, as to where the schwa vowel separates consonants include SIBLNT which could be reconstructed as SIBLANT, PATRNS as PATRONS, ASIMLATION as ASIM-LATION, DIFRENTIATION as DIF-RENTIATION, also AVAILBL NORMLY ORGNIZE REGULRIZE SIMLRLY.

We might find that new "spelling pronunciations" would develop from Cut Spelling, that cut the spoken words as drastically as printed forms like these that drop obscure vowels that are already very weak. Pronunciation changes could also be promoted by spellings such as THER WHER THERFOR RELYBLY.

How might Cut Spelling help or hinder young child readers at the very beginning of reading?

There is a current trend to use "Real Books" rather than artificially constructed "readers" in order to make first reading more interesting. Beyond the HOP ON POP level of Dr Seuss, children are given stories such as Eastman's *The Best Nest* (1968) of around 706 words, in which the 116 word tokens with Cut Spellings would be as in Table 1.

Note that 14 CS word types have sequences of 3 letter consonant strings, and three words have 4 letter consonant strings — i.e. in CS over 25 % of the word types in this story for child beginners have consonant strings of three or more letters, whereas in TO the only such word, MATTRESS, is triple-string only by reason of its double letters, and is easily segmented into two CVC syllables.

### **Comment**

Cut Spelling in general follows "natural" children's writing and early reading preferences in deleting superfluous letters and reducing many digraphs to single letters. However, there are some cautions to make.

In view of the known difficulty that beginning readers have with consonant strings, empirical research is essential into what additional degree of difficulty might be introduced by such a high proportion of CS multiple consonant strings.

It is also necessary to be sure that there is a great compensating value to other users in removing all letters that represent minimal obscure vowels.

Future articles will consider how CS would affect other users of English print, and also what research suggests would be the advantages and disadvantages of phonemic reforms such as New Spelling 90 and American Spelling, to the different categories of users. The final discussion considers overall what features are required of a spelling reform that might prove the "best fit" to human needs and abilities, and the sorts of experiments and other empirical research that could settle the issues.

**TABLE 1**

	Simplification	Simple Convention	Harder Convention	3-4 letter consonant strings:	Ambiguous pronunciation:	
ALREDY	I'L 3	ANOTHR	SPELNG	ASKD	AL 12	SOM
AR	LO	EATN	CRYD	BUMPD	CUD 4	SOMETHING
BAK	OCLOK	FETHRS	CHANJE	GASPD	EVRYWHER	THER 10
BAREL	PIK	FOREVR		WANTD	GESS	WHER
BEL	REALY	HARDR 2		WORKD	LOV 5	
BILD 3	RONG	NEVR		GETNG	MATRESS	
EG	TH 23	PARKR		SINGNG 2	MOTHR	
	U 3	SWETR		SITNG	NEEDD	
	WIL 2	UNDR		SPELNG	PUL	
	TWELV	LOOKD 7		STUFNG 3		
		RAIND		STOKNG		
		POPD				

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- Note: C. Upward will reply to the above observations about CS in a future publication.*

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[Edward Rondthaler: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Personal View 8](#)]

### 3. REVIEW of CUT SPELLING HANDBOOK

#### Edward Rondthaler

Edward Rondthaler is President of the American Literacy Council,

Let me begin this critique of the Cut Spelling Handbook by saying that I am, in general, a disciple of Walter Ripman and Godfrey Dewey and have the deepest respect for their contributions to spelling reform. Dr Dewey once told me:

If you want to make any real contribution to the movement you have to be very thoro, very open minded, flexible, hard working, and totally honest — honest particularly with yourself in the matter of not fooling yourself by underrating the ideas of others, or overrating your own.

I hope I have not underrated this advice.

When we look at the record of bringing English spelling into line with pronunciation we go back to the foundation laid by Walter Ripman in 1941. Good as that was, it did not deal with plurals or certain inflections, and it had a few awkward characteristics some of which were ironed out by Godfrey Dewey in 1963. Since then the other shortcomings have been seriously. Slow but steady progress is being made toward the goal of a notation that mirrors a pronunciation likely to be understood by all readers — a carefully assessed balance between "cultivated colloquial" and "platform speech".

Even so, nobody is completely comfortable with the way that a schwa, particularly in terminal syllables, is represented in any of the proposed 26-letter notations. Ripman and Dewey accepted — probably reluctantly — what may still be the best workable compromise. It is illustrated by the words *littl*, *mantel*, *sister*, and *dollar*. But we keep hoping for a better way; one that meets all the criteria of a practical notation. Certainly CS has some possibilities.

I was not in touch with Valerie Yule when she first proposed Cut Spelling. It came to my attention in the mid-1980's, and I pricked up my ears. That was back in the early days when CS, it seemed to me, was aimed at solving the schwa problem.

I remember the nice catchy phrase "If in doubt leave it out." Perhaps that was too simplistic, but it expressed the idea cleverly and forcefully. I expected to see it on the cover of the yellow handbook. But if today's version of Cut Spelling requires 230 pages of explanation and justification, it's clear that something so simple as "If in doubt leave it out" is out.

What began as a cup of tea and a cookie has now expanded into a ten-course dinner difficult to digest. I'm sorry to find CS so divorced from mirroring speech that it does not change *city* to *sity* and changes *national* only to *nationl*. That may win applause from those who are fluent in t.o., but never from functional illiterates.

As an exercise in shortening our spelling to get more words on the printed page, CS wins high marks — an impressive average of about 7 or 8% (when word spaces and punctuation, as they should be, are included in the count). It might be worth noting, however, that if space-saving is

important we can achieve it in a less dramatic way. Thanks to today's digital typesetting, it takes little more than the flip of the switch to reduce the width of our typefaces by that small and almost unnoticeable percentage.

In trying to fathom what's happened to the CS I knew some years ago, I keep returning to the fourth paragraph on the back cover. That may say different things to different people. I assume it does. But to me, as one concerned about our growing functional illiteracy, it says this:

CS deletes as many letters as possible from a word without making it unintelligible [to fluent t.o. readers]. CS usually, tho not always, shies away from repairing a phonographic mismatch if the repair would do no more than make the spelling logical.

If that's the underlying premise of CS — which it seems to be after studying the handbook — I doubt if it will help our illiteracy problem. It's not the same premise that underlies the orthographies of other languages.

English spelling is like a car that was put together carelessly with bolts that didn't fit. They've come loose and the whole machine rattles and shakes. To repair it is not just a matter of removing the clattering bolts. The chassis may need realignment, and new bolts of the right size to replace the misfits.

No system of English spelling will ever be totally free of inconsistencies. But those inconsistencies should be kept to a minimum, and the notation must reflect professionalism.

One could pick numerous examples, but page 57 (combined with 248) is as good as any to illustrate how, to my mind, CS theories go awry:

The <e> in *come* is redundant, so CS drops it.

We know that no fluent t.o. reader is likely to misread CS *com* because it looks enough like t.o. *come* to be recognizable.

But then CS encounters *comb*. If the <b> is dropt from *comb* the spelling will get mixt up with CS *com*, and if you put a magic-e on the end, a fluent t.o. reader will surely confuse it with t.o. *come*. So to avoid this CS keeps the <b> on *comb* and creates a new term — "magic b". Now we have magic-e and magic-b, and it's up to you to learn where to use which. You must not use magic-b on *homb* or *domb*, but you should, according to CS, use it on *tomb* — except that in that case magic-b does not make the <o> long, but converts it into <oo>!

How does that help functional illiterates or spelling simplification? It doesn't. It's just swapping one set of confusions for another.

Compare it with this approach:

You teach the pupil that whenever the letter < e > follows a vowel it is a signal. Just a signal, always a signal, and never anything else. The e-signal means that the vowel before it is pronounced like its name. Always.

Then the three t.o. words: *come, comb, tomb* can be written like they sound: *cum, coem, toom* — not like they don't sound: *com, comb, tomb* in CS.

And now comes the 64 dollar question: Will those who are fluent in t.o. readily or even reluctantly accept CS? Probably not.

The phrase "such radical changes are not envisioned for CS!" occurs so frequently in the text, that I must conclude that the Working Group felt that the fewer changes they made in t.o. the better would be its chance of public acceptance. In view of spelling reform's historical record that was reasonable. But watering down changes to avoid offending sensitivities may not in the long run, be the best tactic.

We need a better strategy than appeasement.

And there's a better strategy waiting to be used. Conceivably it could incorporate some of the CS principles. It is a proven strategy, pedagogically sound. But it's never been applied to spelling reform. I refer to i.t.a. and *Writing to Read*. Both systems use a "bridge" notation that helps the pupil learn t.o. But in neither case is the notation suitable as a reformed English spelling, and the pupil is encouraged to abandon it as soon as possible.

The American Literacy Council is developing two largely self-teaching tools that will use the "bridge" strategy for a dual purpose. The primary and published purpose is to teach t.o. The unpublished purpose is to give the pupil a sufficiently long exposure to a rational logical spelling so that the concept of spelling simplification may begin to take hold.

By the end of July 1992 these new "tools" — the SoundSpeler computer program and the SoundReeder book — will be ready for experimental use. Both show t.o. and reformed spellings in parallel lines of black and red. So *tough*, in black, appears on the upper line, and below it is *tuf*, in red.

Neither the computer program nor the book are described as doing anything more than teaching t.o. In both cases the "bridge" spelling is in Ripman-Dewey notation (with some recent modifications). This is a notation that could, if desired, ultimately augment or replace our present spelling. Most importantly, the "bridge" spelling remains visible at all times so the student has ample opportunity to see, on the red line, how words would be spelt if they were spelt "as they sound".

These two tools essentially teach t.o., and should not encounter resistance from the status quo. Their largely self-teaching characteristics, moreover, make them useful in both formal and informal environments.

Testing of SoundSpeler and SoundReeder in different groups may reveal that certain features of Cut Spelling should be considered for updated versions.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 13, 1992/2 p10 in printed version]

[Chris Upward: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Pamphlet](#), [Leaflets](#), [Media](#), [Book and Papers](#).]

## 4. Ranking Visual Disturbance of Letter Omissions — a Pilot Experiment. Christopher Upward

The questionnaire reproduced below (published in [Journal 1992/1](#), Item 3) was completed by 20 respondents.

"Below are listed 9 incomplete spellings of the word *important*, each with a different letter omitted. Please assess how visually disturbing you find each spelling, by ranking them in order 1–9, scoring the spelling which you find least disturbing as 1, and the spelling you find most disturbing as 9, with scores 2–8 in order against intermediate forms. You may find it helpful to make a preliminary assessment on a separate piece of paper first, and then adjust it in the light of your impression of all the other spellings. The full spelling *important* may be considered to have score 0.

1 <i>mportant</i> - rank...	4 <i>imprtant</i> - rank...	7 <i>importnt</i> - rank...
2 <i>iportant</i> - rank...	5 <i>impotant</i> - rank...	8 <i>importat</i> - rank...
3 <i>imortant</i> - rank...	6 <i>imporant</i> - rank...	9 <i>importan</i> - rank...

The average disturbance score given to each of the spellings is given below (the total is anomalous as 4 respondents did not rank every spelling uniquely with a figure between 1 and 9), along with the number of times each spelling was ranked as the least disturbing of all nine forms (= n x 1):

1 <i>mportant</i> - scor 5.0 (1x1)	4 <i>imprtant</i> - scor 3.9 (2x1)	7 <i>importnt</i> - scor 2.6 (11x1)
2 <i>iportant</i> - scor 6.5 (0x1)	5 <i>impotant</i> - scor 4.9 (3x1)	8 <i>importat</i> - scor 5.1 (0x1)
3 <i>imortant</i> - scor 7.0 (0x1)	6 <i>imporant</i> - scor 5.3 (1x1)	9 <i>importan</i> - scor 4.1 (0x1)

The results prompt several observations.

- The spelling found least disturbing was No.7, the Cut Spelling (CS) form *importnt*, with more than half the respondents finding it the least disturbing of all nine forms. Possible factors inducing this result may include: the position of the missing <a> near the end of the word (7th out of 9 letters); the absence of ascenders and descenders on the missing letter; the fact that the letter is a vowel, and vowels are known to contribute far less than consonants to the recognizability of words in English; the lack of stress on the letter; and the fact that its sound is represented syllabically by the following <n> (ie the <a> is in effect silent or at least phonographically redundant).
- The omission found most disturbing was <p> (spelling No. 3); five respondents found it the most disturbing omission of all. The explanations suggested above for the low disturbance factor of *importnt* all apply in reverse to *imortant*: the missing letter occurs near the start of the word (3rd out of 9 letters); with its descender, <p> is visually more prominent than <a>; <p> is a consonant, and consonants are essential to the recognizability of English words; and as a voiceless plosive initiating the stressed syllable, <p> is forcefully articulated.
- The fact that the form *mportant* was only ranked fifth may seem surprising, since the initial letter of words must generally be regarded as being the most important key to their recognition. However in this case, we note that it is an unstressed vowel, and therefore acoustically not especially prominent; and not merely does it lack ascenders/descenders, but it is (with <l> visually the narrowest letter in the whole alphabet, consisting of a single vertical stroke (minimum) plus dot; moreover, it is followed by the three successive minimums of the letter <m>, so the absence of one out of the four successive minimums in *important* is easily overlooked. The loss of <m> (which is with <w> the widest letter in the alphabet) in *iportant* was by contrast found to be the second most disturbing omission.
- The loss of the first three letters was found to be more disturbing than the loss of the last three, in a ratio of 18.5:11.7, and the loss of consonants more disturbing than the loss of vowels in a ratio of 16.5: 11.5.

This pilot experiment appears to confirm the essential compatibility of CS/TO with regard to a single word. The study is based on the subjective perception of readers, but it would also be possible to conduct an objective test, in which subjects were required to spot a missing letter within a short period of time (less than one second?). Much more extensive experimentation of these kinds will be needed for the consolidation and development of Cut Spelling.

## 5. Launchng th Cut Spelng Handbook

### Report in Cut Spelng from Chris Upward, Chair of th Cut Spelng Workng Group of th Simplified Spelling Society

On thursday 26 march 1992 th Society held a news confrnce in th imposing — if slytly antiquated — setng of th Vera Anstey Room at th London School of Economics and Political Science. Th purpos was formly to launch th product of over nine years reserch into th fenomnn of redundnt lettrs in traditionl english orthograpy and th efect ther removal has on its iregularity. Th Society' s Cut Spelng Workng Group had concluded its work and was now publishng its findings, undr th informativ if rathr long-windd title *Cut Spelling: a handbook to the simplification of written English by omission of redundant letters*.

Th event had been asiduusly prepared by th Societys Public Relations Oficer, Leo Chapman, hos many years experience as Londn corespondnt of *The Australian* wer put to exlnt use, and by Sue Jackson, public relations oficer at Aston University. We had been warnd to expect that only a fraction of th media peple we had invited wud actuly appear, and so we wer not too disapointd at th turnout of 7. Ther efect made up for ther smal numbr. Despite certn tecnicl problms with th OHP, th confrnce went with a swing and jenrated a good numbr of questions. Those presnt received as handouts a copy of a leaflet explainng th rationale and spelng patrns of CS, and 4 sides of word-bites about english spelng, som of wich it was hoped myt lend themselvs to propagation by th media. Th contents of those four sides ar reproduced at th end of this report.

Beside th *Daily Telegraphs* doyen of education corespondnts, John Clare, and jurnlists from Jermny and Norway, those presnt included a representativ from th BBC World Service and from Associated Press, as well as Richard O' Mara of th *Baltimore Sun*. O' Mara' s substantial articl was evidntly widely syndicated round th United States, because cutngs and corespondnce subsequently came in from a numbr of states, most tuchngly a bunch of lettrs from 10 third-graders at a scool in California. Th BBC World Service aranjed an intrvew on ther european program imediatly aftr th news confrnce, and a secnd intrvew folod for Nijeria, wich was recordd for translation into Hausa to be brodcast later. Associated Press evidntly did a good job ensuring publicity in many local papers thruout th British Iles and furthr afield, including Australia, from wher som enthusiastic responses wer received.

Responses to th launch and to th CS Handbook ar now being colectd, and wil be editd for circulation to membrs and intrestd enquirers later in th year.

#### Word-bites distributed to th media at th CS launch

Side 1

#### The Simplified Spelling Society presents Cut Spelling (=CS)

*The alphabet, like the wheel, is a key human invention. But English today misuses it as grievously as a square-wheeled bicycle would misuse the principle of circularity.*

*English spelling is as confusing as arithmetic would be if convention dictated we recorded the sum "two plus two make four" as  $2 + 2 = 5$ , while also writing  $2 + 3 = 5$  (pronounced ' five' ) and  $3 + 3 = 5$  (pronounced ' six' ). For that is the degree of confusion contained in such spellings as here, there, were*

### SOME PROBLEMS OF TRADITIONAL ENGLISH ORTHOGRAPHY (=T.O.)

- TO ignores the alphabetic principal —  
George Bernard Shaw' s *ghoti* = *fish* , using <gh>  
as in *tough* , <o> as in *women* , <ti> as in *nation*  
- tough, trough, though, thought, through, thorough
- TO is inconsistent: *deign/disdain*, *receipt/conceit*, *affray/afraid*,  
*cat/kitten*, *jelly/gelatine*, *assistant/consistent*,  
*speak/speech*, *proceed/precede/procedure* , *high/height*
- TO wastes years in school, confusing, frustrating, and leaving millions functionally illiterate
- TO restricts people' s vocabulary
- TO is unwieldy: *acknowledgement*, *haemorrhage*, *phenomenal*  
(CS *aknolejmnt*, *hemraj*, *fenomnl* )
- TO is uncertn: *gaol/jail*, *organise/-ize*, *program/-me*,  
*despatch/dispatch*, *labour/labor*, *yoghourt/yogurt*,  
*lichi/litchi/lichee/lychee*
- TO makes foreigners mispronounce:  
*to 'beer' arms* ; *soul, dove* rhyming with *foul, rove*;  
*nation/naytional*
- TO confuses students of other languages:  
English *accommodation*, Spanish *acomodación*
- TO distorts the history of English: *island*, *scissors*.

### SAMPLS OF CUT SPELNG

Ecnomic and social problms in Britn and America ar incresingly being linkd to lo educationl standrds.

Litracy is fundmentl to al lernng — inadequat readng and riting skills prevent exlnce in evry othr subject.

Som peple blame rong teachng methods for widespred ilitracy, but they canot agree on th ryt methods.

Th fundmentl dificity howevr lies in th arcaic patrn of english spelng, wich impede al lernrs, nativ and foren.

Th 26-letr alfabet is a systm wich can and shud allow esy,

straightforward acquisition of literacy skills.

Writing systems are not fixed for ever, but have to be modernized occasionally to try and match pronunciation as well as possible.

Written English was not designed to be user-friendly and has remained largely unchanged for centuries.

From a practical viewpoint, redundant letters are both highly misleading by definition and simple to correct by leaving out.

That is what CS attempts: to lighten, streamline and regularize a writing system at present encumbered with unnecessary clutter.

Whether or not CS as demonstrated here is found acceptable, some action is seriously needed to make English easier to use.

In the *CS Handbook*, the Simplified Spelling Society is putting forward a general concept rather than a rigid, definitive scheme.

Reformed orthographies are normally intended for adoption by the younger generation in schools, rather than by the already literate.

But not the least attractive feature of CS is its economy, which may give an incentive for its adoption where time and space are in heavy demand.

(139/252 words changed, saving 177/1636 or 10.82% characters)

Side 4

**WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR:  
(in no particular order of priority)**

1 Education?

- decision-making, preparing materials
- learners, parents, teachers, trainers, employers

2 Publishing?

- decision-making, implementation
- newspapers, journals, books
- writers, editors, typ-setters
- the public as purchasers and readers

3 Dictionaries?

- co-ordination between dictionaries
- the source of orthographic authority
- combining old and new

4 World English?

- spelling reform in one country
- international co-ordination
- native-speakers vs foreign learners.

## 6. Review of the process of reform in the simplification of Chinese Characters

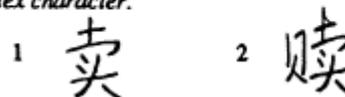
Yue E Li & Christopher Upward

Yue E Li studied English language and literature at the University of Shanxi, after which she taught English at the Agricultural University of Shanxi province in North China. In 1987 she came to the UK to take an MA in Linguistics at Reading University, then moving to Aston University in Birmingham to research for her PhD in Conversational Analysis. Chris Upward is the Society's Editor-in-Chief.

### Introduction

The process of simplifying Chinese characters started in 1950, the year after the People's Republic of China was founded. The final list of simplified characters and radicals was published in 1956. (Radicals are components of complex characters, some of which can also be used as full characters in their own right and may convey aspects of meaning and/or pronunciation, as shown in Figure 1.)

Figure 1  
A radical used 1) as an independent character, 2) as a component (in this case, the right-hand half) of a complex character.



The total of simplified basic characters was 352, plus a further 14 radicals which affect a much larger number of complex characters. The whole process consisted of several stages: preparation, decision-making, trial and standardization. The basic procedure was: first collecting a list of simplified forms which were already widely in unofficial use, then sending them back to users for trial, then viewing the comments about advantages and disadvantages of each simplified form in order to choose those which people found acceptable, and finally publishing a list of standard versions for use.

### The process of simplification

According to the late Chairman Mao's teaching, under the leadership of the Central Education Commission a research group on simplification of Chinese characters was set up in China in 1950. The basic procedures for simplification of complicated characters were as follows:

Firstly, simplified versions of characters already in wide use were collected, and then those which conformed to the following rules for simplification were listed.

1) All the characters which had been chosen to be simplified required versions suitable for the three writing styles known as *regular script* (for printing), *cursive hand* and *running hand* (which may be compared to joined-up and italic handwriting in the roman alphabet). (See Figure 4 below for examples.) They all had to be easy to write and print.

2) The characters chosen to be simplified all had to be common characters in daily use.

3) The official, final list was to be published by the Government, based on the report by the Education Commission.

According to these three rules, the Social Education Section of the Central Education Commission compiled a first "List of commonly-used Chinese characters" based on various sources. This list consisted of 1017 characters, and gave the simplified version of each of these characters. The

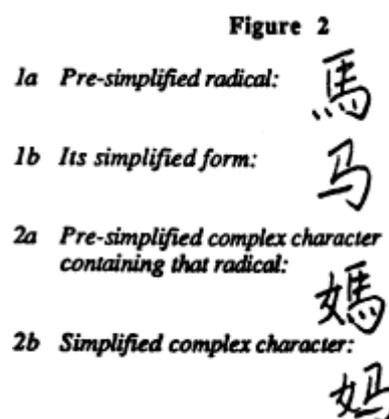
average number of strokes used by the simplified versions was 6.5, reduced from an average of some 18–21 strokes for the old forms.

This first “List of commonly-used Chinese characters” and the three rules for simplification were sent to researchers and teachers involved in Chinese language teaching or calligraphy, in order to get their opinions about the proposed simplified forms. The comments about the list of simplified versions were of two kinds. One was that the simplified versions should be those already in common use and widely accepted. The other was that the simplified versions should aim to increase the speed of writing, while remaining suitable for printing.

After detailed discussions, “The First List of Simplified Characters” was compiled in 1951, consisting of 555 characters.

In 1952 a Commission for Chinese Calligraphy was founded. It considered this first list, and came up with a list of 700 characters. This list was sent to Chairman Mao, who commented that the simplified versions were not simple enough. He said it would be better to use radicals as characters by themselves rather than to build them into complex characters, and to find a basic rule to determine which radical should be used as the simplified form of complex characters containing more than one radical. In addition, he said that reform of Chinese characters should not only reduce the number of strokes previously used, but also reduce the number of Chinese characters in use, i.e. a single character should be used for more than one function.

Following these two comments from Chairman Mao, the Calligraphy Commission amended its original list. In 1953, a second draft of this list of simplified commonly-used characters was compiled, consisting of 338 characters. However, this reduced list was considered not simple enough by the Central Education Commission, who suggested simplifying the radicals, which would have meant all the characters containing those radicals being simplified too, as shown in Figure 2.



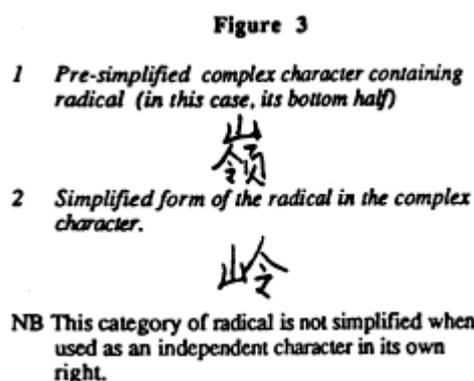
However, in the final agreed versions, some radicals which were simplified for use in complex characters, remained unsimplified when used independently, as shown in Figure 3.

NB This category of radical is not simplified when used as an independent character in its own right.

A third draft of the list of commonly-used simplified characters was subsequently compiled, numbering 1,634, and was sent to specialist committees concerned with book-publishing, education and newspapers, to obtain their reactions. The feedback was as follows:

1) It would be difficult to create new printing type for simplified characters quickly.

2) Having cursive variants for radicals means that there is an even larger number of forms for many complex characters, which all have to be learnt for the purposes of literacy.



3) When the simplified characters are introduced, calligraphic problems arise from the combination of different writing styles, six of which are shown in Figure 4.

4) Some complicated commonly-used characters were not included in the list.

Based on these suggestions, the fourth draft of the list of simplified characters was compiled, consisting of 600 in the regular, printed version and 1800 in cursive and running versions for hand-writing.

After several discussions, in 1955 the fifth draft of the list was published with approval from the Government. It consisted of two parts, one to be introduced immediately and the other to be tried out among the people.

In January 1956, the list of simplified characters was officially published for the first time, containing 260 characters. In June 1956 a second list of simplified characters was published, containing a further 95. In May 1958 a third list of simplified characters was published containing 70 more. In July 1958 a fourth list was published with an additional 92 characters. The final list of the four together contained 517 characters. The average number of strokes in each of the simplified characters was 8.17, which was half that of the original versions. In 1964 the list of simplified characters was officially published with Government approval, with minor changes. This final list consists of three parts: 352 simplified characters whose simplified forms cannot be used as radicals in complex characters, 132 characters which can be used as radicals in complex characters (as in Figure 2), and 14 simplified radicals which only occur in complex characters but affect many hundreds of characters. The total number of characters simplified is then 1754.

### Pros and cons of simplification

Changing a writing system has far-reaching implications, and whatever its advantages, will necessarily also involve disadvantages.

The advantages of the simplified characters in Chinese can be summarized as follows:

1. Handwriting is speeded up, since the average number of strokes in each character is approximately halved.
2. Research has shown that within a given period of time, learners can memorize more of the new simplified characters than of the old complicated ones. However some think the simplified forms are more difficult because pictographic elements, which are an aid to learning, have been lost.
3. Using simplified characters for faxed messages is quicker. (Faxing is particularly useful for transmission of text in ideographic writing systems such as Chinese and Japanese, whose characters do not lend themselves to simple alphabetic encoding.)

Disadvantages arise from the fact that everyone who uses the language for reading and writing, in both the printed and cursive forms, is affected. A change in writing system also requires an upheaval in the publishing industry. A further complication is that the Chinese writing system can be used with a number of different writing tools, including the brush pen. This makes simplification ever more difficult. The problems can be summarized as follows:

Figure 4

1 Great seal:

2 Small seal:

3 Scribal (cursive and running):

4 Regular:

5 Cursive hand:

6 Running hand:

1. Calligraphy is often shown in exhibition for public appreciation and critical appraisal by connoisseurs, and changing the form of the character may affect the esthetic qualities of this traditional art form. After discussion with the Calligraphy Commission, it was decided that calligraphers could keep the original characters unchanged. However as time went by the younger generation ceased to be able to read the calligraphic forms, and the older generation therefore worried about the loss of traditional calligraphic values.
2. Publishing is another problem. Reforming an alphabetic writing system does not necessarily require the creation of any new letters. Simplifying written Chinese on the other hand requires the creation of a new character-form for each simplification. The printing industry cannot just remove strokes from the characters in existing type-faces (as Cut Spelling removes redundant letters from existing spellings), but has to make completely new ones.
3. Language teaching is also affected. The language teacher's job is thereby complicated, since teachers educated before the reform have to learn the new simplified characters themselves.
4. Communication in writing can give rise to problems, both between the generations and between separate Chinese-speaking communities. These problems occurred with Chinese, both within mainland China and with the overseas Chinese communities where the simplified forms were not initially accepted.
5. Traditionalists find such changes disturbing. Some Chinese intellectuals have always worried about the loss of the original underlying pictographic aspect of Chinese characters.

### **Wider use of simplified characters?**

The simplification of Chinese characters has been very successful. They are used nation-wide in China, and, outside China, Singapore is now beginning to use them, a few are used in Taiwan, and Hong Kong will presumably find itself following suit after 1997 when it joins mainland China. When one considers the advantages of simplifying Chinese characters, it ought also to be attractive for the Japanese to simplify their Kanji characters, which derive from Chinese. A further simplification of written Chinese is conceivable, but would be unlikely to affect nearly so many characters.

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 1992/2 p17–19 in printed version]

[Patrick Groff: see [Bulletin](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

## 7. Traversing the Hurdles to Simplified Spelling

### Patrick Groff

Having started his career as an elementary school teacher, Patrick Groff is now Professor of Education at San Diego State University, California. He has over 300 publications to his name in the fields of education and literacy, and has served on several national bodies in the USA, such as the National Council for Teachers of English.

In an article in *Elementary School Journal* sixteen years ago (Groff, 1976), I discussed why there had been no significant spelling reform in English up to that time. We seem to be faced at present with the same basic question that I raised earlier: How can educators be convinced to adopt spelling reform? From an educator's viewpoint I find that the same hurdles now exist to spelling reform that previously prevailed:

*One*, there still remains a great deal of ignorance, apathy, and disregard toward simplified spelling. For example, I reviewed all the issues of *Language Arts*, an official publication of the National Council of Teachers of English in the U.S., from 1976 to 1991. This well-known and influential educational journal did not publish a single article on simplified spelling during this period, let alone one that recommended spelling reform. The articles found in *Language Arts* indicate that interest in spelling instruction, as such, has fallen out of favor with experts in the field of literacy development.

Compliments for what is called the "whole language" (WL) approach (in Great Britain, the "real books" emphasis) now dominate educational publications. The WL scheme advocates "developmental" spelling. It is contended that students best learn to spell if self taught, largely by "inventing" the spelling of words. The educational establishment at present obviously is not concerned highly about spelling instruction, and even less about simplified spelling.

*Two*, the educated populations of English speaking countries continue to be elitist in their defenses of traditional spelling. The travails of learning to spell with an orthographic system in which letters do not predictably represent the speech sounds of English are persistently seen as an intellectual badge of courage. Part of this snobbery is based on the objections to simplified spelling as visually offensive, an affront to the esthetics of print. As noted, the popular WL movement advocates highly progressive, if not radical recommendations about spelling instruction (Goodman, 1986).

By not including simplified spelling as part of its avant-garde teaching agenda, however, WL obviously acts to perpetuate the status quo judgment that learning traditional spelling is a sign of social class status, educational attainment, and academic diligence. The fact that reforming the alphabet, for the purpose of making spellings more predictable enhances progress in beginning reading (Adams, 1990) does not sway the protectionist feeling about traditional spelling as a sign of intellectual, academic, and social merit.

*Three*, there remains in educational circles the argument that letter-speech sound correspondences that aid the reader have higher priority than those that favor the speller. Accordingly, the spellings *bare* and *bear*, for example, are defended because they help the reader perceive immediately the distinctive meanings of these two words (even though their spellings prove a problem for the speller). The normal tendency of able readers is to want to attach meanings to individual words being read, without delay, even if the gratification of this impulse interferes with their understanding of the sentence in which these words are located.

For example, in the sentence, *The none and the buoy tolled hymn to roe*, the able reader first determines the peculiar meaning of the words as they are spelled, in an accurate and rapid (automatic) manner. Only afterwards do skilled readers use the sentence context to decide on the intended meaning of each word. As far as sentence context dictating meanings given to words is concerned, it is well-established that context is not the first cue used by able readers to identify the word meanings in sentences that an author intended to convey (Schatz & Baldwin, 1986).

In short, the context of sentences does not override the skillful reader's immediate perception of the letters in individual words. Instead, when perusing sentences, proficient readers initially are attracted to the letters in words rather than to what the sentence context indicates these words mean.

The argument to retain the traditional spellings of homophones such as *bear-bare*, as given above might be logical. Whether it has any true psychological substance is doubtful, however. There is convincing experimental evidence that if a simplified spelling, such as *ber*, served for both *bear* and *bare*, the acquisition of beginning reading skills is facilitated beyond what is possible with traditional spellings (Adams, 1990). This fact does not answer, of course, the question why educators carry out such research and then fail to follow through on its implications for instruction.

*Four*, defenders of the direct, systematic, and intensive teaching of phonics information and its application to decoding written words also sometimes turn out to be opponents of simplified spelling. It is the contention of some phonics advocates that if phonics information is taught properly this instruction will obviate the need for simplified spelling.

While the direct and systematic teaching of phonics information can claim notable and continuing victories in comparison with the WL approach in developing reading skills (Chall, 1989), phonics teaching success is further enhanced by the adoption of the reformed spellings of words, such as the i.t.a. (=initial teaching alphabet). It is found that the children whose instruction had been with the i.t.a. exhibited "a significantly lower failure rate than those who worked with the traditional orthography" (Adams, 1990, p.256). Unfortunately, nonpartisan, public interest groups in the U.S., such as the Reading Reform Foundation\* that advocate direct and systematic phonics teaching have not elected to promote simplified spelling.

The data on the general success with i.t.a. spellings has not convinced educators to adopt simplified spelling, it is clear. Perhaps a different kind of data on spelling reform would. For example, I calculated that adding the suffix <-ed> to single syllable, high-frequency root words

increased the spelling difficulty of the inflected form 20% over its root form (Groff, 1985). In this respect, we need data that indicates how much easier it is for children to spell such words whose inflection is <-t> (*spelt*) rather than <-ed> (*spelled*).

Similar studies could be made that compared the length of time it took matched groups of children to learn to spell *enuf* as versus *enough*, for example. The relative difficulty children have in learning to spell consonant letter clusters correctly has been reported (Groff, 1986). We now need to determine if simplified vowel cluster spellings are easier for children to learn to spell than are their traditional forms. We need more than opinion on this issue if educators are to be convinced as to the necessity of simplified spelling.

*Five*, less advance than is needed seems to have been made by the proponents of simplified spelling to outwit the argument that its adoption would mean that advantages to the learner from the history of the derivation of word meanings would be lost. In this respect, educators have been implored to believe that if students learn the derivational morphology of polysyllabic words they will become better readers than otherwise is possible. It thus has been recommended that time be spent teaching, for example, that *adduce*, *educe*, and *induce* share a common meaning element, *duce* (=to lead). An analysis of the limited experimental research on this issue concludes that at least this morpheme study is a satisfactory substitute for the employment of context cues (Groff & Seymour, 1987).

*Six*, publications favoring simplified spelling, moreover, tend to ignore what appears to be a greater practical problem resulting from its adoption. Would not whole new sets of reference books be required causing large additional expenses to individuals, schools, and libraries? Would not the great mass of past writings done with traditional spellings be put beyond the reach of students taught with simplified spelling? There hardly can be sufficient nor satisfying answers to such protests. The only acceptable response seems to be to judge the effectiveness of simplified spelling on balance. Does it not do more good than harm? Does it not represent the case of eggs having to be broken in order for a nutritious omelet to be served? A better case in terms of cost differentials must be made by the proponents of simplified spelling, nonetheless. This reform must become cost conscious.

*Finally*, proposals for simplified spelling in the past have been objected to on the grounds of the abruptness of the changes they envision. In this regard, keeping in mind the significant other hurdles to its acceptance that still abound, as given above, it likely will not be possible for it to meet the time schedule set for it by Ives (1992). He suggests seven major spelling reforms in as many years, one change per year. This overture is not overly ambitious when looked at simply in a rational way, of course. Nonetheless, considering the emotional nature of the opposition to simplified spelling, it is not likely that Ives' changes can be instigated with the rapidity he recommends.

Conditioning the adoption of Ives' timetable for the shift to simplified spelling is the reluctance, as noted, of educators' feelings that it actually saves learners' time and school money, and is more convenient for the teacher.

While the experimental data on simplified spelling, as called for so far, is difficult to find at present, this is not a surprising situation. It is less arduous for the advocates of spelling reform to sit at their desks rationally designing simplified spelling structures and arguments for their adoption than it is carry out learning experiences with live subjects.

Obtaining permission to carry out such experiments also is becoming difficult. Schools inquire, if children best learn to spell in an informal manner, are simplified spelling investigations needed? "Can you assure us that your experiment will result in no loss in spelling achievement in the subjects involved", the schools ask uncharitably. Then, "What will be the future consequences to the child who has learned to spell *enuf* rather than *enough*?" Many parents would continue to judge the *enuf* child as less thoroughly educated than is his *enough* contemporary.

To *summarize*, the objection in the educational establishment to simplified spelling remains reactionary, noisy, and deep-seated. At the same time, educators continue their moth-like flutterings against the lamps of educational faddism. They are more than eager to adopt what they consider to be true and practical progressivism, it is clear. A foremost task of advocates of simplified spelling thus is to convince teachers, teacher educators, and educational bureaucrats that it represents serviceable progressivism, and not the cerebrations of eccentric literati.

Simplified spelling has attempted to create its exclusive bandwagon. Over the years, however, its wheels keep falling off. At the same time, the bandwagons of educational 'reform' roll on in a seemingly endless stream. Would it not behoove the simplified spelling movement, therefore, to jump on board one of these carriages of mass appeal? The most recent example of educational innovation with fast-growing, widespread attractiveness is the "whole language" approach to literacy development (called the "real books" approach in the U.K.). "Never have I witnessed anything like the rapid spread of the whole-language movement" world-wide, testifies the dean of education at the University of Illinois, USA (Pearson, 1989, p. 231).

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, 13, 1992/2, p19 in printed version*]

## 8. Publications received.

### **N'wenglish: the way to Instant\* Literacy**

By *Bob Cleckler*. Northwest Publishing, 5949 South, 350 West, Murray UT 84107. \$12.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling in USA.

This is an enthusiastic effort to popularize spelling reform, and present his version. It aims for the general reader, but includes 25 tables. These range from the monetary cost of illiteracy (\$20 thousand million a year or more) thru the confusions of present English, to the spelling rules of N'wenglish and its 41 phonemes.

The author starts with a challenge to understand a root cause of illiteracy — English spelling — and with an exercise in problem solving. Four visual problems are presented, which can only be solved by non-obvious but not prohibited means. These demonstrate the necessity of getting a different perspective before some problems can be solved.

His spelling system uses <tt> for the unvoiced ("soft") <th>, and adds <-c> to vowels to make them long. Only < k > is used for its sound, < c > only in < ch >. The vowel sound in "full, good!" is spelt <oo>, while <ue> is used for "fool, soon". "Are" is spelt <or>, and "far" as <for>, while "for" is respelt <fur>. Thus "full" becomes "fool", and "fool" becomes "foel". These make for confusion in moving between T.O. and N'wenglish.

Appendix I gives the Gospel of John in *N'wenglish*, the first half with macrons over long vowels, the rest without them (using < -e >). Appendix 3 has suggestions for teaching — based much on Frank Laubach's experience.

### **Recherche et réform.**

Laisons — HESO, # 19–20. Janvier 1992. 50 Franks, TTC, 27 Rue Paul Bert 94204, Ivry-Sur Seine Udex

Largely devoted to the 1990 changes adopted for French spelling by *Le Conseil Superior de l'Instruction Publique*, these changes are presented in 8 articles and 85 pages. Four documents are reprinted, from 1901, 1976, and two from 1990.

Nina Catach wrote four, and Susan Baddeley two of the 22 articles in this issue. They hope to supply us with translations of a few of the articles, and with reports on the implementation of these and other developments in French spelling.

This is the latest issue, in French, of the series begun by *Histoire el Structuer de l'Orthographe* in 1978.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, 13, 1992/2, p20 in printed version]

[David Moseley: see [Bulletin](#), [Journals](#)]

### Three Reports on Recent Research

## 9. SPELLING DIFFICULTIES LIMIT WRITTEN EXPRESSION

### Abstract by Chris Upward and David Moseley

**David V Moseley, 'How Lack of Confidence in Spelling Affects Children's Written Expression'.**

In *Educational Psychology in Practice*, April 1989, pp.42–46.

Dr Moseley is Reader in Applied Psychology at the University of Newcastle, England and co-author of the best-selling ACE (=Aurally Coded English) Spelling Dictionary.

#### **Background**

Correct spelling is a widely desired educational goal, yet children's actual performance and attitudes in English are not well attuned to this expectation. British teachers have recently faced conflicting advice, with priority sometimes given to technical accuracy (eg correct spelling), but sometimes to content and style instead. It is claimed, on the one hand, that children's writing is inhibited by spelling difficulty and would blossom if correct spelling had lower priority, but, on the other, that correct spelling is a prerequisite for effective communication.

#### **Past studies**

In one instance, it was observed that if a child had used a wider vocabulary, her spelling accuracy would have declined. A broader study showed a representative sample of twenty 15-year-olds averaging one misspelling in 60 words, with 6 pupils misspelling at least one word in 20, and 3 misspelling at least one in 10. One might suppose such pupils avoid using more sophisticated vocabulary with more difficult spellings.

A survey of 1254 pupils aged 8–9 showed the size of their spoken vocabulary correlated poorly with spelling accuracy. (Using high frequency vocabulary to test spelling obscures such correlations anyway.) It is therefore probable that poor spelling increasingly inhibits such pupils' powers of written expression at more advanced levels. Furthermore, misspelling of basic vocabulary is likely to prejudice examiners against the content and expression of such writing too. Moseley's 1989 study further emphasizes the dangers of deducing linguistic impoverishment from limited writing powers.

## **New evidence**

The study shows poor spellers using 35% more regularly spelt words than good spellers, and pupils diagnosed as dyslexic using 47% more. The poor spellers and dyslexics also used significantly more short words than the good spellers. Calculations were based on the proportion of words written which occurred in a list of 500 commonly used words.

Evidence was next sought which might show poor spellers avoiding irregularly spelt words, as well as less common words. Using scripts from 1,250 New Zealand pupils aged 7–13, a list was compiled of 51 words which occurred both among the 300 most frequently used and among the 300 most frequently misspelt. A second list was then compiled of 51 words of equal length also occurring among the 300 most frequently used, but not found amongst the 300 most often misspelt. It was predicted that poor spellers and dyslexics would use fewer of the 51 harder spellings than of the 51 equally common easier spellings.

The prediction was fulfilled when scripts by 20 British pupils aged 15 were examined. No difference in frequency of usage between easier and harder spellings was found amongst the 10 better spellers, but the 10 poorer spellers were found to prefer the easier spellings by a factor of almost 4:1. Similar results were obtained from dyslexics. This suggests that difficult spellings restrict pupils powers of expression, though less so in the case of younger New Zealanders.

Certain pupils had informed Moseley that they deliberately repeated words with safe spellings, rather than risk error by varying their vocabulary more widely. This was confirmed by a sophisticated comparison of type-token ratios and error frequency; this showed a moderate correlation. Poor spellers made more errors, wrote less, used shorter words and a more limited vocabulary, and repeated themselves more often.

Poor spellers were seen to score lower marks than any of the above limitations by themselves would produce, so suggesting such weaknesses had a cumulative effect. It is not clear what the best policy would be in these circumstances: should freer spelling be encouraged, in the hope of releasing more of the writers' innate powers of expression? In what circumstances should misspelling be penalized? More research and new ideas are needed.

One thing however is clear: the above results are all grist to the mill of spelling reform.

*[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, 13, 1992/2 pp21,22 in printed version]*

[Gwenllian Thorstad: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Paper](#)]

## **10. Literacy Skills of English and Italian Children**

### **Gwenllian Thorstad,**

**'The effect of orthography on the acquisition of literacy skills' in *British Journal of Psychology* (1991), 82, 527–537.**

Dr Thorstad was formerly tutor in Educational Psychology at the Tavistock Clinic, London, and now advises the Simplified Spelling Society on research. On 25 April 1992 she gave an address to the Society, reporting and inviting discussion on her research findings. The following summary has been adapted from a press-release announcing her address to the Society, originally drafted by Leo Chapman, the Society's Vice-Chairman and Public Relations Officer.

#### **Literacy problems in English**

All standardized reading and spelling tests in the UK indicate that it takes 10 years for English speaking children to be able to read and spell most words, while it is said that Italian pupils take only one year in school to achieve the same standard of literacy. Therefore there is no need for these types of test in Italy or carefully graded reading books, and there is little provision for remedial teaching.

The cause lies in the irregular spelling of English words, such as daughter and enough, which defeats many British people, of whom at least one third are not good spellers, 15% are semi-literate and 5% are illiterate.

While it is understandable that most people who can read and spell correctly do not want the spelling changed, they do not realize the price that is paid by many for this conservatism. For those, severe educational and social consequences can ruin their lives. It takes away all pleasure in school, often prevents them from following a chosen career, can be a cause of truanting and later delinquency. This is because at least 5–15% cannot memorize words from their appearance, however many times they see them, but need to build them up from the sounds.

British children have less time for their other studies, because they have to spend so long learning literacy skills in English. Some children with a Specific Learning Difficulty (Dyslexia) can never learn by the 'look-say' method and need specialized phonological remedial teaching.

#### **Compared with Italian**

This is scarcely necessary in Italy because every lesson automatically becomes a remedial one. Even two Italian children, who apparently had a severe Specific Learning Difficulty at 6.5 years, had made remarkable progress when followed up a year later. As a result, Italian schools do not have to provide remedial teachers, nor do the text books have to be carefully monitored for their level of reading difficulty.

In Italian every letter is pronounced except <h> which is always silent. In contrast, the English alphabet has only one consonant, <v>, which has one sound, cannot be produced by other combinations of letters and is never silent. The five vowels have some 48 different sounds. There are also many homophones, which are words that sound the same but are spelled differently such as led and lead, and homographs, which are words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently according to their meaning, such as tear (in crying) and tear (rip).

However, most difficult of all are the small, common words which are totally irregular, such as was and to. Of the 100 most common words used in children's books, only 33 are regular. This is the greatest hurdle of all for dyslexic children.

## **English and Italian learners**

Dr Thorstad's study was done with 95 English children learning English traditional orthography (t.o.) and 70 Italian children, both groups aged from six to 11 years. There were also 33 English children learning the initial teaching alphabet (i.t.a.), aged from six to seven years. The English t.o. and Italian children were divided into three age groups of the same average age and ability, the youngest age group having an average age of 6.5 years like the English i.t.a. group. They attended small schools where the teaching was good. They came from stable homes with caring parents, according to the teachers.

The children were tested with a passage of 56 words taken from an article in an Italian journal about making cement in the Arctic Circle and translated for the English children. It was deliberately selected so that the subject matter and vocabulary would be unfamiliar to them, so that they would have to depend on looking closely at the letters in a word when reading, or analysing the sound of the word when spelling.

At 6.5 years, the English t.o. children read an average of 31 words correctly, the English i.t.a. children read an average of 50 words correctly, and after only six months in school the Italian children read an average of 44 words correctly.

But in spelling, the results of the English t.o. children were much worse. They could only spell correctly an average of 13 words, the i.t.a. children an average of 27 words, but the Italian children an average of 45 words. The English children could not attempt most of the words, while the Italian children made only very slight errors.

By 10.5 years the average of the English t.o. children in reading was 54 words, while the Italian average was 55 words. But in spelling the English t.o. children only had an average of 44 correct, while the Italian children had an average of 55 correct. The passage contained a considerable number of easy words like the and of.

## **Difficult words compared**

In order to bring out the difference more clearly the eight most difficult words were compared. These eight words, similar in both languages, were looked at separately: cement/cemento, correct/corretto, literally/ letteralmente, perceptible/percettibile, permits/ permette, preparing/ preparano, special/speciale and thermometer/termometro. The English t.o. children only read an average of one of these words at 6.5 years and seven words at 10.5 years, while the Italian children could read an average of five words at 6.5 years and nearly 8 words at 10.5 years.

But in spelling, the younger English t.o. children had no words correct and only two at 10 years, while the Italian children had an average of five correct at 6.5 years and nearly eight at 10.5 years.

The differences actually were far greater in terms of the number of errors in each word, for the Italian children often had only one slight error in stress in pronunciation in reading because they did not know the word, whereas the English children could often only say the sound of the first letter.

The Italian children used a systematic phonological approach in reading unknown words, while the English children rushed through the reading sounding out the first letter or two in a word and then just guessing. Thermometer was read as their mother by the seven-year-olds and the motor or the monster by the eight-year-olds.

There was a marked difference between the assurance with which the Italian and English i.t.a. children tackled these long, unknown words and the distress expressed by the English t.o. children.

## **11. GERMAN & ENGLISH SPELLING DIFFICULTY COMPARED**

**Christopher Upward**

**'Is traditional English spelling more difficult than German?'  
in Journal of Research in Reading, 1992/2, pp82–94.**

Chris Upward is Senior Lecturer in German at Aston University (Birmingham, UK), Editor-in-Chief of the Simplified Spelling Society, and Chairman of the Society's Cut Spelling Working Group. The abstract is written in Cut Spelling.

English spelling and its role in literacy teaching are currently under intensive debate in English-speaking countries. Yet there is no consensus as to the most appropriate teaching methods, nor as to the importance of conventionally correct spelling either as an aim or as an obstacle in the learning process. It should therefore be useful to compare the effect on standards of literacy of the irregular spelling of English with that of more regular spelling in other languages.

Such comparisons are difficult because of educational variables between countries. The study attempts to overcome this difficulty by analysing errors made by English-speaking students of German writing in both languages. The presumption was made that if two spelling systems are of equal difficulty, writers will make fewer errors in their mother tongue than in a foreign language, although countervailing factors cannot be excluded.

The errors found were categorized by type and probable cause. Categories for both English and German were: 1) silent letters, 2) misspelled schwa, 3) double consonants, 4) wrong letters representing correct sound, 5) interference from other languages. A further five miscellaneous categories were established, mostly characteristic of one language only (e.g. apostrophes in English, <ß> in German). The writers were found to have made 6.87 writing errors per 1,000 words overall in English, but only 3.87 in German, i.e. the foreign language was written 1.78 times more accurately than the mother tongue.

However it was considered that even this result may underestimate the greater difficulty of English spelling, since the writers are presumed to enjoy the advantage of much longer and closer familiarity with English than German. A series of 3 closer analyses therefore attempted to establish how far the errors could be attributed specifically to difficulties of the two spelling systems, and how far extraneous factors may have produced errors. The first of these analyses removed those typically metaorthographic errors not involving the choice of letters (e.g. punctuation); the resulting calculation showed English to be 2.22 times more difficult than German. The second analysis removed spellings presumed to arise from interference from foreign languages, after which English appeared 2.36 times more difficult. The third analysis removed all other errors (typically 'slips') not obviously attributable to features of the spelling system concerned. At this point, when it is claimed that the truest comparison of difficulty between the two languages can be measured, the greater difficulty of English stood dramatically, to a factor of 6.98.

The categories of error were then further examined. It was found that 63% of the errors made in English were associated with redundant letters, occurring in the three categories 1) silent letters, 2) misspelling of schwa before <l, m, n, r>, and 3) double consonants. In conclusion, these findings were related to the Cut Spelling proposal for simplifying English spelling mainly by removing such redundant letters, and it was claimed that the study had shown not merely the much greater difficulty of English spelling compared with German, but the appropriateness of a Cut Spelling solution to the problem.

The paper is itself also published in Cut Spelling.

## 12. The Gift by O'Henry

In "Fonetic!" Spelling (Key after text)

This is wun of O'Henry's best storys. He livd a hundred yeers ago when yung men ernd \$30 for a 54 our week, when a shabby room rented for \$8, when gerls let thair hair gro doun to thair nees, and when men wor poket woches — befor the invenshun of rist woches.

Wun dolar and sixty-seven sents. That was all. And fifty-too sents of it was in penys. Penys saevd wun and too at a tiem. Dela counted it three tiems. Wun dolar and sixty seven sents. And the next dae wuud be Crismas.

Thair was nuthing to do but flop doun on the shaby litl chair and cri. So Dela did it.

Whiel Dela is drieing her ies, taek a luuk at the hoem. A fernisht room at \$8 a week. A gas lamp with a crakt shaed and a flor that squeekt at evry step.

In the hallwae belo was a maelbox, rairly uezd, and an electric buton frum which noebody cuud coex a ring. Oever it was a card with the naem "Mr. Jaems Dilingham Yung". The "Dilingham" caem frum a former tiem of prosperrity when its oener was being paed therty dolars a week. Now, when the incum had shrunk to twenty, the leters of "Dilinghaam" luukt blerd as if thae wer thinking of faeding out, leeving oenly a modest D. But whenever Mr. Jaems Dilingham Yung caem hoem to the room on the top flor he was caud "Jim" and hugd bi Mrs. James Dillingham Yung, hoom U allredy noe as Dela.

Dela finisht her cri and atended to her cheeks with a pouder puf. She stuid bi the windo and luukt out sadly at a grae cat wauking on a grae fens in a grae bak yard. Tomorro wuud be Crismas Dae, and she had oenly \$1.67 with which to bi Jim a prezent. She had bin saeving evry peny she cuud for munths, with this rezult. Twenty dolars a week duzn't go far. Expenses had bin graeter than she had expected. Thae allwaes ar. Oenly \$1.67 to bi a prezent for Jim. Her Jim. She had spent meny hapy ours planing sumthing nies for him. Sumthing fien and rair. Sumthing just a litl bit werthy of being his wief. What cuud she do?

Sudenly she ternd frum the windo and luukt into the miror. Her ies wer shiening. Qikly she puuld doun her hair and let it fall iuo its fuul length.

Now, thair wer too pozeshuns of the Jaems Dilingham Yungs in which thae boeth tuuk a miety pried. Wun was Jim's larj goeld poket woch that had bin his grand faather's. The uther was Dela's hair. Noebody els had hair as long and buetyful as Dela's, and noebody els had a woch as stuning as Jim's.

Dela's long hair now fel about her, ripling and shiening liek a cascaed of broun wauters. It reecht belo her nee. Then she pind it up agen nervusly and qikly. Wuns she hezitaeted for just a minit and stuid stil whiel a teer or too splasht on the worn carpet.

On went her oeld broun jaket; on went her oeld broun hat. With a wherl of skerts and the briet sparkl stil in her ier, she fluterd oun the dor and doun the stairs to the street.

She stopt at the sien that red: "Wigs Maed to Order". Dela ran up wun fliet. Thair she met a larj gruf wuuman.

"Wil U bi mi hair?" askt Dela.

"I bi hair," sed the stern wuuman. "Taek yur hat off and let's luuk at it."

Doun ripld the broun cascaaed.

"Twenty dolars," sed the wuuman. "Giv it to me qik," sed Dela.

And for the next too ours Dela floeted hapily frum wun stor to anuther luuking for Jim's prezent.

She found it at last. It was just riet for Jim and no wun els. Thair was nuthing liek it in eny of the stors, and she had ternd all of them insied out. It was a platinum chaen, simpj and elegant in dezien. It was eeven werthy of The Woch. As soon as she saw it she nue it was reit for Jim. It was liek him. It was cool and valueabl.

It cost twenty-wun dolars, and Dela hurryd hoem with the 67 sents. With that chaen in his woch, Jim cuud luuk at the tiem in eny company. Grand as the woch was, he sumtiems luukt at it on the sli becauz of the oeld lether strap he uezd insted of a chaen.

When Dela got hoem she tuuk out her curling iern and went to werk repairing the damej dun bi her jenerosity and her luv for Jim.

Within forty minits her hed was coverd with tieny curls that maed her luuk lick a kid. She luukt in the miror long and cairfully.

"If Jim duzn't kil me," she sed to herself, "befor he taeks a second luuk at me, he'l sae I luuk liek a corus gerl. But whut cuud I do — o whut cuud I donwith a dolar and sixty-seven sents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffy was maed and the frieing pan was on the bak of the stoev hot and redy to cuuk the chops.

Jim was never laet. Dela dubld the chaen in her hand and sat on the corner of the taebj neer the dor that he allwaes enterd. Then she herd his step on the stair far down on the ferst fliet. She felt scaird for just a moement. She had a habit of saeing litl silent prairs about the simplest evrydae things, and now she whisperd: "Pleez, God, maek him think I'm stil prity."

The dor oepend and Jim stept in and cloezd it. He luukt thin and verry seerius. Pur felo, he was oenly twenty-too. He needed a nue oevercoet and he was without gluvs.

Jim stopt insied the dor, as stif as a seter at the smel of a qael. His ies wer fixt on Dela, and thair was an expreshun in them that she cuud not understand. It terrified her. It was not angger, nor serpriez, not disaprooval, nor horror, nor eny of the feelings she had bin prepaired for. He simply staid at her with that straenj expreshun on his faes.

Dela wigld off the taebj and went to him. "Jim, darling," she cried, "don't luuk at me that wac. I had mi hair cut off and i soeld it becauz I cuudn't liv thru Crismas without giving U a prezent. It'l gro out agen — U won't mind, wil U? I just had to do it. Mi hair groes so fast. Sae 'Merry Crismas!' and let's be hapy. U don't noe whut a nies — whut a buetyful, nies gift I'v got for U."

"U'v cut off yur hair?" askt Jim, sloely, as if he stil didn't noe it after a lot of hard thinking.

"Cut it off and soeld it," sed Dela. "Don't U liek me just as much enyhow? I'm stil me without mi hair."

Jim luukt about the room cueriously. "U sed yur hair is gon?" he sed.

"U needn't luuk for it," sed Dela. "It's soeld — soeld and gon. It's Crisumas Eev, Jim. Be guud to me becauz I soeld it for U. Maebe the hairs on mi hed ar numberd, but noebody cuud ever count mi luv for U. Shal I puut the chops on, Jim?"

Jim woek up qikly out of his dreem. He throo his arms around Dela. Then droo a pakej frum his oevercoet poket and laed it on the taebel. "Don't maek eny mistaek about me, Del," he sed. "I don't think thair's enything in the wae of a haircut or a shaev or a shampoo that cuud maek me liek my gerl eny les. But if U'I unrap that pakej U mae see whi U had me serpiezd at ferst."

Dela's nimbl fingers tor at the string and paeper. And then a screem of joi; and then, alas! a qik chaenj to teers and waels reqiering all the comforting powers that Jim had.

For thair lay The Coems — the set of hair coems that Dela had wershopt for a long tiem in a Braudwae stor windo. Buetyful tortus shel coems with joeld rims — just the shaed to wair in the buetyful vanisht hair. Thae wer expensiv coems, she nue, and her hart had longd for them without the leest hoep of ever having them. And now thae wer hers, but the long broun hair that shuud hav adornd them was gon.

She hugd them tiet, and after a whiel was aebel to luuk up with dim ies and smiel and sae: "Mi hair groes so fast, Jim!"

And then Dela jumpt up liek a litl scaird cat and cried, "O, o!"

Jim had not yet seen his buetyful present. She held it out to him eegerly in her oepen hand. The preshus metal chaen seemd to flash with a reflecshun of her briet spirit.

"Isn't it buetyful, Jim? I hunted all oever toun to fiend it. U'I hav to luuk at yur woch a hundred tiems a dae now. Give me yur woch. I waunt to see how the chaen luuks on it."

Insted of oebaeing, Jim tumbld down on the couch and puut his hands under the bak of his hed and smield.

"Del," he sed, "Let's puut our Crisumas presents awae and keep them for a whiel. Thae'r too nies to uez just now. I soeld the wochj to get the muny to bi yur coems. And now supoez U put the chops on."

### **Key to pronounciations (partial)**

- An <e> following any vowel gives that vowel the "long" pronounciation.
- <aa> as in father; <all> as in haul; <j> as in edge; <uu > as in could, pull; <zh > as in vision.

Plurals, possessives, 3rd person singular present all retain <-s> even tho many are pronounst "z".  
"U"= "you"

American Literacy Council edition has a full pronounciation key, and alternate lines in traditional and Fonetic spellings, with a plastic covering sheet which permits seeing either or both versions, as desired. Also five pages of vocabulary, in both spellings.

## **13. The Simplified Spelling Society**

### **Annual General Meeting, 25 April 1992, Summary**

#### **Chairman's Report:**

The Society is determinedly pluralistic in its approach to specific spelling reform schemes, and this lends great vitality to our proceedings. Our main mission must be to change public attitudes to reform. This involves two factors:

- Informing the public of the issues. The idea that there is some single decision-maker with power to get things done on spelling reform is a myth. We have to aim at educating the public at large. Airing our differences on specific reform proposals is not a weakness, and we should do it publicly to bring a wider audience into the debate.
- Building, over time, personal commitment in the public to specific reform proposals.

#### **Secretary's Report:**

Bob Brown reported on his first year as Secretary, during which he has concentrated on

- (1) stabilizing membership, which now stands at 105;
- (2) offering value for money to members — this year we have sent three books to members, three *Newsletters*, one *Journal* and several other items. In the next year he expected we will produce at least one new book. There will be a regular, attractive *Newsletter* and the *Journal* is now anticipated on a more regular basis. He is planning a new series of less formal (newsletter-style) publications to give a platform to individual members who had detailed ideas that they would like to put forward for general comment.
- (3) building a professional image: Bob Brown believes this is the key to future success.

We need to **justify** our claim to a place at any future committee table set up by educational or other authorities to discuss spelling issues. This means we have to be (a) sensible, (b) expert in our subject area — as opposed to just dogmatic about one idea — and (c) a source of information, research expertise, etc.

When he took over as Secretary, there were no publications to give or sell to enquirers. Now we have a credible initial set of leaflets and books, and this will grow. He believes that, amongst other

things, we next need to address:

- . Clarification of our aims as a Society, which seem slightly fuzzy to the outside world.
- . A professional public relations campaign.

It is fortuitous that an experienced person willing to take on this task — Leo Chapman — has presented himself at this time. Leo has been performing this role very effectively on an acting basis for the last few months.

- Focussing on serious research in relevant areas, and the academics and other specialists who carry it out. We should publish and reprint relevant papers and encourage, sponsor, assist (even fund) suitable research projects. Appeals-to-reason from the armchair are not convincing to the people who matter; professionally-conducted research is.

#### **Editor-in-Chief's Report:**

Cut Spelling is generating a lot of attention, with 12 radio interviews and lots of press mentions so far. Copies have been sent to many people of influence and such bodies as the National Curriculum Council.

**A motion was passed**, and amended to read: RESOLVED that:

1. In order to clarify its public position and always within its constitutional 'aim to bring about a reform of the spelling of English', the Society affirms the following more detailed statement of its aim, which is:
  - to encourage the idea that spelling reform is possible;
  - to foster debate on the possible nature of reform and how it might be brought about;
  - to devise, publish and promote suitably serious potential reform schemes, and other research materials, in contribution to debate; by definition, the Society puts forward for consideration by the public and authorities any spelling reform proposals that it publishes;
  - to persuade and campaign for spelling reform in general;
  - to develop and maintain the Society's role as a source of expertise in spelling and relevant associated disciplines;
  - to aim at producing a consistent and predictable spelling scheme with maximum benefit to future generations.
2. The Society rescinds any earlier decisions committing itself to the use of a 'house style' in internal or external correspondence.

## 14. Letters

### The Kanadian Nuuzletter, januari, 1992

1. Nu Prezident: I am the nu Internasional Prezident ov the I.U.K.L. I am a kwiet, linggwistik person, but I wil du mai best tu achiiv the objektivs of this organizasion. I thank evriwun whu haz wurked in the past, and I remind them that the struggel must tu kontinu. Du watever yu kan du.
2. The Times Ov Toronto: It waz reported tu me that the nekst edision of The Times haz biin delaade. Subskribors kan ekspektize it in the futuur. (Sumtimes our favorit nuuzpaper iz several months laat/leet. Wunse it waz wun yuur leet.! However, it alwaas reemerj bai sum misterius proses.)
3. Illiterasi: Our nuuzpapers kontinu tu report that illiterasi iz a major nasional problem in Kanada and in most kuntris. Pliiz kontinu to spred the messaj that the major, and onli signifikant, kawz/kaaz ov this pervasiv illiterasi iz the english langweej.
4. India: Both english and hindi kontinuize tu geen strength. Bengali, marathi, punjabi, tamil, and urdu remeen strong but stagnant. Nepali, manipuri, sanskrit, sindhi, kannada (but not kanadian), konkani, and portugiiz sloli ar luuzing strength. The Sahitya Akamedi ov Delhi, the nasional akademi wich grant literari awards in 22 ov India's 200 langweejs, refuuz at this time to bekum the ofisial regulator ov english.
5. Mitterand 1: In september, 1991, the Mitterand Government chanjed the spellings ov 4,000 wurds in order tu reduuse sliteli the massiv nonsense in the french langweej. In Kanada, a bilingual kuntri, this important chanjment resiived almost no reportaaaj! Prezident Mitterand kreated Le Haut Conseil Du Lang Fransai tu implementize this reformasion bekawz, for over thrii senturies, the Akadami Fransai had pruuved itself tu be irresponsible, irrasional, and irrelevant.
6. Mitterand 2: In order tu selebreet Prezident Mitterand's 10th anniversari in paoer, the Roiter Ajensi's Paris offis asked the sitizens on Frans to spel his naeen'm. Over 80% of Franse, reportized Roiters, waz unabel tu spel the neem ov the man whu thee luv and for whu thee voot! Agen the fundamental kawz, the french langweej, seemed tu eskeep kritisism. In short, the irrasional langweej ov Franse stoppized its sitizens from spelling the neem ov theer french liider!
7. Missellani: The steet radio in Helsinkki, Finland is brodkasting the nuuz in latin! Miinwail, Freddi the ligel, Britan's suisidal olimpik ski-jumpor, iz singing in finnish! Kwestsion: Hao much moor graond wil luuz the russian langweej?

Jonathan Kates/Keets, Internasional Prezident

P.S. The I.U.K.L wil must suun to adoptize its own flag. At the moment we du not hav a flag tu kiip flaiing.

94 Glenholm Ave. Toronto Ont M6H 3B1

## House Style

Robert Craig has written suggesting that you may be interested in publicizing and USING a House Style (for JSSS) agreed by the majority of members.

I believe that a House Style ought to be identical to the introductory Stage or Stages proposed for the general public.

What I now propose is that the two Stages which I have pioneered should be the House Style.

In the past there have been all kinds of suggestions made; lists of targeted words and a list of 15–20 Spelling Reforms, and members have not united into a single opinion; but we must now unite.

Stage I is intended as a separate 5-point plan which would appeal to the public.

Putting Stages I and the Gibbs Stage 2 together as Stage 'Alfa' we get these advantages:

All of the 5 short vowels are dealt with.

. All of the notorious "ough, augh" words are properly corrected.

. All of the "ph" words are brought up-to-date.

Robert Craig opines that "oo" in "food" only, and "ee" should be included, but scrapping <ei, ie, ey (qu)ay>.

Stage 1.

SR Short <e>: hed, pleasant, treasurer.

SR "ough": cof, coffering, ruf, ruffen, luffed.

SR "augh": draft, daughter, caut.

SR non-magic <e>: hav, giv, gon, possible, advertisement.

SR "ph": nefew, fotograf.

SR short <o>: swon, wonder, quadrant, quality.

SR short <u>: company, becoming.

SR DRIL: noe, nollidge, hoom, hoos, nat.

Robert Craig wants to add:

SR "oo": float, group.

SR "ee": receive, priest; but leaving, clean, mete etc. alone.

SR "/v/" is too problematic for these early Stages.

The essential is, if we believe in this, then we must **use** it in our correspondence.

If you agree with me, do please write using Stage "Alfa".

Yours sincerely, **Stanley Gibbs**

**Editors note:** The Society's 1992 AGM, as reported in this issue, decided against a "house style". This editor's style is to use those shorter, more phonemic spellings found in most American dictionaries — *altho, tho, thru, thoro; fixt, spelt; program, catalog; favor, labor;* etc. Otherwise, the author's style is followed.

N.B. The issue editor was Kenneth Ives, US.

The following letter appeared in the March 1978 issue of the American Sociological Association's **Footnotes**:

## **Piener Rgues 4 Reformd Spelling**

Dear fello Sociologists:

I hav bin a regular or Emeritus membr of the Association for haf a century, tho I do not now reciev yor jrnl, nor need to. I am now 88, and hav known almost all the Presidents of the Society or Asn. since its start, except that the first, Lester F. Ward, I only herd lecture. I hope yu hav on file, for publication at the rite time, the obituary I sent in some years ago, on Gilfillan; it wil make good reading. It is not at all boastfl, tho I hav publisht 5 books in the sociological field, mostly on the sociological aspects of *Invention*. And Im just completing my 6th and by far best, on my peculiar discovery, *Lead Poison Ruined Rome* it wil be cald, thru leaving its *upper class* almost childless and ofn sik, insane or ded.

Since their places wer naturally fild by the ablest from belo, this elimination of ability, and of their higher culture which was likewise quasi-hereditary, hardly past on save to the children of welth, the dubl ruin of Roman culture and genius, leading into the nite of the Dark Ages, is for the first time expland. The same had hapnd erlier in Greece. My discovery of this class-wise ruin of ancient genius and culture has had an immense success, world wide, from just an articl or 2 in 1965. If yu'v herd anything about ancient led poisoning, it was some eco of my work.

And why the reformd spelling? Because as civilization advances, *reading and riting* becum the principl occupations of the sector of mankind that matrs most, and on which all depends. So the facilitation of that *main* occupation becum evr mor importnt. And we hav accepted the typeriter, and printing, and many othr reforms.

But I shud close. I remain yors for Sociology and all kinds of progress.

**S. Colum Gilfillan, Los Angeles, California**

Dear Chris:

The #1 edition of the Journal reached me a few days ago and I am writing to comment on several articles.

I especially liked Kenneth Ives report on "A Spelling Reform Program for the 1990's". The seven steps were logical, reasonable and quite acceptable to anyone concerned and well informed as to our orthographic problems resulting from our adoption of Johnson's archaic English spellings of a bygone age.

Also, Ives' review of "Language Planning and Social Change" by Ralph Cooper, was well presented, interestingly organized, and deserving of consideration for implementation.

The comments reported in the Detroit Free press (in "Publicizing Reform") quite definitely express the U. S. viewpoint.

It is gratifying to know that you hav given well deserved space and attention to the progress being made by the American Literacy Council.

Dr. Edward Ronthaler and his assistant, Joseph Little have accomplished a significant breakthrough with their efforts to influence 3 different education publishers to proceed with the distribution of the Council's recordings of the Soundspeller Literacy software. This is one of the really significant advances made by spelling reform advocates in the last century. We are hopeful that this new program will receive the support it deserves as a long step forward in English Spelling Reform. And thanks to the SSS for your recognition and space in the Journal of the Society.

Incidentally, I would like to call to your attention the recent and significant surge of interest in the U. S. in nation-wide improvement of education. The Department of Education is very strongly promoting the "AMERICA 2000"; is advancing the organization of statewide America 2000 committees which have already been structured in nearly all the 50 states. This program is being federally funded to ensure its continuance and extension into the future of public school improvement over the next century. Educators are finally aware that the social and economic future of the English-speaking world depends largely upon the level of literacy and communicative ability of the whole population, — not simply the few super-educated individuals of the upper classes. There is no doubt that we have tolerated too much stratification in the U. S., which is now recognized as more of an impediment to social progress than an asset!

With sincere kind regards and good wishes, Harvie Barnard, A.L.C.

*[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, 13, 1992/2 pp19 in printed version]*

### **Literature Available, [at time of publication]**

From the ***Simplified Spelling Society***, Bob Brown, Secretary, England

**NEW SPELLING 90**. £ 5, outside Europe, US \$ 12.

**SPELLING REFORM IN CONTEXT**, Bob Brown. £ 2, outside Europe, US \$ 5.

**INTRODUCING THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING SOCIETY**, leaflet.

50 copies (or less) £ 1, outside Europe, US \$ 2.

**CUT SPELLING**: ***A Handbook to the simplification of English spelling by the omission of redundant letters***. 306 pages. 110, outside Europe, US \$ 20. From ***Progressiv Publishr***, 401 E 32, # 1002, Chicago IL 60616 USA:

**WRITTEN DIALECTS N SPELLING REFORMS: HISTORY N ALTERNATIVES**. Kenneth Ives. 112 pages, US \$ 5 postpaid in North America; \$ 6 overseas.

History of spelling and spelling reforms, especially in the United States.

Examples from Benjamin Franklin to ITA.

**TOUGH, THOUGH, THOUGHT**: ***And we call it correct spelling!*** Leaflet, reprints available, 5 for US \$ 1, 50 for US \$ 7, postpaid in North America, (add \$ 1 for 50 overseas).

From ***American Literacy Council***, 106 Morningside Drive, Suite 79, New York NY 10027

DICTIONARY OF SIMPLIFIED AMERICAN SPELLING: ***An alternative spelling for English***. \$ 25 postpaid.

FONETIC SPELLING (The Dictionary on 8 floppy disks). US \$ 25.

SOUND SPELER, descriptive leaflet. Single copies free, 25 for \$ 3. Instruction Manual, \$1. Software, including Manual, \$ 60.

THE GIFT, by O'Henry, in Fonetic American (in red) and T.O. (in black), with a plastic covering sheet which permits seeing either or both versions, as desired. Also five pages of vocabulary, in both spellings, and a pronunciation key. \$12.95 plus \$1 postage in USA. 10 for \$100 postpaid.

From **Better Education thru Simplified Spelling**, BEtSS, 24034 Bingham Pointe Drive, Birmingham MI 48010

Leaflet: a **different approach to the crisis in American Education**. Single copies free.

From **HESO** 27 Rue Paul Bert 94204, Ivry-Sur Seine C6dex, FRANCE  
RECHERCHE ET REFORM. Laisons — HESO, # 19–20. Janvier 1992. 50 Franks, TTC

From **Northwest Publishing**, 5949 South, 350 West, Murray UT 84107.  
N'WENGLISH: THE WAY TO INSTANT\* LITERACY. By **Bob Cleckler**. \$12.95 plus \$1.50 postage and handling in USA.

### Cartoon

