Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society J30, 2002/1.
Editor: Steve Bett.

Contents.

[Steve Bett: see **Journals**, **Newsletters**]

1. Editorial

Alternative Transcription Systems

As the moderator of the phonology forum, one of the most common questions that I receive from those who are convinced that English needs reform is "What reform proposal should 1 support?" My answer has always been to study the options and make your own determination. For most, this is not a satisfactory answer.

Those who have lectured on the absurdity of English spelling know that it is possible to keep the audience as long as you do not suggest a specific reform. It is not hard to demonstrate the need for reform. [See the polyvalence chart or list of 18 ways to spell /u:/].

Once tuned-in to the irregularities, someone in the audience will ask, "What system of regularized English should we support?" "What system of respelling do you recommend?" For some, the answer is the latest system that I have worked up. But, many in the audience want something more. They want "a stable established system they can actively support."

Gregersen [**JSSS 27/2000/1** Item 6] added the following: Reformed spelling should not undermine traditional pronunciations and should try to accommodate as many varieties of English as the feasible with compromise forms from major classes of words. Some variant spellings will have to be admitted but they should, as much as possible, be kept to a minimum. Valerie Yule (Item 11) thinks that the morphemic principle can be integrated with the phonemic principle.

I have listed some of the alternatives below. The number of different schemes may number in the 1000's but there appear to be as few as three starting points. One of the key distinctions, found in several of the articles in this issue, is between spelling reformers who start by reducing irregularity, and alphabet reformers who start with a one sound per symbol.

Spelling Reform or Alphabet Reform
Gregersen is a classic spelling reformer, he wants a regularized English to be as close as possible to the traditional system and is content with removing a few irregularities. Spelling reformers are convinced that the public will reject any proposal that requires changing more than 15% of the traditional spellings. [However many "mild" reforms actually respell over 35%]

Alphabet reformers acknowledge that removing just a few irregularities will minimize the visual shock but they feel that a Webster type reform will not have enough impact on the problems of teaching and learning to make it worth the trouble.

Some view mild reforms such as those endorsed by Teddy Roosevelt and McCormick as major changes in their beloved language. So seemingly unobtrusive reforms can create an opposition and a backlash.

Some alphabet reformers are revolutionaries like Benjamin Franklin who think that inconveniencing one generation will be worth the effort. Others are like G.B. Shaw wanted an easy to write parallel phonemic system that would compete with the traditional writing system.

Alphabet reformers represent about 30% of the people who are attracted to the society so they need to be acknowledged rather than merely dismissed as impractical visionaries. While it is true that the Shaw alphabet appealed to less than a million people, Shavian represents only one of the possible Alphabet reforms. We have not really "been there done that" with respect to alphabet reform.

While alphabet reform [or an over 95% phonemic reform] is often characterized as a "non-starter," there are few successes that the supporters of gradual unobtrusive reforms can point to that puts them in a different category.

I have suggested that the way to introduce alphabet reform and pronunciation guide spelling is as a second writing system as is commonly done with IPA in an ESL classroom. This is an i.t.a. approach with something extra — a dictionary where the code remains as the pronunciation guide spelling. The problems with IPA is that it is not supported by standard keyboards and is not a particularly good transitional code.

World Vote
If we poll the general public [see Wade's article on the World Vote], they may prefer "patches" such as *thru* for through, *catalog* for catalog, and perhaps *unconshus, hite, (rend, axident,* and *nesesary* to any systematic reform. However, the majority may still prefer no change to such small changes.

We have not studied any groups that have learned how to sound spell. Knowing better might have a profound effect on spelling preferences. It is still premature to close the book on alphabet reform and near 100% phonemic spelling.

Alphabet reformers start with a symbol for each speech sound and go from there. The starting point is a "phonographic alphabet" to use Twain's description, where each symbol represents one and only one of the 36 uncombined sounds of English speech. It is rather odd that we have to make this qualification since this is what we mean by an alphabetic writing system. The reason that Twain thought it was necessary was that the popular view of the alphabet as an ordered character set without any requirement that each character represent sound in any systematic unambiguous way.

Comparative Literacy
A consistent theme in the JSSS during the past 20 years has been the comparative difficulty of non-phonemic writing systems. It is not that logographic or whole word systems do not work but that they are much more difficult to learn and use. Two articles summarize the recent findings that children learning transparent or consistent writing systems have it easier. For example, Italian children achieve a level of literacy in their "shallow" orthography after one year of study that is unmatched by children learning a "deep" orthography until their third year. [see Item 11]
—S B

[Kenneth Ives: see **Bulletins**, **Anthology**, **Journals**, **Newsletters**, **Book**]

2. Tribute
In Memory of Ken Ives (1917–2002)

Sociologist Ken Ives died on April 2, 2002 at his home in Chicago. He was 85. Ken was the guest editor of the *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* from 1992 to 1995. In June, 1996, Ken was given a plaque by Chris Jolly, Chairman of the Simplified Spelling Society in recognition of his work. Ken continued to assist Chris Upward with the editing of the *Journal* until 2000. His contributions are listed below:
Author of ***Written Dialects,*** Progressive Publisher, 1972 (71 pp.), one of the best short books on the history of spelling and spelling reform.

The variety of spoken dialects in English has become a subject for study ... Differing but consistent ways of writing ... English may be viewed as differing written dialects.
Our traditional spelling became largely frozen with the rise of printing four centuries ago and dictionaries two centuries ago, but our spoken language has had a great vowel shift and other changes. Hence the correspondence between our spoken and written dialects has become more complex, irregular, and confusing. We are forced to be almost "Bilingual" in our native tongue.

- (1985) Reform Criteria & Stages, **Newsletter Summer 85**, Items 11 & 12
- (1987) Review of Eastman, C M. **JSSS J6 1987/3**, Item 14.
- (1992a) The Long Vowels Reconsidered, **JSSS J12 1992/1**, Item 4.
- (1992b) Review of Cooper, R **JSSS J12 1992/ I**, Item 5.
- (1992c) A Spelling Reform Program ... **JSSS J12 1992/1**, Item 6.
- (1993a) Contributions of CutSpelling to broader program, **JSSS J14 1993/1**, Item 4.
- (1993b) Diagramming Spellings, **JSSS J14 1993/1**, Item 5.
- (1994) Perspectives from the IRA Convention **JSSS J17 1994/2**, Item 15
- (1995) Review of 'Issues in Education: **JSSS J18 1995/1**, Item 13.
- (1996) Review: Scott Foresman Spelling Research, **JSSS J20 1996/1**, Item10.
- (1997) Spelling Reform and the Deaf: A Problem and A Strategy, **JSSS J21 1997/1**, Item 3.

3. Schemes

There are a variety of different proposals to solve the alphabet problem in written English Here are a few of the better known ones.

New Spelling was one of the first to be endorsed by the Society and continues to have the greatest number of variants [three listed below].

Cut Spelling was the next scheme to be endorsed by the society because removing the redundant letters seemed like a logical 1st step.

RITE — Reduced Irregularity in Traditional English begins with cut spelling and cuts more irregularity.

CAP systems use the capital letters as unique phonograms effectively doubling the available number of sound signs on a standard keyboard.

SAMPA is a unigraphic cap system.

Some CAP systems such as Shavian require a special font to convert to a non-roman visualization.

Follick and Spanglish are digraphic systems that based on Middle English and Latin sound-symbol correspondences. Like the IPA, they are designed for an International audience familiar with the traditional Latin sound values.

KEY: TO-traditional, NuSpl-New Spelling, CAP-capitalized long vowels, IPA-International Phonetic Alphabet

Vowel Rep*	Transcription System author, year	Web Page GP table & rules	PV No.	Active Devel. Group	Converter	Dictionary [on line]	Dict. [book]	Book
NuSpl	New Spelling *Ellis, 1900*	Yes *Y	12	No	No	No	?	Yes
NuSpl	ALC Fonetic *Rond, 1980*	Yes *Y		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NuSpl	Truespel *T. Zaromslos.* 1995	Yes *Y		Yes	Yes	Yes+	No	No
NuSpl	i.t.a. - *J. Pitman 1960*	Yes *Y		No'	No	No	No?	Yes
TO NuSpl	Cut Spelling Upward, 1988	Yes No	book	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	RITE - *Bell, Rock, . .* 2000	Yes No	see 13	Yes	No	No	No	No
Cap	Unifon - *J. Malone 1950*	Yes Yes	7	Yes	*in dev*	No* in *dev*	No	Cited
Cap	U2 [Unifon II] 2001	Yes Yes		Yes	No	No	No	No
IPA IPA	Saxon Spanglish, *Bett,*	Yes Yes		Yes	No	No	No	No
IPA	2000 Follick / Nu Folik	Yes Yes		No	No	No	No*	Cited
	1935 SAMPA - *J. Wells* 1989	Yes Yes		Yes	No	No	No	Cited
IPA*	Shavian - *Read 1950*	Yes Y		no	in *dev.* no	No	No	Yes
IPA*	QuickScript - *Read 1960*	Yes Y		no		no	no	No

Col l. Vowel Representation: There is about an 85% overlap among highly phonemic solutions to the alphabet problem. The main difference is in the representation of the long vowels and diphthongs.

* New Spelling [*Ellis, Archer, ...*]   *ae ee ie oe ue oo*
* IPA [*Jones, passey, Sweet, ...*]   *ei i: ai ou ju u:*
* Cap [*John Malone*]   *A E I O Y U*
* Shavian and Quickscript [*Read*]
* Pictographic Monofon *(Bets/*

A scheme is a notational system for visualizing speech. The last **typology**(Pamphlet 13) was developed by Bob Brown in the 1990's. Bob used several divisions including normative and descriptive.

Col. 3. Most *of* the transcription systems have a Web page. A highly phonemic solution can be reduced to a simple symbol-sound correspondence chart. Systems with over ten exception rules are difficult to reduce to such a table.

Rondthaler, for instance, insists that ALC SoundSpel cannot be represented as a simple set of grapheme-phoneme correspondences.

Cut Spelling and RITE may be rule based but cannot be reduced to simple chart. There are just too many exception rules.

The first task of a reform notation is to eliminate "code overlaps." It is O.K. to have several ways to represent a sound, but a symbol should not represent more than one sound. The first task might be to make English as simple as French, then we can set our sites on Italian.

Col. 4. If there is a PV (Personal View) the number is given here. See PV list.

Col. 5. Active Development Group. Several orthographies are stable so the development group is only involved in developing teaching materials, new fonts, and a dictionary. *Truespel* just released a training CD with instructional audio clips.

Col. 6–7. A converter is a program that replaces traditionally spelled words with reformed spellings. Entire books can be quickly converted with the on-line converters or with the stand alone See Links.

Col. 8. A dictionary is actually an ordered list of traditional spellings with the appropriate reformed spelling. The correspondence table used for the converter could be published as such a dictionary but is rarely done.

ALC Soundspel is the exception. The list in two transcriptions is titled: Dictionary of Simplified American Spelling.

Col. 9. Only about half of these schemes has been around long enough to be mentioned in a book. i.t.a. has the most mentions. See cut spelling handbook

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

4. "It's the spelling that's stupid – not me"
Transcript of a recent radio talk
by Valerie Yule Radio-National, Australia

Broadcast Sunday 5 May 2002   Ockham's Razor with Robyn Williams.

Summary:
Clinical Psychologist **Dr Valerie Yule**, when dealing with children and adults who were diagnosed as dyslexic, discovered that the confusion often resulted from English spelling which is unpredictable and not user friendly. Has the time come to clean up our basic spelling system?

Transcript:

Robyn Williams: In some ways it's very odd that English should be the lingua franca across the world; not only across the world, but throughout diplomacy, air traffic control, much business, and of course, science.

The odd bit is that English is harder to read than any other language using the alphabet. That study was released by a Scottish university in September and we broadcast the results in the Science Show last year. English takes longest to learn to read, followed by Danish, which is much easier. There is also a case made to implicate English as worse for likely dyslexics.

Well Valerie Yule, who's a psychologist in Melbourne, has some helpful suggestions. Now here's Valerie Yule.

Valerie Yule: We English speakers take for granted that our English language is the international language of the world. It is used by more people than any other language, mostly as a second language, not a native tongue. It is the language of the air, the sea, and cyberspace.

However, English became what Pope Paul called 'the modern Latin' for much the same imperial reasons that Latin was an international language until the last few hundred years. It went with the flag, it went with the traders and the soldiers. But Latin went and so could English.

The Achilles heel, or the cloven hoof, or the bottom line, is lowdown English spelling. English has to be learnt as two languages, the spoken and the written; you can't learn one from the other. And the natives, even the Anglo natives, are getting restless.

In Europe they joke about the evolving informal Euro-English language, used by non-English speakers to communicate between themselves within the European Union. Linguists are now studying this Euro-English, and how it is regularising English grammar and cutting down verbs. Indeed this developing Euro-English might have a pragmatic advantage over Esperanto as a truly international language, because Euro-English is based on an existing language, English, and a printed heritage that already exists worldwide.

And in Europe they are joking too about a possible new Euro-English spelling: Wil der Drem kom tru?

Multilingual developing countries have mostly left off trying to use English as their medium of education and national communication, despite the obvious advantages of English in materials and access to the world. But even their local teacher can't cope, and so for example, Papua New

Guinea now uses Tok Pisin, an English Melanesian pidgin with a spelling so easy that you and I can recognise the 'English' words in it.

India has so many regional writing systems that even phone directories can be useless across regional borders, but a reformers' campaign to use Roman letters as an alternative script failed hopelessly. And the reason for failure, perhaps even stronger than regional patriotisms, is the Indians' fixed belief that a Roman script would have to mean spelling as difficult as English.

The English-speaking natives are also getting restless about spelling. Away from spelling checkers, way out in the email chatrooms, anything goes. More and more youngsters are diagnosed as dyslexic for refusing to buckle down to learning English spelling in order to read. An upper-class Oxford gentleman, Richard Wade, formerly a BBC producer, claims that his Freespeling website receives millions of hits that welcome his message. 'If you cant remember how to spel a word, spel it how you would like to spel it'. And when enough people start doing just that, Wade thinks, then dictionaries would have to start accepting more sensible spellings, such as accommodate with no dubl letters.

I have a 16-word spelling test up on my website, to spell common words like Guardian and Occasion. And even the great and good can rarely spell all sixteen words correctly. Less than 10% of educators in literacy and researchers in intelligence have been all correct. And at an international conference of psychologists studying dyslexia, the only word all the psychologists could spell correctly was psychology.

I was proud that I was a perfect speller. My clue was, I found out when I was about six, that the most economical way to learn spelling was to think of how I thought a word ought to be spelled, and then note where the correct spelling was different. For example, Daughter, had a 'gh' before the 't'.

Then I married a man who couldn't spell, who became a highly regarded professor in spite of this. Then I became a clinical child psychologist, and children and adults were sent to me to be diagnosed as to what sort of dyslexic (sic). I found that if I took them through what I thought it helped to know to learn to read, at some stage they would usually say, 'Oh, I didn't know that!' and sometimes all they needed to go ahead was to have that gap or confusion cleared up.

And one of the most common and helpful discoveries for failing learners is 'Oh, it's the spelling that's stupid! I always thought it was me that was stupid!' And once people realise it's the spelling that is stupid, not them, they can cheer up and look calmly and even with a superior contempt to see how it is stupid, too many letters, too few letters, or silly letters.

English spelling is stupid because it is unpredictable and not user friendly. Why need only 20 vowel sounds have to have over 218 ways to spell them? It doesn't help learners that 80% of English spellings follow some sort of rule, because learners cannot predict which words or which rule.

The final straw for me was when a ten-year-old boy was stumbling, mumbling through a reading test. In utter frustration, I transliterated a parallel form of the test. 'Here, try this. No spelling traps.' He began, stumbling as usual, and then he picked up speed and ended almost at a gallop. Then he looked at me and said, 'But I could read this!' I thought, you poor boy. That was around 1970.

Since then, I have studied spelling and its history; I have experimented; I have studied spelling reforms and the psychology of spelling reformers and the psychology of conservatives and the psychology of vested interests, because there are vested interests.

I spent seven years working on experiments to see how readers respond if useless letters are left out of the spelling of words, useless because they serve no purpose to represent meaning or pronunciation, and may even confuse, as in Heaven with an 'A' and Private with an 'E' on the end. And one way to start improving English spelling is simply to apply Ockham's Razor to its clutter.

'Litera non sun multiplicanda praeter necessitatum.' No more letters are needed in English spelling than are actually necessary.

Most people hardly even notice when useless letters are dropped, which shows the letters really are useless, and many poor readers and English-language learners are helped when the briar-patch is thinned out. Only a few readers are repelled, and they are an interesting elite to study.

I thought the powers-that-be would be interested in such experiments. I thought wrong.

But over the 30 years since I became interested in spelling, the shackles are shaking, but unless there is a consistent spelling to use instead, the rebellion is unfortunately shown in mass poor literacy. Published research is now proving how English spelling is a real handicap to achieving literacy in English language compared to more regular European writing systems.

How words are written fascinates me, the history of spelling is fascinating, how for 200 years English spelling has been used as a quick screening test to keep out the vulgar mob, brand those who cannot cope with our bad spelling as bad spellers, and make good spellers feel they are virtuous.

In any science, the first thing to do is to examine the accepted assumptions. That is how breakthroughs are made. Now examine every assumption about why English spelling must stay as it is in every jot and tittle while the whole world is changing and toppling around it, and you find that every assumption turns out to be fallacious, from etymology to representing dialects.

About every other major language in the past 150 years has modernised its writing system to a greater or less (sic) degree, including even French, but not English.

Why can't the English?

In brief, the English can't improve their spelling because their tradition for a spelling reform was set in the 19th century and it headed in the wrong direction, considering only phonetics, the relation of letters to speech sounds.

But present English spelling represents other aspects of the English language as well, such as units of meaning and grammar, and these features may be worth keeping, simply clean them up to be more consistent. Cleaning up the basic spelling system that we have already is a pragmatic solution, because old and new can coexist during transition.

A hundred years of argument is no substitute for research. At present cognitive psychologists are like the astronomers' establishment in the story of Longitude. They study present spelling and how people cope with it or can't cope. But do not yet think innovatively about improvement. Yet psychologists and psycholinguists are well placed to take up research in human engineering, to investigate how spelling could be made a better match to the differing needs and abilities of users and learners worldwide, and still be backwards compatible with our heritage of print so nothing was lost.

Australians could lead the way. The Macquarie Dictionary people have already been exploring popular preferences in spelling and the moods for change. We have the electronic technology to permit change, and internet is an inexpensive place for experiments and evaluations. We need no longer idolise mess.

Spelling is an absolutely basic element in modern communications technology. It need not remain primitive. Reforms of writing systems have typically accompanied revolutions against other oppressions. If Australians want a republic, then recognise that English spelling remains our greatest colonial oppression.

Robyn Williams: Language as colonial oppression. There used to be a language test to enter Australia. Valerie Yule is a psychologist and lives in Melbourne.

Next week Ockham's Razor is presented by Stephen Martin, who's talking about the giant mammals of the sea, the whales. I'm Robyn Williams.

Response to inquiries

Valerie's response to the flood of email inquiries she received after the broadcast: Thank you for your correspondence on spellng and what Ockham would have done to it. I am sending you a personal note of thanks, but you may be interested in these 5 pieces of general information.

1. For a general context of innovation, see Valerie Yule's web.

2. Transcript of Taking Ockham's Razor to English Spelling
or the ABC Science Unit's Ockham's Razor website

3. For discussion of reserch, testing, implementing and FAQs see Valerie Yule's web.
For principles to investigate for spelling impruvement see below.

Teachers and students may be particularly interested in the Literacy and Spelling pages, including the 21-lessons with an overview of reading and spelling on Valerie Yule's web.
(These lessons come over well on some browsers, but on others they look dull and the font is dull. So try to imagine what they are meant to look like.) They come from a half-hour cartoon literacy video project, 'Help yourself to read or find out where you got stuck' — which of course will have the tremendous advantajes of being able to link pictures and narration, and animated text, and a good show.

The classical etymology board game of BABL© on Valerie Yule's web helps students work out meanings of words of Latin and Greek derivation. Or you can just download the word lists.

4. You may like to vote on the Freespeling web (speling with one l) for the spellings that you would like to have, in the world votes.

5. The 16 word spelling test that very few spellers can answer all-perfect

accommodate	exessiv	miniture	professr
remembrd	unparaleld	disapoint	gardian
mischivus	psycology	sovren	disiplin
iliterat	ocasion	recomend	tecnicly

Of 45 experts at an international conference on Intelligence, given individual written tests of spelling these sixteen common words, only four had perfect scores, and the average score was 13.8.

How did you rate? Hundreds have tried this test, at games-nights conferences, schools and exhibitions. The reason why hardly anyone gets them all right is because the letters that have been left out are all surplus. They are not needed for either meaning or pronunciation, and it is difficult to remember what these extra letters are and where to put them.

(Usualy to help the poor and handicapd, peple are askd to give money. You can help to make a tremendous difrence to the lives of milions just by helping to tidy up English spelling — help to change what is only fashion after all — by better fashions. When you can and as you can, as in emails, save time and effort, and leave out the surplus letters that are like briar-patches for everyone with dificulty in lerning to read and spel in

English, here and internationaly.'When in dout, cut it out'.   Here are some sujestions: As you can and when you can — eg in emails —

* Drop the silent letters at the end of words like MINUT PRIVAT DELICAT APROPRIAT DEVELOP. (even tho some pepl still think that DEVELOP should still have an e at the end)
* * Drop dubld letters when they serv no purpos at all, in words like ACOMODATE IMEDIAT OCASION.
* * Drop silent letters that mislead, in words like FRIEND SIEVE DAUGHTER. (FREND, SIV, DAUTER)

6.   TEN SPELLING REFORM PRINCIPLES TO RESEARCH Also set out on Valerie Yule's web. English Spelling is a World Oppression. This need not be.

Spelling is a marvellous Social Invention but it can fossilise.

English spelling could be improved to maximise its advantages and stop its disadvantages.

Consider the following ten principles that take into account the abilities and needs of all presently literate as well as learners who have such difficulties now.

1. Cut out surplus letters as in ACOMODATE, DELICAT, DISIPLIN, GARDIAN, FORIN

2. Retain 30 irregular spellings for very common words such as ALL, OF, COULD, ONE, PUT, WAS, WHAT, WHO, ONE, ONCE, so that text still looks familiar.

3. Represent formal unslurred speech, conventionalìsed so that it is international. [overpronounced citation spelling]

4. Consistent spellings for consonants.

5. Consistent spellings for vowels, including present spelling patterns for vowels that end words, and unintrùsive grave accents for the long vowels that are spoken like the vowel nàmes A E I O U. Technology now màkes this possible, , and it would solv the màjor problem in reforming English speling.

6. Continue to represent grammar, with -s/es and -d/ed plural and tense word endings.

7. Stability for morphemes — units of meaning — as in PLAYING BÀBYS.

8. Standardised spelling for print but more latitude for informal writers.

9. Spelling distinctions only for those very few homophones found to risk confusion.

10. Experiment — on the Web, in personal use, in psychological and educational research, and alternative spellings and pronunciation guides in dictionaries.

For discussion of research, testing, implementing and FAQs see Valerie Yule's web. But anyone can start now — for example, cut out surplus letters in words.

A logical spelling system can help learners to think logically.

Think through the spellings in this article and see how this might be so. Now let's try these prinsipls out. What seems sensible to you, and what is not? (If the grav axents on the long vowels A E I O U du not show up on yur brouser, let me know.)

5. The Number of Phonemes in English
Steve Bett

Counting the number of phonemes is like counting the number of colors in a rainbow.

When we try *to break up a continuous spectrum into discrete units, we move to the realm of fuzzy logic.* [1]

Abstract
Phonemes are categories or conceptual constructs not unlike our notions of color. Color is a little simpler since "blue" could be defined as falling between two specified frequencies. It is easier to take a slice out of the visual spectrum than it is to take a slice out of the speech sound spectrum. However, the same problems remain when we get too far removed from the primary colors. Adam Brown's argument is analogous to "if we can't count the number of colors in the rainbow, then we should stop using color names." Most categories & concepts have fuzzy boundaries particularly when we are talking about how that category is perceived by more than one person. Just as we can talk about the primary colors and be understood, we can talk about clear instances of pure or uncombined phonemes. We cannot expect agreement to extend to the blends. The minimum number of unblended phonemes in all varieties of English is 36 [14v–22c]. Agreement on this much is enough to retain the goal of one symbol-one sound. Dr. Bett is the moderator of the phonology forum: See saundspel on the Links page.

1. Are pronunciation guides possible?
After reading the eloquent arguments of linguist, Adam Brown [JSSS 27/2000/1], I came away almost convinced that a dictionary pronunciation guide was impossible. Brown's intention was to explain why it was impossible to specify the exact number of phonemes [2] in English. He expanded on my [4/2000] article where I gave examples of phoneme estimates from 36 to 62. I suggested that, while 46 [21v 25c]was a adequate number of phonemes to describe English speech, the only number that people would be likely to agree on would be the number of uncombined phonemes. I thought there could be agreement on 14 pure vowels and 22 pure consonants. [2] As shown in the analysis of dialects below, the exact distribution of these vowels and their allophones can depend on the dialect. [see Northern & Southern English]

Brown doubted the possibility of even limited agreement. He added that ***if the exact number of vowels cannot be established, then speech sounds cannot be visualized ... and the alphabetical principle becomes an unrealistic ideal.***

Brown's presentation reminded me of the following definition of an alphabet:
Alphabet ... meaningless marks arbitrarily associated with meaningless sounds.

After such a definition, one might conclude that written communication is impossible. By defining the goal as a strict one-to-one correspondence to an exact number of phonemes, Brown is able to build a similar strong case against the possibility of a phonemic transcription. Almost every argument that Brown brings up is valid. A strict one-to-one correspondence requires an exact number of phonemes. If we cannot agree on the exact number of phonemes then we cannot have a corresponding alphabet or phonemic transcription.

Fig. 1. In addition to the IPA symbols, this chart shows 4 ASCII or KWERTY representations
The International Phonetic Alphabet typically isolates 14 pure vowels and 7 combinations

VOWELS: Graphemes for 21 English speech sounds (phonemes)

ipa	SAMPA	SS	Keyword	SAMPA	unifon	englik	Saxon stressed	Spanglish unstressed
7 short [checked] vowels								
i	I	i.	pit	pIt		pit	pitt	pit
ɛ	E	e.	pet	pEt		pet	pett	pet
æ	(	a.	pat	pit	pat	paet	patt	paet
a	A	o.	pot	pAt		pot paat	poet	pot
ɔ	Q	o	cost	kOst	kxst	koost	cost	cost
ʌ	V	u.	cut	kVt	kut	cat cut	cutt	cat
ʊ	U	w u	put	pUt	pCt	put	put	pwt
	short	vowels			unifon	englik		
7 free [long] vowels								
i:	i	ie	ease	iz	Ez	iiz	iez	yz
e	e	ei	raise	rez	rAz	reiz	reiz	reyz
u:	u	uu	lose	luz	lUz	luuz	luuz	luz
	ɜ'	urr	furs	f3'z	fcrz	f'erz	furrz	fern
ɔ:	O	o aw	cause	koz	kxz	kooz	cawz	coz
ə	θ	a	allow	θ"laU	clq	alau	alau	aloud
o	O	oa	nose	noz	nOz	nouz	noaz	noz
14 uncombined -								
8 combinations in minimum set								
ɚ	θ'	er	corner	"kOrnθ'		korner	corner	cornr
	aI	ai	rise	raIz	rIz	raiz	raiz	
	OI	oi	noise	nOIz	nQz	noiz	noiz	noyz
	aU	ou	rouse	raUZ	rqz	rauz	rauz	ræwz
	Aθ	aa	are	Aθ	or	aar	aar	ar
	Iθ	ir	ear	Iθ	Er	ir	ier	ir
	Eθ	err	air arrow	Eθ	Ar	er	eir arro	err
	Oθ	or	ore	Oθ	Or	or	oar	or
21 total - Jones			herder	"h3'dθ'	h'erder		hurrder	herder

Listed above are the 21 vowels isolated by Daniel Jones and used by most scholars [e.g., Wilk and Wells] and many dictionary pronunciation guides. 14 of these vowels can be considered to be uncombined or pure vowels. [see next chart] The IPA special symbols are listed [column 1] when they differ from **SAMPA.** Well's **SAMPA** notation, a machine readable **ASCII-IPA, Is** listed In the second column. **SAMPA** uses upper case letter for the short vowels, O for 'awe' is the one exception. Unifon uses big letters for the long vowels. Spanglish, a digraphic solution, use double letters [digraphs] for the extended vowels. Spanglish, RITE, and the traditional orthography [with German words] use trailing double consonants to mark stressed short vowels.

In a [04 June 2000] letter written to the saundspel phonology forum, Michael Avinor put it this way, *"Speech is an analog signal and writing is a digital signal. To talk about a phoneme we have to cut*

up continuous speech into discrete units. Digitizing speech can preserve only a limited part of the speech information."

Even more information is lost when speech is visualized or represented graphically. Nevertheless, the fragment of the original that remains can be enough to accurately convey information.

IPA	5 Front		4 Central		5 Back	
14 vowels	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded	Unrounded	Rounded
High	i (Ie)	beat		hɜ'də'	boot	u
lower high	ɪ (I.)	bit	ago	herder	book	ʊ
higher)**Mid**	e (ei)	bait	ə (a)	(3) ɚ (er)	boat	o (əu ou oa)
lower)	ɛ (e.)	bet	but	(v) ʌ (v.)	bought	ɔ (o)
Low	æ (ae)	bat	ɑ (aa)	father	bottle	ɒ (o)

Daniel Jones' IPA for RP had 21 vowels. This chart lists the 14 pure or uncombined vowels. Diphthongs include of ai au oi and iə eə oa uə

Fig. 2. (i:) tense unrounded, (I) lax unrnd, [ə] mid lax unmd unstressed. The other dimensions of speech sound go by several names. One reference is to the jaw position; open, half open, or closed. Another is to tongue position during vocalization [front and back] is also used. Typically 3 to 6 levels of openness and backness are isolated. All front vowels are unrounded and all back vowels are rounded according to the chart above. Example words are added to the vacant columns. The vowel symbols are in the same position as in the Jones' vowel diagram or quadrilateral — a more accurate representation of the mouth.

This chart does not show combined vowels such as the glided blends of two sounds [diphthongs] that start in one position or cell of the chart above and end up in another. e.g., ai is a combination of low central vowel [@ or a:] and a high front vowel [i or I]. au begins as a low mid and ends as a high back.

Linguists, such as Daniel Jones, broke the sound spectrum down into **two parallel segments** [see chart]. tense — lax, and rounded — unrounded. The same sound may have two different expressions depending on muscle tension and rounding. Place of articulation was also important.

a range of sounds treated as identical

2. Sounds are not the only perceptions with fuzzy boundaries
Sounds are not the only things in our perceptual world with fuzzy boundaries. Has anyone ever claimed that a name for a discrete segment of the sound spectrum was any more exact than a color name for a discrete segment of the color spectrum? The flaw in the Brown's argument is the implied insistence on a high level of precision. If we raise the bar of precision high enough, then most ideals can be characterized as unobtainable and unrealistic.

We cannot see a particular color, e.g., blue, any more than we can hear a particular phoneme. This does not mean we cannot discriminate or sort blue and yellow objects. We can be presented with an instance and then asked to judge whether or not it a member of a category or class of 'blue' things. As we get near the boundaries, the judgments become more uncertain [e.g., Should a green ball be sorted into the pile of blue objects or yellow objects?]. However, there are some modal or mid range instances that nearly everyone will agree is a particular primary color. There are even instances that nearly everyone will agree is blue-green. When the blends become more complex, however, agreement becomes harder to achieve.

3. The Phoneme — fuzzy by definition: a range of sounds treated as identical

The same is true for the abstract sounds we call phonemes. Phonemes have been defined as the smallest unit of sound capable of changing the meaning of a word. The substitution of b for p in [pit] changes the meaning. Therefore [b] is a phoneme and the p:b distinction is phonemic. [pit & bit] are called minimal pairs.

Voiced and unvoiced pairs such as [p: b] are not distinguished in all languages. It is difficult to distinguish the two in English if they are whispered.

[pit-bit] is just one of many examples of the [p:b] minimal pair. Examples of other minimal pairs can be much more difficult to find. Is there a [ɪ:ə] minimal pair? Distinguishing minimal pairs for schwa [unstressed mid lax v] is much harder than for other vowels. The substitution of schwa [ə] for [ɪ] for in the word [accept / ək'sept] changes its meaning from [to take something offered] to [except /ik 'sept/] [to not include something]. Other notations Spanglish: [acseppt : icseppt] WS fonetic [yksept: iksept]

4. A phoneme is a category, an abstraction, not a physical thing

A phoneme is not really a unit in the sense of a single sound. It is a range of related but acoustically distinct sounds treated as a unit or category — treated "as if" they are the same sound. What we hear are sounds or phones. A phoneme is an abstraction or interpretation. The same person will pronounce the same vowel in acoustically different ways in association with different consonants.

People from different speech communities will rarely pronounce the same vowel the same way. [see Roger Brown [[9881 for more examples of categories].

5. 100% agreement is possible for 14 clear instances of uncombined [primary or pure] vowel phonemes

Any time you try to break up a continuum or spectrum into discrete units, there will be problems at the boundaries. Not everyone will slice the continuum at precisely the same point. However, just as it is possible to achieve nearly 100% agreement on instances of the primary colors, it is possible to get nearly 100% agreement on instances of the primary or uncombined phonemes.

Many words are not pronounced the same in different dialects of English. This means that a phonemic representation of one dialect [e.g., /ə/ or /U/] may not correspond to the speech in a different region. A phonemic script always presumes a base dialect and such alphabetical writing systems developed for one dialect will not always be a reliable guide to the pronunciation of another dialect.

Thus, some people will have to learn a spelling dialect in addition to their local dialect. This situation is also true in Spain and Italy. The base dialect, Castilian, for instance, does not always correspond to the local dialect.

Not everyone will agree where **i** sound stops and **e** sound begins. The disagreements will increase when the vowel is unstressed. The last phoneme in <vegetable> can be transcribed as vejtəbl, vejtəbəl, or vejtə bUl where [ə] represents the unstressed mid lax vowel or schwa ə. The first phoneme in <because> can be transcribed as bekoz, bikoz, or bə'koz. The less stress or smaller the discrete unit, the less agreement there will be.

Breaking up the vowel sound continuum into discrete units is analogous to breaking up the color spectrum into discrete colors. Adding gray into to a color mix is analogous to removing stress in

speech. Gray for the lost of brightness and contrast) reduces the ability to discriminate colors just as the loss of stress reduces the ability to discriminate vowels.

6. One phonographic representation cannot cover all the dialects of English

This is a different issue than the one just discussed. It is not a question of not being able to recognize clear instances of a phoneme. Rather it is a case of which phonemes should be used with particular words. Brown is right, strictly speaking BBC-English and NBC-English are phonologically distinct. This however, does not mean that they cannot be represented with one orthography. All it means is that the pan-dialect solution will not be 100% phonemic.

If the symbol represents a speech sound, when that sound changes the symbol has to change. If this is the case, then dialects that are have unique pronunciations will have unique spellings. If this is the case, how does one come up with a standardized spelling for English that can match every dialect of English?

How do broadcasters determine what pronunciation to use on the air? It is the same problem. If a broadcaster can pronounce it, then it can be spelled in a phonemic notation. The dialect used by broadcasters is designed to be the easiest one for a widespread audience to understand. The spelling system would follow suit. The base dialect would be the broadcaster's dialect.

There are two broadcast dialects that can be described as BBC-English and NBC-English. Since these two dialects are not the same, their pronunciation guide spelling would also differ. Let's assume that both broadcast dialects pronounce /ei/ and /ai/ as /ei/ and /ai/. Many of their listeners do not. Words containing /ei/ can be pronounced e: in northern English and /ai/ in Cockney. /ai/ is pronounced /a:/ in parts of the Southern U.S. and also in parts of England.

The spelling system has an easier time of it than the dialects and pronunciations used by broadcasters. The reason for this is that people will reinterpret word pronunciations to match their regional dialect. If asked, they might say, "I know it is spelled [greit] but around here we pronounce it [gret]."

I have no problem with using broadcast English as a base dialect for the spelling system but there are two other proposal for dealing with such discrepancies between dialects of English.

Conclusion

We cannot count the number of phonemes in English speech any better than we can count the number of colors in a rainbow. However, just as we can identify the primary colors in the rainbow, we can identify 36 clear instances of the primary or uncombined phonemes in speech [14 pure vowels, 22 pure consonants]. As we try to make finer distinctions, unanimity of opinion declines. There will never be much agreement on the exact number of combined vowels. Most people will want unique phonograms for [**ch**-tsh], /**j**-dzh], and /**ai**/ — as in *Saigon* and *aisle* — bringing the total to 39. Many will want to grant phonogram status to [oi], [au] and a few r-combinations bringing the total to about [46]. An alphabet with [46] phonemes would be more than enough to represent the significant sounds in both British and American dialects of English. [see the IPA chart below]

Saxon Spanglish Alfabet

A	AA	AE	AI	B	C (KS)
AGO	CAAR	CAET	AIS AIL	BIBB	CANCEL
Ch	D	UR ER	E, EA	EI EY	F
CHERCH	DIDD	SURRFER	BREAD	VEIN THEY	FAIV
G	H	I.	IE Y	J	K Q
GIGGL	HORS	IZ TIPPY	FIELD	JUDJ	KICK
L 'L	M 'M	N 'N	NG	O.	O AO
LITTL	MOUND	NUNN	SINGL	OTTER	AWE DOG
OA	OI OY	OU AU	P	R 'R	S
OAT	OIL BOY	OUT CAU	PICK	ROAR	SISTER
Sh	T	Th Thh	U. v	U .W	UU u
SHIPP	TOT TOTT	THY THAI	UPPER	HUK HWK	GURU
V V	W Wh	X KS	Y	Z	Zh
VALV	WINNER	TAX TAKS	YES YU	ZIPPERS	MEZHER

We can get by with 42 phonograms or sound signs shown in the grapheme-phoneme chart above. Actually, we can get by with **36** by removing the redundant letters **c q** and **x** and the combinations [or diphthongs **ai, oi, ou**]. This particular chart includes Ch [tS] and J [dS] but combines [Dh] and [Th]. The one below has a unigraphic symbol for /tS/ and /dZ/. It also has symbols for both NBC and BBC English. The IPA alphabet is simpler than Spanglish which has incorporated many traditional features.

I.P.A. Alphabet for English (BETA)

ɑ	ɒ	æ	ʌ	b	č	d	ð	e	ɛ
ɑmz	ɒd	ænd	ʌp	bæt	čɪn	dɪn	ðe	ep	ɛg
aims	odd	and	up	bat	chin	din	they	ape	egg
ɜ	ɝ	ə	ɚ	f	g	h	i	ɪ	j
ɜθ	ɝθ	ə'wɛə	ə'wɛɚ	fæn	get	hæt	it	ɪt	jist
earth	earth	aware	aware	fan	gate	hat	eat	it	yeast
ǰ	k	l	m	n	ŋ	o	ɔ	p	ɹ
ǰɔ	kɪn	lɔ	mun	not	sʊŋ	old	ɔi	pip	ɹun
jaw	kin	law	moon	note	sung	old	all	peep	run
s	š	t	θ	u	ʊ	v	w	z	ž
si	ši	txn	θxn	uz	bʊk	vɛst	wʊd	zɪp	vižon
sea	she	tin	thin	ooze	book	vest	wood	zip	vision

Received Pronunciation   General American   Common Pronunciation

People will continue to argue about such things as
[1] What would be the best way to represent unstressed sounds? [to schwa or not to schwa...].
[2] Should the redundant letters **kqx** be included in the alphabet? [they are in Spanglish]
[3] Should both the voiced and unvoiced [**th**] be included?
[4l Should the schwa [**a**go] and schwi [ver**y**] be represented with a unique phonogram?
[5] Stress is phonemic in English but should it be represented in the writing system?

There will be words that continue to be pronounced uniquely in a particular dialect. Thus a transcription system based on General American for NBC English] and BBC English may not always precisely represent the pronunciation of some words in other dialects of English. It is not

that these dialects have any more phonemes [although this is a remote possibility], they just apply the 36 identified pure phonemes differently in a few words.

The goal is to develop a workable writing system for English that is as good as the Italian writing system is for the Italian language. Unlike the goal of a perfect one-to-one correspondence between graphemes and phonemes, this goal is attainable. What prevents its realization is not the elusive nature of isomorphism as a goal but the fact that any consistent system will respell 60% of the words in English and that most of these respellings look odd to those adept in the traditional writing system. Some respellings will "offend the eye." For those who have acquired a high level of word pattern recognition, respelling will nearly obliterate certain distinctions isolated by heterographic homophones such as [know, no], [dough, doe], [I, eye, aye].

There is certainly no need to abandon this idealistic goal of isomorphism or one-to-one correspondence at this point. It clearly defines the correct direction. One symbol per sound can remain the stated goal without the expectation that it is the kind of ideal that can ever be fully attained. When a practical English writing system becomes nearly as good as one of the systems used as a pronunciation guide in a dictionary, then the quest can be abandoned.

A broad pronunciation guide spelling that is nearly 100% predictable and easy to type is about as close as one can expect to get. Beyond this we quickly reach a point of diminishing returns. The goal is not to be better than today's dictionary pronunciation guides but to approximate them with a practical everyday writing system devoid of unsupported special characters and complicated diacritics.

The goal is to come up with the best possible visual representation of the abstract phonemes that people have in their heads. The goal is to achieve a system or representation that is nearly isomorphic with the phonological structure of English speech. We will never quite reach this goal. Fortunately, a system that is less than ideal will be "good enough". A writing system for English that is as good as the writing systems for Italian and Spanish will be fine.

There is no perfect graphic representation of speech sounds. Since the writing system is not designed to capture subtle differences between different dialects, the system does not have to be as detailed as IPA. As good as Spanish is quite adequate for English.

Applied linguistics works in a realm of *fuzzy logic not Aristotelian logic where everything is either black or white ... true or false.

Brown points out all of the limitations of phonemic spelling and then concludes that since the goal of one and only one symbol per sound is elusive an unobtainable it should be abandoned.

In building a better system for a broad transcription of English, there is a point of diminishing returns. This point will be reached long before we have to become overly concerned about the precision of phonemes or the suitability of a particular base dialect.

One and only one symbol and per sound should remain as the simplest expression of our goal.

Notes
[1] fuzzy logic — in classical logic everything was black or white, true or false. fuzzy logic recognizes a middle ground, e.g., usually true. Fuzzy logic is a superset of conventional (Boolean) logic that has been extended to handle the concept of partial truth — truth values between "completely true" and "completely false". It was introduced by Dr. Lotfi Zadeh of UC/Berkeley in the 1960's as a means to model the uncertainty of natural language. The Sony PalmTop apparently

uses a fuzzy logic decision tree algorithm to perform handwritten (i.e., computer lightpen) Kanji character recognition.

[2] phoneme — a difference in sound that makes a difference in meaning — a range of sounds treated as the same sound. A phoneme is abstract concept or category — you cannot see, touch, or hear a phoneme but you can point to instances. A phoneme is not one sound but a family of sounds, especially when more than one speaker is involved. A phoneme is an area. All instances in that area are referred to as allophones or diaphones.

Phonemes are language specific. Where English speakers distinguish two phonemes [**l**id/**r**id], speakers of other languages may hear only one. R is not distinct from L in Japanese.

Phonemes are called the smallest unit of meaningful sound within a language.

[3] Phonemic — All languages are 100% phonemic. Differences in sound make up the code. To the extent that a writing system represents the important sound categories of a language, it is also said to be phonemic. Most writing systems are mixes. Pictographic and logographic elements are also included.

Writing in 1891 E.V. Graff presented a phonetic alphabet for 37 elementary sounds. This is the same as the one above except for the addition of **hw** as in when and where.

QUIZ:
[1] How many phonemes are there In the word brought**?**

To answer the question, look it up in a pronunciation guide and count the phonograms: IPA. b-r-ɔ-t Unifon **brxt** Spanglish **brawl** Truespel **braut.** Spanglish and Truespel are not unigraphic and this can distort the count. Answer: 4

 [2] How many phonemes in the word thorough?
The dictionary says / 'θ e r ou /. This looks like 5. This is a tougher question than the first because it is uncertain if /ou/ or /eu / represents one or two phonemes. It is one in Spanish and many other writing systems. English speakers generally pronounce the "long O" as a diphthong but they would understand a monopthong. Unifon **TcrO** Spanglish **thurro** Truespel **ttheroe. WS thyyrou.** Unifon's one sound per symbol design would suggest that it is probably the best transcription system for easy phoneme counting were it not for the fact that it uses single letters for diphthongs [I=ai, O=ou, q=au, Q=oi]. Answer: 4 or 5 [*with an explanation*].

References
Avinor, Michael 2001 Message dated June 4, 2001, Saundspel: The Phonology Forum. See Links paje.
Bett, Steve. 2000**.** Can we pin down the number of phonemes In English: *Simpl Speling Newsletter,* March, 1999, p. 7.
Bett, Steve. 2002**.** The number of phonemes in English. **Longer versions of this article.**
Brown, Adam. 2000**.** The number of phonemes in English: not a simple answer to a simple question. *JSSS* J27/2000/1 p. 11-13
Brown, Roger. 1988. **Words and Things**. Glencoe Free Press
Wells, John. SAMPA — speech assessment methods phonetic alphabet, 1987. See Links paje.
Valuable suggestions and comments received from members of the saundspel forum: particularly Charles Paulson and Drs. Valerie Yule and David Kelley.

6. Recent Research on Difficulties in Literacy Learning
Allan Campbell's Summary

1984: Journal of Educational Psychology, **vol 76, #4, pp 557–568:** *Decoding and comprehension skills in Turkish and English: Effects of the regularity of grapheme phoneme correspondence;* **Banu Oney and Susan R Goldman, University of California, Santa Barbara.**

The decoding and comprehension skills of Turkish and American first and third graders learning to read their respective languages were assessed. Turkish students were faster and more accurate on the decoding task than Americans at first-grade level and equally accurate but faster at third-grade level. 'The data suggest that languages with more letter-sound correspondences lead to faster acquisition of decoding skills.'

1991: British Journal of Psychology, **#82, pp 527537:** *The effect of orthography on the acquisition of literacy skills;* **Gwenllian Thorstad, The Tavistock Clinic, Child and Family Department, London.**

This study compared Italian and British children, showing, for example, that 7-year-old Italians were able to read words they did not know, and some 11-year-old British children could not read words they DID know [in speech]. The report concludes: `As a result of this learner-friendly orthography, Italian children do not need to spend so long learning the mechanisms of literacy skills as English children do, and have more time for other studies.'

1997. Cognition 63, **pp 315–334:** *The impact of orthographic consistency on dyslexia: A German-English comparison;* **Karin Landel, Heinz Wimmer, Uta Frith (variously of University of Salzburg and MRC Cognitive Development Unit, London).**

'The main finding of the present cross-orthography comparison of development of dyslexia was that English children suffered from much more severe impairments in reading than the German children.'

2000: Nature neuroscience, vol 3, #1: A cultural effect on brain damage; **E Paulesu and 15 other researchers from Italian and English educational institutions.**

The study was to see how the different orthografies of English and Italian were accessed by the brain. It found that Italians showed greater activation of the part of the brain that deals with foneme processing. In contrast the English had greater activation of the part of the brain that deals with word retrireview. Among other results: 'Italian students were faster at both word and nonword reading, even when the nonwords were derived from English words.'

***2001: Science 291,* March 16: *Dyslexia: Cultural diversity and biological unity;* Eraldo Paulesu and 11 others (from Italy, France, England, and Quebec).**

This study found that tho the neurological basis for dyslexia is the same across English, French, and Italian languages, the disorder manifests itself in different ways according to the regularity of the orthografy. The reading disorder is twice as prevalent among dyslexics in the United States (and France) as it is among Italian dyslexics. Again, this is seen to be because of Italian's 'transparent' orthografy.

***2001: How do children learn to read? Is English more difficult than other languages?* Paper presented to the British Festival of Science, Glasgow, September; Professor Philip H K Seymour, University of Dundee.**

English-speaking children take up to two years more to learn reading than do children in 14 other European countries.

In addition there have been studies by the Institute of Learning at Hull University, which has developed a model for predicting spelling success, based on the length of words, their regularity, and frequency of use. It claims that less able English-speaking children need up to four more years to reach the same efficiency with difficult words as they have attained at age 7 with easy words

---

Ben Rossen, who used to have Chinese students in his university classes tells the story of a conversation with one of them where he thought the student was talking Chinese and the student thought he was talking English.

MORAL:
If you learn English from a book, don't expect anyone to be able to understand you.

The sad part is that English could be written in a way that would enable one to speak it as well as read it.

7. What's Freespeling and the World Vote really about?
Richard Lawrence Wade, founder of www.freespeling.com

*With a catchy name, an **attractive professional** looking web page, and a clever promotional campaign, **Freespeling.com** has attracted more visitors in a month than all of the other spelling sites have had in three years.*

On the surface, it is a call for anarchy — spell any way you want. On closer reading, it is a new democratic approach for establishing a more rational standardized spelling.

Richard Lawrence, formerly an executive with the BBC, addresses the frequently asked questions [FAQ] about "freespeling" — Ed.

Q. Why is freespeling important?
A. English has become the world language. Chinese and Spanish may be powerful contenders on the web, nonetheless English is now what we used to call the "lingua franca". Air Traffic uses it, Mariners use it, waiters on the Amazon use it, even comely Persians in black chadors use it. Scientists have to write their papers in it, surfers on the net type in it to a myriad of strangers they kinda know but never meet. They all use English, the only language they have in common. And that's a fact!

But, because of its spelling, English is the hardest European language to learn to read and rite. In the UK its said there are 7 million people with the ability to read and rite only of an l l year old. In the USA maybe 44 million. "Illiterates" get the worst jobs, if a job at all. They have the lowest incomes and the lowest expectations because they are discriminated against. A discrimination educated and cultured people not only accept but practise and promote! We accept all sorts of accents, dodgy grammar, constant neologisms but "bad spelling"? No. Try applying for a decent job with a misspelt CV And you don't have to have a low IQ to be classed "illiterate". Ask any dyslexic about the tangled maze they try to find their way thru every day and the humiliation some face because the letters on the page just wont stay still in the correct positions. *Discrimination* — weve tried to outlaw it in many other areas, lets erase the stigma of being a "Bad Speller".

Q. So you want to Reform the language?

Richard Lawrence Wade

A. Reform the English language? No, only the way we write it down — spell it. And, no, I am not a Reformer with a capital R because I am convinced that in an era when the word English means a series of subtly, and sometimes widely differing languages which span the globe, there is no single Authority, with a capital A, which could possibly introduce coherent change. The United Nations' track record does not suggest it could impose a new Spelling Regime on the USA, Australia, the Caribbean, India, Zimbabwe ... let alone England. And if Britain were to set up some worthy Royal Commission for the Reform of Orthography, I suspect that by the time it had actually convened, its remit for New Structures and New Rules would have been long overtaken by the internet chatrooms of the tweenagers.

Q. So how are you going to achieve change?

A. I am a campaigner seeking to effect positive change in the certain knowledge that when you try to alter the spelling of the language of Shakespeare, you are facing powerful opposition from those most able to implement change — the clever and the articulate — because of the intellectual capital they have invested in learning our wonderful language. But have those who oppose change considered fully what English really represents *today* as a universal tool of communication? Or, if they do actually acknowledge shortcomings in its spelling, have they sat down and tried to come up with a *better* idea of how to *start the process* of modernization?

If English spelling was a brand of automobile, you can be sure they wouldn't buy one! Top heavy, out of date engine, carburetor gets blocked (remember that!?), asymmetric seats, wheels of four different sizes, and difficult to learn to drive.

Q. How did you get involved in freespeling?

A. It was a birthday card that did it — on my fortieth birthday when I was working for BBC Radio 4 Britain's main speech and news and current affairs channel. My office was plastered with notices saying "Radio Four" spelt "f..o..u..r" and there was this card saying "Happy Birthday — Forty today". I showed it to my boss. "Look theyve actually printed this wrong — left out the U — amazing." "Oh dear, Richard," she said, "... you've obviously been spelling the word forty wrong for the last 39 years." "Four" "forty" — ridiculous. Who can justify it to a child?

Q. Okay so what are you actually doing?

A. I realised there was little chance of substantial Change if that meant New Rules, Top Down. It had been tried and failed.

So I decided to try Bottom Up and introduce Freespeling — to spell with some of the freedom of Shakespeare himself. But I needed a lever. And there was the very tool — Fashion. The fashion of Short Text Messaging using the technology of the mobile fone. Youngsters need to abbreviate and so use a new shorter, sometimes stunted English as they exercise their freedom. 43 million text messages every day in Britain alone!

But Freespeling itself is not about abbreviation. Its about harnessing that freedom of attitude and fashion to say "Don't worry, it does not matter if you spel some words rong as long as you are riting to be *easily understood. "*

Q. Is that it — just spell any way you like?

A. Freespeling.com sets out a two pronged strategy. Prong Number One counsels every writer to exercise their freedom with restraint and *only freespel* a few words on each page — perhaps the ones they find most difficult or illogical. Oh, and so they don't get marked down by some disparaging reader as "illiterate", they would do well to initial the page with a small f plus a footer pointing out to the reader that they are exercising the freedom of **www.freespeling.com**.

Reading is partly about the speed and ease of pattern recognition. So we need Standard Spellings we can swiftly scan. We already do it with new words in the vocabulary — who would have recognised "laptop, email, download" a few years ago'? If we can quickly scan and recognise those words then we can do the same with new freespelings.

The World Vote hosted by www.fre s tin .co began in mid March to elect new spellings for fifteen target words — most of them tricky but with one or two easier ones as well. Its purpose is clear. To

produce and publicize alternative easier, simpler spellings which freespelers can start to use and which will then gradually be absorbed into a more rapidly evolving Standard Spelling.

Prong Two is about *Evolution.* Freespelings *will coexist* with the conventional. I advise freespelers not to use unconventional spellings at work or school but to start with frends and family. 1 hope soon some perceptive newspaper will take up the challenge and run a daily page to show that the medicine is actually quite palatable, if you bother to taste it! t bet that initiative will start in North America, or maybe Australia — or perhaps, more likely, the teenage magazines will realize the significance of whats happening with mobile cell fones and chat rooms and adopt the fashion onto their printed pages.

Q. What do your opponents say?

A. There are some Pedants and Old Fogies who thunder at what they — without perhaps due examination of the argument — may regard as too radical or wrong headed. Such critics often pontificate but fail to offer solutions.

Q. But are they right to worry?

A. Well lets look at the reality: the first freespeling World Vote closes on June 30[1]. These are the [5 target words against which new freespeling candidates are standing:

Height, accident, chaos, accommodate, foreigner, knowledge, friend, necessary, business, February, unconscious, view, forty, sincerely, because.

Some difficult, some tricky, some deliberately easy to pose the question in the voter's mind "Why on earth do we drop the u from forty?"

Q. ...And Prong Two?

A. Prong Two is crucial. It sets out to work towards an easier simpler set of Standard Spellings. In July we shall see the final tallies of votes but suppose the choices go like this. Height — suppose voters choose IL.L.T..E for height, and A.X.I..D..E..N..T for accident and drop the "i" in "friend" to give us "frend". Knowledge. Suppose they drop the "k" in "knowledge" to spell N..O..L..L..E..G..E like "college"?

Will that really damage your ability to scan and recognise the word patterns? Suppose voters take a long look at "necessary" and choose the simpler N..E..S..E..S..A..R..Y . Who will fail to understand that speling at a glance?

I suggest they look eminently usable by ordinary men and women who want to communicate easily. What I am trying to do is to get people thinking about a magnificent language... in global use... of which one important element needs modernizing. I am not trying to put forward a single codified Revision of English Spelling which everyone is obliged to accept and use. Nobody has to use the new freespelings if they don't want to but my wager is that before too long freespelings will simply get absorbed into the Standard Speling and they'll be using them anyway!

Q. What happens when the 1st poll closes?.

A. I shall put up on the website the winning candidate for each target word and post 15 new target words for the next poll, closing a month or maybe two later. Press Releases will go out worldwide to publicise the new, easier, simpler freespelings in the hope that some of the international media will tell their viewers and readers. My other hope is that some clever entrepreneur marketing a Fast Moving Consumer Good will have the wit to print the new words on his chocolate wrapper or fizzy drinks tin to appeal to teenagers and twenty somethings. Once the bandwagon really gets rolling,

one might consider posting a large number of words for a single special poll. One has to devise the means as one goes along, keeping in mind the goal — coherent change that will produce "a new consensus on preferd spelings to enable greater ease of communication and wider literacy."

Q. Aren't you hoping water will flow uphill?.
A. Who would have believed ten years ago that young women would be parading thru the streets with hipster jeans and shortfall tops that leave their stomachs bare enough to reveal jewelry studded into their tummy buttons? Or that major international firms would instruct highly paid staff that a suit and tie are no longer appropriate attire at the office. We are at a moment of high fashion, of unprecedented changes in communication by fone and computer, of changes we can channel to our advantage. Seven years ago emails were only just starting to explode. Four years ago I bet u hardly knew what a Short Text Message was; two years ago digital Single Lens Reflex cameras were still almost experimental — today their purchase tolls the knell of parting film.

Lets grab the opportunity! Shakespeare knew you had to: "There is a tide in the affayres of men, which, taken at the flood, leades on to fortune"

Thats probably what Shakespeare actually wrote down on the page of the first folio with those two freespelings — affayres, leades... but that was nearly 500 years ago. It wasn't until 1755 that Dr Samuel Johnson fulfilled what was by then a crying need — to achieve a Standard Spelling. He codified English into a firm set of axeptable spellings. His dictionary was nesesary, scholarly ... magnificent but that was almost *two and a half centuries* ago. Times and needs change. Today not thousands but millions can now surf the web in English and can vote to simplify its spelling.
Lets try to make 2005 — the Two Hundred and Fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Johnson's great dictionary — lets make it the year when many of us dare to boldly go and *actually, successfully* make a major advance towards modernizing the spelling of the English language. — *end* –

Counterpoint
Most reformers believe that the World Vote is an effective way to test the acceptability of a scheme and a good way of determining what the popular options might be.

A. One principle has informed these early efforts — to understand the difference between loading a bandwagon with a particular proposal... and knowing how you will put your shoulder to the wheel to start it rolling. There aint much point in loading it in the first place, if u havent worked out how to get the thing moving! The fact is that with the internet the time is now ripe for change. And with Short Text Messaging the genie is already out of the lamp.

However, the results of a World Vote are unlikely to be a consistent writing system. Preferred respellings might be as irregular as the traditional spellings.

It might be important to determine what silent letters are redundant before the poll. Wade finds the double L in "spelling" to be redundant but in some systems, including the traditional one, the double consonant can serve to mark the preceding vowel as short and stressed.

Of course, we could easily live with the short-long stressed/unstressed ambiguity if some of the other irregularities were cleared up.   — SB

8. Spelling Reform: A Bibliography of Resources.
Cornell Kimball

Cornell Kimball is an erstwhile transportation engineer who does computer support and troubleshooting for the highway department in California. He has been interested in language for decades. His detailed look into the workings of the English language led him to an interest in spelling reform.

Abstract.
This is a bibliografy of articles, correspondence and editorials from the publications of the Simplified Spelling Society (SSS) and a few related sources. They deal with strategies for promoting reform, ascertaining popular reaction to reformed spellings, and with spelling reform in languages other than English. This list, a few websites included, is broken down by subject. Short quotes are given from some articles. The total listing includes items from
- the *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* (*JSSS*),
- the Society's *Newsletters*, including *Simpl Speling*,
- and a publication called the *Spelling Progress Bulletin*.

1. Strategy: Promoting Idea of Spelling Reform.
These articles make basic points about promotion, ways to spred the word, and how to sell this to the public:

Campbell, Allan, Editorial, "Learning for the future," *Simpl Speling* **SS5, March 1998**, Item 4, "
The rite of replying," *Simpl Speling* **SS13, November 2000**, Item 7. A quote from this runs: "Public attitudes that change, change mainly slowly. Advertisers spend much on repeating expensive TV ads — to have their message sink in. It's the steady drip, drip, drip that wears the stone, and if our letters can be part of a series, the better our chances."
Cookson, Harry, "People find reasons to oppose change," *Simpl Speling* **SS5, March 1998**, Item 3.
Downing, John, Ph.D., "Research on Spelling Reform,"
Spelling Progress Bulletin, **Spring 1980**, Item 5.
Hanks, Patrick and Upward, Chris, "Feasibility of Spelling Reform," *JSSS* **J8, 1988/2**. Item 9.
Hofmann, Thomas R, "International Requirements for Spelling Reform,"
JSSS **J7, 1988/1**, Item 7.
Kiwi, Chris, Letter to Simpl Speling, "Promoting reform in general,"
simpl speling **SS13 November 2000**, Item 4.
Kuizenga, Elizabeth, Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "A call to get 'into real action',"
simpl speling **SS10 November 1999**, Item 5.
Kupfrian, Dr. Wilbur J., Letter to *Spelling Progress Bulletin*, "Where do we go from here?"
Spring 1980, Item 11.
"A great promotional program would be required before the average citizen perceives the inconsistent and complicated aspects of our spelling 'system' and of the advantages both at home and internationally of adopting more uniform spelling rules."
"Forming a strategy for introducing simplified spelling," *Simpl Speling* **SS14, March 2001**, Item 1 and Members' supplement Item 11 [edited report of a presentation by Jack Bovill]
Stark, David, "Implementing Spelling Reform — An Introduction," *JSSS* **J10, 1989/1**, Item 6 [a companion piece is listed later in the bibliografy].
Thommen, Matthew, "Selling Spelling: a marketing approach to orthographic change,"
JSSS **J20, 1996/1**, Item 8.

Upward, Christopher, Editorial, "Orthografic Ownrship: an aproach to winng suport for spelng reform?" *SSS Newsletter*, **N10 April 1996**, Item 7.
"If potential users needs ar not caterd for, those users canot hav a sense of ownrship and wil not be esily persuaded to adopt a reformd orthografy."
Yule, Valerie, "How to Implement Spelling Reform,"
Spelling Progress Bulletin, **Fall 1980**, Item 5.
"Spelling reform can only be achieved by looking at what is practicable, not at dogmatic idealism about what would be perfect; arguments must deal in evidence rather than in opinion."

2. Taking The Public Pulse: Popular Reaction to Reformed Spellings

Here are articles or letters about taking surveys, doing control studies, etc. to find out how people feel about spelling reform, their reactions to reformed spellings, that might be used to create a plan more salable to the public:

Baker, Robert G, Ph.D., "An Experimental Study of Attitudes Towards English Spelling Reform,"*Spelling Progress Bulletin*, **Spring 1983**, Item 4.
Cunningham, Paul, "Teaching one's ideas, seeking reactions,"
Simpl Speling **SS7, November 1998**, Item 4.
Gledhill, Dr John M, "A pre-Christmas office experiment," *Simpl Speling* **SS9, July 1999**, Item 4.
Jolly, C J H, "The Marketability of Spelling Reform," *JSSS* **J8, 1988/2**, Item 6.
Thorstad, Gwenllian, "Children's Responses to Simplified Spelling,
Part 1,"*JSSS* **J21, 1997/1**, Item 3, Part 2, *JSSS* **J22, 1997/2**, Item 2.
Whitmore, Peter, Letter to *JSSS*, "Testing the -ITE market," *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 14.
Wilkinson, Jean, "If U could spell Wednesday any way U liked...
Simpl Speling **SS4, November 1997**, Item 7.
Yule, Valerie, "Experiments in public response to surplus-cut spellings in texts,"
JSSS **J16, 1994/1**, Item 3.

3. Spelling Reform in Other Languages:

German.
One notable recent — indeed still on-going — example is the spelling reform in German. Here are items chronicling many of the stumbling blocks and successes that the reform has met as it's moved ahed:

Under "Spelling Reform Around The World": "Germany," *News8* **Summer 1985**, Item 7.
Under "From Around the World": "Germany," *SSSN* **J3 Summer 1986**, Item 4.
"Institut für deutsche Sprache: Sprachreport 4/87" [summary and translation of account by Dr Wolfgang Mentrup], *JSSS* **J7, 1988/1**, Item 12.
Augst, Gerhard; Upward, Chris; and Institut für deutsche Sprache, "The Latest on 'Re-regulating' Written German," *JSSS* **J11, 1989/2**, Item 6.
Augst, Gerhard, "Update on the Reregulation of German Orthography," *JSSS* **J12, 1992/1**, Item 8.
Harenberg, Werner, "Paket, Rytmus, Tron?"*JSSS* **J19, 1995/2.** Item 9.
Günther Drosdowski on Spelling Reform, Interview from *Der Spiegel* #25, 1995, translated by Margot McCaffrey in "German Reform: Two Years in Twilight," *JSSS* **J19, 1995/2**, Item 9.
Ed Chris Upward "Spelling Reform in German," *JSSS* **J21, 1997/1**, Item 8.
Augst, Gerhard, "Update on the German Spelling Reform," *JSSS* **J22, 1997/2**, Item 8.
"Notes from Switzerland," *JSSS* **J22, 1997/2**, Item 9.
Augst, Gerhard and Schaeder, Burkhard, "Recht-schreibreform-eine Antwort an die Kritiker, Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, summarized and translated by Upward, C. under the title 'Answering the Critics of German Spelling Reform'," *JSSS* **J23, 1998/1**, Item 7.

"The reform represents a compromise between different interests, and no one can expect it to incorporate all their personal preferences or theories."

"The German Reform: Judgment by the Highest Court and a Little Local Difficulty," *JSSS* **J26, 1999/2**, Item 5.

Hutchinson, Gavin, "Opposition to the German Spelling Reform," *JSSS* **J26, 1999/2**, Item 6.

"German news agencies adopt (some) reformed spellings," [summary and translation of article by Jürgen Dittmann in Sprachreport April 1999], *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 9.

do Rock, Z, "German changes taking hold," *Simpl Speling* **SS11, March 2000**, Item.2.

do Rock, "German newspaper backtracks on change," *Simpl Speling* **SS13, November 2000**, Item 5.

Here are articles about spelling reforms in a few other European languages:

Dutch.
Trouille, Jean-Marc, "Changes in the Spelling of Dutch," *JSSS* **J5 1987/2**, Item 6.

Cohen, Harry, "Spelling reform in the Low Countries," *JSSS* **J19, 1995/2**, Item 7..

French.
Baddeley, Susan, "AIROE: an Association for Spelling Reform in France," *JSSS* **J7, 1988/1**, Item 11.

Baddeley, Susan, "Spelling reform in France: Past, Present and...Future?" *JSSS* **J10, 1989/1**, Item 4:
"As the task of making up for lost time becomes more and more urgent, reformers realise that over-ambitious reform schemes which have no hope of succeeding will only be a waste of time and effort.."

Baddeley, Susan, "Progress of the spelling reform debate in France," *JSSS* **J11, 1989/2**, Item 5.

Upward, Christopher, "A role for dictionaries in spelling reform: a French example," *SSS Newsletter*, **N1 April 1991**, Item.3.

Brown, Bob, "Can we learn from the French?" *SSS Newsletter*, **N4 July 1992**, Item 2.

Baddeley, Susan, "The 1990 French Spelling Reforms: an Example to be Followed," *JSSS J15, 1993/2*, item 2.
"Most people are simply not aware of the extent to which spelling has changed over the centuries, and this makes them immediately hostile to what they mistakenly consider to be an attack on a part of their 'national heritage.'"

Norwegian.
Baker, Robert G, "Spelling Reform and Politics: the Case of Norwegian," *SSSN* **J1, Autumn 1985**, Item 7.

Portuguese.
Cookson, Harry, "Spelling reform in Portuguese: what can we learn?" *JSSS* **J21, 1997/1**, Item 7.

do Rock, Z, "The Spelling of Portuguese," *JSSS J28, 2000/2*, Item 9.

A bibliografy with a further listing of Journal articles about spelling reforms in other languages:
JSSS, "Writing reforms in other languages," *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 4.

The situation with Esperanto is of course not the same, but there are things to learn from the general idea of language planning:

Gledhill, Chris, "What can we learn from Esperanto?" *Simpl Speling* **SS7, November 1998**, Item 8.

4. Further Ideas to Consider in Planning.

Brown, Bob, "English Spelling and the Computer," *SSS Newsletter*, **N8 March 1995**, Item 2.
[Report of Dr. Roger Mitton's address to the Annual General Meeting].

"Simplified Spelling on the Internet," *SSS Newsletter*, **N10 April 1996**, Item 6..

Cookson, Harry, "Phonetic spelling: How far can we go in English?"
    SSS Newsletter, **N10 April 1996**, Item 4.
Frith, Dr. Uta, "Cognitive Processes in Spelling and their Relevance to Spelling Reform,"
    Spelling Progress Bulletin, **Spring 1982**, Item 7.
Gregersen, Edgar, "Morphological Consideration in the Creation of Rational Orthographies,"
    JSSS, **J2, 1986/1**, Item 4.
—"Compromise Spellings and World English," *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 6.
Ives, Kenneth, "Diagraming Spellings," *JSSS* **J14, 1993/1**, Item 5.
Kerr, John S, "The Implications of Spelling Reform for Skilled Readers," *JSSS* **J8, 1988/2**, Item 7.
Scragg, Donald G, "English Spelling and its Reform: Some Observations from a Historical
    Perspective," *JSSS* **J11, 1989/2**, Item 3 [1988 Inaugural Address].
Seymour, Dr P H K, "Psychological Processes in Spelling Recognition and Production," *Spelling
    Progress Bulletin*, **Spring 1982**, Item 8.
Upward, Christopher, "Heterographs in English," *JSSS* **J4, 1987/1**, Item 7.
Wells, John C, "English Accents and their Implications for Spelling Reform,"
    SSSN **J3, Summer 1986**, Item 3.
Yule, Valerie, "Improving English spelling for readrs," *JSSS* **J14, 1993/1**, Item 3.
"International English Spelling and the Internet," *JSSS* **J23, 1998/1**, Item 3.
Also: Edgar Gregersen's "Compromise Spellings" article in the *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 6, shows
some examples of a few of the main spelling reform proposals, Nue Speling, Cut Spelling, and
American Spelling/ World English Spelling.
And: Information that can be used in planning a spelling reform can also be found on Valerie Yule's
website.

5. More Ideas: Reviews of Books and Other Writings.
Ives, Kenneth, Review of Ralph Cooper "Language Planning and Social Change" (1989,
    Cambridge University Press), *JSSS* **J12, 1992/1**, Item 5.
Jolly, Chris, "Three influential books of the past decade" [Brief reviews of: Peter Bryant and Lynette
    Bradley "Children's Reading Problems" (1985, Blackwell, Oxford); Margaret Snowling "Dyslexia"
    (1987, Blackwell, Oxford); Usha Goswani and Peter Bryant "Phonological Skills and Learning to
    Read" (1991, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Hove, England)], *JSSS* **J16, 1994/1**, Item 8.
Mitton, Roger, Review of Edward Carney "A Survey of English Spelling" (1994, Routledge,
    London),*JSSS* **J19, 1995/2**, Item 2.
Reilly, John J., "Richard Feynman & Isaac Asimov on Spelling Reform," *JSSS* **J25, 1999/1**, Item 9.
Upward, Christopher, "Revlations of a Cross-Linguistic Perspectiv" [Review of Margaret Harris and
    Giyoo Hatano "Learning to Read and Write: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective" (1999, Cambridge
    University Press)], *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 12.

6. Lobbying Literacy Policy Makers In Britain:
JSSS **J21, 1997/1**, Item 11. [correspondence with Michael Barber, David Reynolds, Nicholas Tate].
JSSS **J22, 1997/2**, Item 12. [further correspondence with Michael Barber].
JSSS **J24, 1998/2**, Item 9. [with Michael Barber, Nicholas Tate].
JSSS **J26, 1999/2**, Item 10. [with Tony Blair and David Blunkett].
JSSS **J27, 2000/1**, Item 11. "Submission to the UK Parliament's Education Sub-Committee Inquiry
    into Early Years Education" [prepared by Masha Bell].
Bell, Masha, "Preparing a submission", *Simpl Speling* **SS11, March 2000**,
    Members' supplement Item 9.
Gwen Thorstad, "Further representations to Commons", *Simpl Speling* **SS12, July 2000**, Item 1.

In New Zealand
JSSS **J25, 1999/1**, Item 10 [correspondence with Wyatt Creech's office and Dept. of Education].
"NZ asked to take lead", *Simpl Speling* **SS11, March 2000**, Item 1.

"'American spellings' issue raises the profile", *Simpl Speling* **SS13, November 2000**, Item 2.
Campbell, Allan, "Lobbying in New Zealand", *JSSS* **J28, 2000/2**, Item 10.

In Britain and New Zealand
"Society engages MPs on two fronts", *Simpl Speling* **SS11, March 2000**, Item.1.
A bibliografy of earlier submissions is listed in: *JSSS* **J18, 1995/1**, Item 7.

7. Calls for an International English Spelling Summit.
Some proponents of reform have long called for an international body to oversee English spelling.
Some examples are:
"Congress call 'to be encouraged'," *Simpl Speling* **SS14, March 2001**,
    Members' supplement Item 11.
Yule, Valerie, Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "'Free spirits in the hills,'*
    simpl speling* **SS14 March 2001**, Item 5.

8. How to Get the Media and Other Institutions to Use Simpler Spellings.
Bonsall, Damian, "What newspapers may require to alter their spelling,"
    Simpl Speling **SS11, March 2000**, Item.7.
Craig, Robert, "Three-stage policy," *Simpl Speling* **SS14, March 2001**, Item 5.
Kimball, Cornell, "What One Member Has Been Doing",
    SSS Newsletter **SS1, December 1996**, Item 5.
Lang, Tom, "An approach to Chambers", *Simpl Speling* **SS12, July 2000**, Item 4.
Little, Joe, "How can we outsmart Murphy?", *SSS Newsletter* **SS3, July 1997**, Item 2.
— "...or simply praise the Lord", *Simpl Speling* **SS4, November 1997**, Item 2.
Mole, Alan, "Spelling-reform books for libraries," *Simpl Speling* **SS13, November 2000**, Item.3.
Rondthaler, Edward, "A Teaching Spell Checker", *JSSS* **J22, 1997/2**, Item 6.
Relton, Ted, "Publish — and be damned...", *Simpl Speling* **SS4, November 1997**, Item 1.
Kimball, Cornell, "Dictionary alters *thru* entries," **SS5 March 1998**, Item 1.
— Under "Snippets": "In three books on ergonomics *simpl speling* **SS13 November 2000**, Item 2.
Jolly, Chris, "Talking with journalists from publishing houses,"
    simpl speling **SS14 March 2001**, Item 4.
Upward, Christopher, "Th Potential of Stylgides as Vehicls for Spelng Reform, with a case-study
    of*The Times English Style and Usage Guide*," *JSSS* **J21, 1997/1**, Item 5.
Wilkinson, Jean, Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "Comics at the leading edge?"
    SS14 March 2001, Item 5..
Yule, Valerie, "Style in Australia: current practices in spelling, punctuation, hyphenation,
    capitalisation, etc.," *JSSS* **J7, 1988/1**, Item 10.
— "Style Council 1988 in Melbourne Australia," *JSSS* **J10, 1989/1**, Item 10.

9. The Initial Teaching Alphabet.
Downing, John, "The Transfer of Skill in Language Functions" [re-edited],
    JSSS **J28, 2000/2**, Item 1.
Threadgall, Ronald A, "The Initial Teaching Alphabet: Proven Efficiency and Future
    Prospects," *JSSS* **J7, 1988/1**, Item 6.
Upward, Christopher, "John Downing's i.t.a. Evaluation", *JSSS* **J28, 2000/2**, Item 4.

Another source for information on the initial teaching alphabet is a page on websites run by David
Barnsdale and Steve Bett.

10. An Application of a Small Set of Reformed Spellings in a Publication.

This is a series of articles about the Chicago Tribune's use of up to 80 simplified spellings as standard in the newspaper:

Shipley, John B., "Spelling the Chicago Tribune Way, 1934–1975",
Part 1, *JSSS* **J24, 1998/2**, Item 2.
Part 2, *JSSS* **J25, 1999/1**, Item 2.
Part 3, *JSSS* **J26, 1999/2**, Item 4.

11. Changes on Limited Scale.

These quotes and references deal with proposals for reforming just a small set of spellings or of making modest rather than thorogoing changes to English spelling.

Barbe, Walter B., Editorial, *Spelling Progress Quarterly*, **Spring 1984**, Item 1.
   "We cannot forsake standard English overnight, so our path must be one of moderation. Most obviously, we must remain aware of how our language is changing, both overtly and subtly. ... Words like thru, nite, and alien are all around us and demonstrate that our language is constantly evolving."
Campbell, Allan, Editorial, "Let's start from where we are,"
      SSS Newsletter, **SS2 March 1997**, Item 3.
   "Our first step needn't be a Great Leap Forward that is counterproductive. World English has an array of improved and approved spelling options that are already familiar to readers."
Clausen, J, Letter to *JSSS* **J10, 1989/1**, Item 2:
   "The attempts in the past to simplify the written language have failed because the changes proposed have been too drastic all at once. Even your proposals for Cut Speling would seem to me again too drastic to get the nesesary support."
Cookson, Harry, Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "Partly accepted spellings," **SS4 November 1997**, Item 6.
Craig, Robert, "Long service has seen many proposals,"
   Simpl Speling **SS4, November 1997**, Item 4.
   Referring to a few simpler spellings some periodicals:
   "I feel that rather than pressing for our own particular systems we should cooperate to promote those changes which have majority support."
Everingham, Doug, "Wide-ranging involvement over many years,"
   Simpl Speling **SS11, March 2000**, Item 3.
   "[I] asked the education minister about possibilities for spelling reform. He consulted some experts. Most of them advised only a small change like 'f' for 'ph' would be likely to succeed."
Free, Jon, Letter to *JSSS*, "Anglo-American variants," **J28, 2000/2**, Item .11.
Gilet, Peter, Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "Foneticism a second priority?" **SS9 July 1999**, Item 5:
   "I am starting to think, from my own efforts at changing my spelling (in letters to frends and so on) that we have in fact grossly underestimated the momentum of a system used by millions of people."
His Grace The Archbishop of York, Letter to JSSS, "Acceptability problems," **J11, 1989/2**, Item 2.
   "Having read your literature my immediate reaction is that it contains some excellent ideas, but that you are probably trying to do too much all at once and that your proposals will suffer the fate of Esperanto. The fact that American spelling has not proved acceptable in this country [the UK] is, I suppose, an example of the resistances likely to be encountered."
Helm, Nelson, "'The excellent but unlikely' is killing 'the modest but less unlikely',"
   Simpl Speling **SS6, July 1998**, Item 6.
   "I expect the public will resist the first change most. Therefore, I suggest that we find some small, popular change, and sell it in isolation (not as part of a package)."
Ives, Kenneth, "A Spelling Reform for the 1990's For English Speaking Adults," \
   JSSS **J12, 1992/1**, Item 6.

Kimball, Cornell, "Pragmatic Strategies for Promoting Spelling Reform," *JSSS* **J23, 1998/1**, Item 4.

Lang, Tom, Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "Favors use of best dictionary forms," **SS6 July 1998**, Item 5.

— "When Parliament voted to simplify spelling!" *Simpl Speling* **SS8, March 1999**, Item 4.
   "I feel that any system requiring extensive changes in spelling stands no chance of gaining general acceptance."

MacLeod, Dan, Letter to *JSSS*, "Reform by spellchecker," **J22, 1997/2**, Item 14.
   "I don't know how it is in the UK, but here [in the US] informal simplifications like nite and tuff are pretty widespread. It seems like simply legitimizing these spellings would get things rolling."

— Letter to *Simpl Speling*, "Ergonomics has a lesson for spelling reformers," **SS4 November 1997**, Item 6.

Stark, David, "2 — The Principle of Minimal Interference," *JSSS* **J11, 1989/2**, Item 10:
   "It may be an emotional response for someone to dismiss a new spelling as 'peculiar' or 'ridiculous' merely by looking at it. However, it will be easier to make them look a second time, and convince them that the new spellings are merely a more rational advance on the old ones, if the link with traditional orthography is clear."

Upward, Christopher, Editorial, *JSSS* **J7, 1988/1**, Item 1 [Leapfrogging Webster]

— Editorial, *JSSS* **J11, 1989/2**, Item 1 [Exploiting Alternative Spellings].

12. Common Arguments For and Against Reform.

Some of the main arguments against reform, as well as answers to them, are available on a website maintained by Justin Rye: This material was adapted for the *JSSS*:

Rye, Justin B, "Spelling Reform — arguments against and for," *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 8.

Some good countering arguments — especially disabusing the idea that English spellings always reflect their histories — are given in this reprint of an earlier SSS publication:

"SSS Pamflet Nr. 3 'Dhe Etimolojikal Arguement' bie William Archer," *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 2.

Also notable for reasons for/against:

Anderson, George, "VIPs also can be poor spellers," *Simpl Speling* **SS6, July 1998**, Item 3.

Hutchins, Jean, "Wy dyslexics need simplifyd speling," *JSSS* **J10, 1989/1**, Item 3.

Moseley, David V, "Spelling Difficulties Limit Written Expression," *JSSS* **J13, 1992/2**, Item 9.

"Most illiterate English children would succeed in other languages," *Simpl Speling* **SS12, July 2000**, Item 7 [Report of Ken Spencer's speech to the Annual General Meeting].

"Spelling change myths," *simpl speling* **SS14 March 2001**, Item 2.

Thorstad, Gwenllian, "Literacy Skills of English and italian Children," *JSSS* **J13, 1992/2**, Item 10.

Upward, Christopher, "German & English Spelling Difficulty Compared," *JSSS* **J13, 1992/2**, Item 11.

Further: The submissions that have been made to literacy policy makers, noted earlier in this bibliografy, are good sources for reasons favoring reform. Two in particular that give many reasons are in *JSSS* **J14, 1993/1**, Item 2, and *JSSS* **J27, 2000/1**, Item 11.

13. Other Topics: The General Nature of English Spelling, Its Problems, and Possible Solutions

A bibliografy accompanied a 1992 SSS Submission to the (British) National Curriculum Council:
   JSSS **J14, 1993/1**, Item 2.

9. Recogniez whut is "guud enuf" and run with it!
A Comparison of Glossic and Romic solutions
Dr. Ed Rondthaler says, "Quit fooling around ...

It wuud be a big step forward if thoez of us hoo beleev in reform began rieting in the guud sensibl 'ae ee ie oe ue' was propoezd bi respected skolars in 1910 — with the fue mienor chaenjes offerd in 1955+.

> But the reel reezon that isn't dun is that evrybody waunts to hav a fingger in the pi. That's whi speling reform is not liekly to get enywhair.
>
> We need sumbody big enuf to sae "Qit fooling around! Recogniez whut is guud enuf and run with it."

I'v tried to do that and hav bin rieting that wae, much of the tiem, for yeers — and I'l keep on doing it becauz it werks for evry werd in English and luuks enuf liek our speling so that noebody has ever complaend or had trubl reeding whut I riet. I shuud probably point out that I hav no authorship of this ae ee ie oe ue speling. I was introdoost to it by John Downing, Godfrey Dewey, James Pitman and Ben Woodall — graet men not with us enymor...

See Ed Rondthaler's book, *Dictionary of Simplified American Spelling,* 1988.

Henry Sweet described the problem this way:
> The great difficulty of arriving at any agreement is the multiplicity of possible systems. Any system, however clumsy and arbitrary, which clears away only a portion of the irregularities of the existing spelling, is an improvement on it. Any one, for instance, if he likes, can drop the silent w in such words as write, and make night into nite, thus getting rid of a large number of irregularities at one stroke. In fact, given a hundred human beings of average intellect who can read and write, it would be perfectly easy to turn out a hundred different systems of spelling, all of them more or less an improvement on the existing one.

It is not so much a question of wanting *"to get one's finger in the pie"* as with having different opinions as to how much irregularity to remove. All reformers want to remove some of the irregularity in written English. If all the irregularity was removed, over 50% of the words in the dictionary would have to be respelled. Masha Bell recommends the following reforms:
- standardize the double consonant rule
- standardize the spelling of /i:/, e.g. [ee]
- standardize the spelling of consonants and short vowels

This would include removing all non-functional silent letters. *ate eel ite ote ewe* spellings would not be changed because the "magic e" has a function. The proposal is essentially Cut Spelling with double consonants to mark short stressed vowels and a few more substitutions such as [eel for /i:/.

Implementing these three reforms might not be "good enough" for Dr. Rondthaler because long vowel spelling is not standardized, but the elimination of these irregularities would certainly simplify spelling. These limited reforms would fail to eliminate all "code overlaps": It would still be possible to read or decode some spellings two or more ways.

If we just look at the different systems on the Spelling Reform Ring, we see three different types of proposals — all of them "good enuff" to solve 70% of the problems with English.
Ways of representing the long vowels:

- *Digraphic New Spelling systems [ae, ee, ie, oe, ue] or [ay, ee, ie/y, oe, yoo, oo]*
- *Unigraphic Augmented alphabets [A E I O Y U, à, è, ì, ò, iù , ù, or E I al O jU u]*
- *Digraphic IPA based systems [ei, i:, ai, ou, ju, u:] [ei, ie, ai, ow, yu, uu]*

We can simplify this somewhat by referring to the first option as **Glossic** — based on familiar shifted sound-symbol correspondences and the third as **Romic** — based on the Roman or Latin sound-symbol correspondences.

PG Code pronunciation guide
One should probably distinguish spelling reformers from alphabet reformers such as Franklin, Twain, and Shaw. Alphabet reformers want to standardize the phonemic spelling code found in dictionaries. This code could support the teaching of an i.t.a. or a parallel writing system. It might compete with the traditional multi-coded notation but would not try to change it. Alphabet reformers want to teach sound spelling so this code becomes available to all. However, the choice of using it for communication is a personal choice.

The parallel system of Global English in PG Code would live side by side with traditional hard to learn English orthography. It would provide English speakers with a complete alphabet and a way of talking about sounds. With a complete alphabet, all traditional spellings could be pronounced as spelled, clearly revealing that what is being spelled is a historical dialect not something we use today.

Pronunciation guide spelling has fewer compromises than Rondthaler and Lias's American Spelling [aka ALC SoundSpelling]. The **PG Code** would be available to those learning English as a second language and probably suit them fine. Many would never have to complete the transition to traditionally written English since documents written in the PG code could be understood by all..

The new **PG Code** would resemble IPA but use the traditional ME devices rather than new letter shapes for distinguishing long and short vowels. However, a couple of Icelandic letters might be added to the PG code later to eliminate some of the digraphs. For instance, a grave accent could be added to indicate "half" vowels or unstressed mid lax vowels: àgo sofà thè hèr bìrd revòlušòn.

"Enuff" is enough. support Spelling Reform

A Saxon-Spanglish Transcription
Recognaiz wat iz gud enuff and runn with it.
Saxon-Spanglish is another contender for the role of a "good enuff" writing system for English. It has an equally illustrious history. There is an 85% agreement with ALC SoundSpel but there are two major differences: The Romic solution [1] has fewer exception rules and [2] is based on the Middle English [and Germanic] conventions and Continental grapheme/phoneme conventions.

It wud bi a big step forward if thowz av uss hu believ in reform began raiting in the gud sennsibl 'ei, ie, ai, ow, uu' wey propowzd bai respeckted skolerz in 1890: Henry Sweet, Daniel Jones, and Mont Follick.

The riel riezan that iznt dunn iz thaet evvrybody wants to hav a fingger in the pai. Thaet is hwai spelling reform iz not laikly to get enywerr. Wi need sambody big enuff to say: "Kwit fuuling aroundl Recognaiz wat iz gud enuff and runn with it."

Aiv traid to du thaet and hav bin raiting thaet way, mach av the taim for yirz — and ail kiep on duing it becoz it werks for evvry ward in English and luks enuff laik our spelling so thaet noboddy haz

evver had trubbl rieding wat ai rait. Ai shud probbably point out that ai hav no awthership av this spelling. Ai waz introduust to it by rieding Sweet, Jones, and Follick. Greit men hu ear not with uss ennymor.

There are currently no "sight" words in Romic solutions because this represents a major compromise with 'one symbols per sound' However, [I] for [ai] could be added. As an i.t.a., it would be added after the basic symbol sound correspondences had been learned.

The differences between this Romic solution and the Glossic solution in the first paragraph are easy to spot: [1] one way of spelling the unstressed mid lax vowel in ago, [two exceptions: before r and after th, tha is spelled the]. [2] fewer compromises with the phonemic principle and the base alphabet. [3] consistent use'of the Middle English convention of double consonants to mark short stressed vowels. [ALC has hurry, carry, and ferry] [4] IPA/continental long vowel conventions.

All combined, these features would benefit ESL students who represent a majority of the population now studying English. The long vowel conventions are not quite as easy for TO adepts as ALC.

Mostly due to the ten exception rules, this particular Romic solution is not quite as easy to learn as Unifon — a one and only one symbol per sound or 100% phonemic system. However, SS is more systematic than ALC making it easier to spell without consulting a dictionary. It should be emphasized, however, that all alternative writing systems will require dictionary standardization or a base pronunciation. SS is basically midland NBC-English with a BBC-English [o] before a single consonant. Terminal [o's] are closer to Spanish. [bello not bellow, bellou, or bell@u., belo not bilou]

Summary
There may be hundreds of ways to regularize English but to date there have been only two basic types of proposals for visualizing the long vowels: **glossic** — systems that try to standardize the shifted symbol-sound relationships and **romic** — systems that try to return to the Latin symbol-sound relationships. There is about a 15% difference in the two conventions. Without exception rules and "sight words" both types of proposals would respell over 50% of the words in the dictionary and distort 1,000's of "eye rhymes."

Glossic respellings may distort familiar shifted shapes a little less. In the process, glossic would probably distort familiar international word pronunciations a little more. Romic solutions would be the better alternative if the main beneficiaries of the reform were those learning English as a second language.

Both approaches could provide pretty good pronunciation guide codes. Glossic advocates tend to stress compromise and the retention of word shape recognition. Romic advocates tend to sidestep the issue of an easy transition for those adept in the traditional orthography and advocate a parallel highly phonemic code.

Rondthaler expresses the impatience of many spelling reformers when he says "quit fooling around" pick a "pretty good" spelling system — a compromise between [1] spellings that are easily recognized by those versed in traditional spelling and [2] spellings that provide a more reliable guide to pronunciation — & go with it.

> Dutch children watch English television and listen to English pop music. By the age of 12 they can speak quite fluent English. When they must start learning English at school, they encounter English spelling. A common gripe is, "you must learn English twice, once spoken and again later written." — Benjamin Rossen

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

10. English Spelling and Comparative Literacy
Valerie Yule, Ph.D

Does the English writing system handicap learners more than more transparent writing systems?

English spelling is so preposterously unsystematic that some sort of reform is undoubtedly necessary in the interest of the whole world. J.R. Firth [1937, p. 48]

Does the nature of English spelling handicap lerners of literacy more than other writing systems trouble their novices? The obvious answer to me, from observation and experience, is yes.

However, no evidence will convince those who do not wish to believe that English spelling, or television violence, or cigarettes are harmful. The factors are always multiple and complex, and it is hard to get an objective measure of direct relationships. Do nine-year-olds answer multiple-choice questions about a text better if their native language has a regular or irregular spelling? Findings may not be answering the most important questions.

Christopher Upward (1995) has reviewed significant reserch that attempted to compare reading and spelling achievements with different writing systems, including English spelling. He points out the problems of large-scale comparisons, when direct matching on all relevant points is practicaly imposibl and certainly not afordable.

Here I would like to briefly add to his revew, and emphasise some important points about the reserch and its aplication. Recent corroboration in findings of recent cross-lingual reserch by **Philip Seymour** and others has been receiving media publicity, which these erly studies described here have not. This is an encouraging development, for open discussion of the demonstrated problems set by English spelling, to lead into the next step — what can be done about it.

Previous reserch and experiment up to 1991 were revewed in the writer's doctoral thesis (**Yule 1991**, especially pp 23–28 and 140–168) and details need not be repeated here. Again, as Upward also reported, small studies add up to convincing evidence, while large-scale attempts at comparisons come up with blurred generalisations.

Experiments over the last 150 years have showed that English-speaking children could lern to read more easily in reformed spellings than in TO (traditional orthografy). These include the successful SSS experiments with Nue Spellings in 16 schools in the 1920s (see, for example, **Pitman & St. John 1969**) , the large-scale Initial Teaching Alphabet project (see for example, **Thackray 1980**, **Mazurkiewicz, 1967, 1975**) and the equally large-scale but barely reported *Writing to Read* program of J. H. Martin (see for example, **Murphy, 1984**, and small-circulation reports such as the Fort Worth, Texas, project report of 1986, that found that his initial lerning spelling was the more successful feature of the program rather than the IBM electronic paraphernalia that supported it.

All these experimental programs found that children were initiated into independent reading more quickly with improved spellings than with traditional English orthography, but since most books and their world outside the classroom were still entirely TO, the initial advantage became harder to sustain, except for Martin's scheme, which involved imediate transition to the spelling that was all around
.
In international comparative reserch until recently, large-scale comparisons of the value of different writing systems have been unavoidably fudged by the complexities of differential ability, motivation and opportunity. These studies include **Gray's** UNESCO survey of the teaching of reading and writing in 1956, and the intensive studies of **Stevenson** et al on the achievements and reading disabilities of Chinese, Japanese and English children (1982, 1984, 1985).

However, when on the spot, it is easy to see and to demonstrate in comparisons of small groups and individuals that lerners do better with a consistent rather than an inconsistent writing system — see, e.g. **Fishman (1968**: 750–1) on bilingual children, **Cossu et al's 1988** comparison of Sardinian and American children taught by similar teaching methods, **Oney & Goldman's** findings (1984) on comprehension and decoding skills of Turkish and American children, and observations of Niugini students who find Tok Pisin easier than English, and of Australian aboriginals who could write in Pitjitjitjinjara within six months, while English-speaking aboriginals tend to have dificulty lerning to read in English.

Some important points need to be made clear. Anybody can lern anything, however dificult, if they have the ability, motivation and opportunity. Motivation is, of the three, probably the most important. For example, **Makita**'s claim (1968) that Japanese have 99% literacy is probably only a mild exaggeration; even tho the Japanese writing system seems one of the strangest in the world, with its mixture of five very different scripts and three principles for them, its general lack of relationship to the spoken language, and often problematic comunication of precise meaning. Singapore students lern to read in English with equally strong motivation and disciplin, also in the expectation that education will bring them rewards. Finnish educational enthusiasm helps to put Finnish children at the top of the league, despite the problems set them by very long words with some difficult foneme discriminations.

On the other hand, Indonesia and Brazil, with simple and consistent alfabetic writing systems, have had stagnating literacy rates (**Hull, 1981**, **Carraher 1987**) through disillusioned expectations about education and often poor drill-style teaching.

Australian adults with reading problems are hampered by attitudes of rejection about literacy and discouragement about their own abilities, so that government literacy campains, spending up to $54 milion in one year in a country of 18 million people, have put most emphasis in trying to persuade these diffidents that it would be to their advantage to be able to read instructions and write letters — not even touching on the value and delights of this door to education in its fuller sense.

• The people to focus on, who would most benefit from an improved writing system, are those who lack advantages of ability, motivation and opportunity, rather than those who will lern regardless. Our next-door private school confidently expects that all its five-year-olds will be successful in their phonics program, and be reading independently in present English spelling by the end of their first year; twenty kilometres away, many children leave after their last year unable to read or barely able. (The succeeders might indeed be better and faster readers still with a reformed spelling, but that is yet to be proven. But I have tested remedial readers with improved spellings and a high proportion respond well.)

• Lerning to read well must always require some personal effort by the lerner. Even lerning to speak, which comes naturally, requires years of sustained effort by young children. Just watch them.   For less advantaged lerners, the fewer tacks on the track the better.

• With a simple writing system, every motivated child and adult could teach themselves to read at home, using video/CD interactive with animated computer-graphics and little or no other help. For the first time we have tecnology that can link the spoken and written language directly and continuously for instruction. When this innovation is taken seriously, it will be regarded as one of the most far-reaching inventions of the 20th century. Chris Jolly's phonics video series (Jolly Learning Ltd) and some other video series with handbooks take young children through the lerning process. The fully developd technique when used with improved English spelling would require only a two-hour video plus practice with reading books. **(Yule, 1995**.)

• The direction for reserch. An obvious place to look for definitive confirmation or rejection of whether English spelling is a handicap or not is the USA. One of the reasons for the support for the English Language Amendment to protect the English language has been the perceived threat from

below, as Chicano immigrants from south of the border find it easier to be literat in Spanish than in English, even when they are bilingual, now that they are losing their earlier feelings that they must assimilate to English-language demands to avoid remaining an exploited minority. (See **Porter, 1990**)   However, reserch evidence on comparisons of Spanish and English lerners in America was extremely difficult to find during my pre-1991 investigation, although clues were there, e.g. **Carroll & Chall,1975**, **Christian, 1982**, and **Goyen's 1989** studies of Spanish schooling..

The International Reading Association is strong, and has its base in America. Here is an area of reserch for its members which should be receiving urgent attention. The *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* should surely be looking out for it.
.
In the meantime, we could be moving on to practical mass testing of modified English spellings through such simple and flexible means as subtitling on television and film.

References

Carraher, T. (1987) Illiteracy in a literate society: Understanding reading failure in Brazil. In D. Wagner, (Ed.) *The future of literacy in a changing world.* Oxford: Pergamon.

Carroll, J. B. and Chall, J. S. (1975) *Toward a literate society.* NY: McGraw-Hill.

Christian, C. (1982) Reading in Spanish as a mode of language maintenance.   In J. Fishman & G. D. Keller (Eds.) *Bilingual education for Hispanic students in the United States.* New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Cossu, G., Shankweiler, D., Liberman, I., Tola, G., & Katz, L. (1988) Awareness of phonological segmentation and reading ability in Italian children. *Applied Psycholinguistics 9* :1–16.

Fishman, Joshua. (Ed.) (1968) *Readings in the sociology of language.* The Hague: Mouton.

Goyen, Judith. (1989) Reading methods in Spain: the effect of a regular orthography. *Reading Teacher. 42.* 6: 370–3.

Gray, W. S. (1956) *The teaching of reading and writing. an international survey.* Paris: UNESCO.

Hull, T. H. (1981) *Buta Huruf Baru The new illiteracy in Indonesia.* Unpublished paper. Australian National University.

Makita, K. (1968) The rarity of reading disability in Japanese children. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 38:* 599–614.

Mazurkiewicz, A. J. (1967) Fourth year results of study with i.t.a. *Spelling Progress Bulletin.* **Winter 1967**: item 2.

Mazurkiewicz, A. J. (1975) Comparative attitudes and achievements of the 1963 i.t.a. and TO-taught students in the Tenth and Eleventh Grades. *Reading World .14:* 425–51.

Murphy, R. T. (1984) (Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ) Personal communication.

Oney, B. & Goldman, S. (1984) Decoding and comprehension skills in Turkish and English: effects of regularity of grapheme-phoneme correspondence. *Journal of Educational Psychology 76:* 557–568.

Pitman, Sir James and St.John, John. (1969) *Alphabets and Reading.* London: Pitman.

Porter, Rosalie. (1990) *Forked Tongue — the Politics of Bilingual Education,* NY: Basic Books.

Seymour, Philip H.K.. (2001) *How do children learn to read? Is English more difficult than other languages?* presented at the British Festival of Science, Glasgow, Sep

Stevenson, H. W., Stigler, J. W., Lucker, G. W., Lee, S-Y, Hsu, Ch-Ch & Kitamara, S. (1982) Reading disabilities: the case of Chinese, Japanese and English. *Child Development. 53:* 1164–1181.

Stevenson, H. W. (1984) Orthography and reading disabilities. *Journal of Reading Disabilities 17 :* 296–301.

Thackray, D. V. (1980) *Readiness to read with i.t.a. and t.o.* London: Chapman.

Upward, C. (1995) Orthography vs. Litracy: Findings of th IEA. *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society.* **1995/2: J19**, Item 3.

Yule, V. (1991) *Orthography and Reading: Spelling and Society.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Monash University.

Yule, V. (1995) 'Teach yourself to read at home by video,' problems and promises. *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society.* **1995/1. J18, Item 4**

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

11. English Spelling for International Comunication
Valerie Yule

The greatest barrier to the wider spread of English lies in its spelling — R.E. Zachrisson . Discussion Group:

Abstract.
As a lingua franca for international comunication the English language has great advantages, but the difficulties of its spelling system bode poorly for its future. Improving English spelling requires consideration of its international aspects, for readability, learning, relationship to the spoken language, and writing. These include the issues of compatibility with present spelling and relationship to spellings in other roman-alphabet languages. English is a living language, and trends in spelling change to be investigated appear in pijins, 'European English', and the writing systems of other languages, as well as in text messages, Internet and emails, and commercial comunications. Of five concurrent ways towards spelling improvement, the most urgent is action research, primarily in cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics, to meet the needs and abilities of users and learners of English internationally. Reserch is essential to ensure the two basic requirements for an international English spelling — that it becomes more consistent, predictable and streamlined, and provides a more useful key to learning the spoken language and vice versa, rather than the present need to lern almost two English languages.

'I am talking in English because it is the modern Latin.'
Pope John Paul II reported in the Sunday Telegraph, 1 December,1985.

Non-native speakers of English far outnumber native speakers

Native speakers of English 500 million
Non native speakers of English estimated at over 600 million.

---

1 International ownership of English.
The English language now belongs to the world, not just to England and its former colonies. This is belatedly becoming recognised **[2]**. The most important reason for improving the efficiency of English spelling, is that it is one of the basic tools in modern global comunication along with satellites, radio telecomunication, teleprinting, and the other vast and continual advances in spreading the written word. International rights to a more user-frendly English writing system are now more important than the plesure of parochialists in the quaintnesses of antiquarian remnants better kept to the historical sections of dictionaries. Yet altho almost every other major language in the world has improved its writing system to a greater or less degree in modern times, English spelling technology still retains the unnecessarily irregular and unpredictable forms of 250 years ago. Is it uniquely unchangeable among alfabetic writing systems? All assumptions about the impossibility of remedying English spelling need to be critically questioned. Today apathy and incompetence, more than spirited devotion to antiquity, allow the disadvantages of English spelling to continue.

Native speakers of English (around 500 million) are now far outnumbered by the other users of English in the world. English is next to Mandarin (around 850 million speakers) in the number of native speakers, not including those in Africa who speak English as a parallel language, but over

one billion people use our language with some understanding, and possibly another billion can manage some sort of conversation in it. Their needs have a right to be met. What are these needs? How can they be met?

2. The Advantages of English.

English became the 'modern Latin', the lingua franca of the world, for historical reasons, mainly the British Empire, not because it was the 'best'. It is now has the advantages of being the language of the dominant global culture, and still predominates in the comunication of diplomacy, tourism, science, business, tecnology, the Internet, air and maritime messages. Its heritage of print is a heritage for civilisation. It also has the advantages for international use of a simple grammar and a rich vocabulary that has been absorbed a from almost every other language, and that pervades every other living language. Its richness of idiom and metaphor are a problem for foreign learners, but because it already exists and dominates the market, it is far more feasible at present to remedy its defects than to introduce a completely new international language, however theoretically ideal, such as Esperanto. It would be marvellous if the world could have one simple lingua franca held in common, and there may come a breakthru to a new writing system that can cross languages, like Chinese but not as difficult. But the advantages of new languages invented for this purpose fall down before the greatest advantage of English — that it is already there.

<div style="border:1px solid">English spelling hampers comunication and education in all countries.</div>

3. The international disadvantages of English spelling. Why seek to improve it?

The greatest disadvantage of English for international users is the inefficiency of its writing system, and although insufficiently acknowledged, it is this which threatens its continuing global dominance. English spelling hampers comunication and education in all countries, including multilingual developing nations, no less than in its homelands, which continue to have massive literacy problems despite massive budgets for teaching and remediation. Recent publicised research (eg **Seymour, 2001**) confirms long-held observations. After World War II, many multilingual developing countries, especially in Africa, tried to use the English language as a unifier and for education, as a supralingual medium with ready-made printed materials and the advantages of joining in the rest of the world — but had to drop out because their teachers could not cope with both the written and spoken versions, and the pupils coped even less. It would be more in the interests of progress in a country such as Papua Niugini, if standard English were the lingua franca for the tribes with their hundreds of different languages because of its international, educational and completely supra-tribal value (**Yule, 1987**). English is also more economical and precise — for example, a bilingual public notice in a newspaper took 48 words in English to say what took 83 words in Tok Pisin. Pijin required nearly twice the words. English spelling is a major though unrecognised reason why Papua Niugini did not continue with English as its lingua franca after independence from Australia, but developed Tok Pisin and Motu pijins instead, which have simple spellings for their English-origin vocabulary that are much easier to read, lern and write — for example, PROVINSAL SEKETERI, KOMYUNITI PROJEK, NESENEL BROTKASTING KOMISI, AUSTRALIAN ASOSIET PRES. Indeed, if written English could be given an introductory spelling in Niugini publications, adapting Tok Pisin conventions, then nationals might more easily to learn both written and spoken English.

The barrier of English spelling is also one factor why Hindi became the prime Indian language on independence despite protests by non-Hindi regions, and why Indians still resist the use of the roman alphabet as a second script for their many native languages, which would give them a united form of visual representations. They assume that the roman alphabet would involve a spelling as difficult as English **[3]**.

While universal broadcast media and culture are spreading a homogenised American-English oral language around the world, 'many Englishes' are also developing, in large part because present spelling is inadequate to hold the spoken language to a broad global standard. These 'New Englishes' are made matters of local pride, and fascinate linguists, but they can set problems for future global comunication. Linguists are also intrigued at how within the European Union, there is developing for spoken contact between non-English nationals a sort of EuroEnglish, sometimes described as Desperanto, with a simpler grammar and vocabulary. English spelling is an insufficient guide for them to learn to speak easily together in standard English. 'Euro-English' has some notable similarities with other English pijins and creoles, in its methods of simplification. Scholars such as Jennifer Jenkins, Barbara Seidlhofer and Juliane House **[4]** write about the threats to the pre-eminence of standard English, and the greater user-frendliness of 'ELFE' (English Language for Europeans) speech between Europeans. This 'proposal may seem to be a recipe for permissiveness and a decline in standards'. But it is also 'essentially seeking to carry through the implications of the fact that English is an international language, and . . is no longer the preserve' — of the top tenth of native English-speakers who spell with ease. In my own work on education and literacy with Koreans, Indonesians, and migrants to Australia from countries round the world, I have often heard complaints, 'Let the English keep their spelling as it is, and let the rest of the world have rest-of-the-world English spelling!'

James Murdoch of the Murdoch Empire recently also warned that English may not necessarily continue to be the language of the Internet by default as Mandarin, Hindi and Spanish rapidly increase their share, and so the Murdoch comunication projects do not promote it. Results of recent research give 'a clear indication that the supremacy of English, taken for granted in much of the Anglophone world, may be as transient as British economic and political dominance of the 19th Century proved to be.   . .Wonderful as English happens to be, it is not the only possible language for a future united world:'   (**Roberts 2000**). Roberts argues for Esperanto, as others argue for other invented languages. "Being perfectly regular, people have been able to learn it in a tenth of the time needed to learn a national language.'   He may be right, although Esperanto does have its own disadvantages. But it would be possible for an English language for international use to use a completely regular grammar and abandon in-group idiom, with a basic vocabulary of 10,000 words rather than the limited 800 of 'Basic English' — and to improve its spelling.

Scientists recognize that small and apparently trivial things can have enormous effects. Those who have mastered English spelling through superior opportunities, intellect or persistence may perceive their achievement as trivial, and difficulties of spelling as unimportant, but most of the world does not share those privileged opportunities.

Bilions upon milions of dollars have been given or lent to developing countries. A more useable English spelling could be worth more than we would care to donate in money.

> Most Anglophone children take three years to reach a literacy standard
> that children in languages with relatively consistent spellings can reach in one.

---

4. Designing an international spelling.

While we await a writing system that is a perfect cross-lingual breakthru, there is an urgent need to improve what we have already, to make it as user-frendly as possible. The usual priorities of Anglophone spelling reformers have tended to be firstly, for an ideal system with perfect sound-spelling correspondence, and secondly to meet the spelling and reading needs of children in Anglo-Celtic schools. The priorities for international English comunication are in somewhat different order — firstly, readability — which includes compatibility with present spelling and its relationship to spellings in other roman-alphabet languages; easier learning; a guide for speaking and listening; and ease of writing. However, both at home and abroad, the aims are the same:

- The written language to be more consistent and predictabl.
- The written language to be more reliable as a guide to the spoken language and vice versa , so that it is not necessary to learn what are almost two English languages.

4.1 Readability.
i. Compatibility with present spelling.
Present readers still need to be able to read our existing heritage of print, and to read an improved spelling without requiring re-training, or they will reject it. It is tempting to seek a theoretically ideal English spelling system, perhaps even with an alfabet more suitable than 26 letters for over 40 English speech-sounds. However, this would mean clean-sweeping away everything already in print and setting all present users to learn again. Nor is it actualy necessary. English spelling is around 80% consistent, but the fact that around 20% is unpredictable makes the whole lot unpredictable — like having mines in a field makes the whole field dangerous. 'Cleaning up' the 20% requires the simple matter of consistent consonant representation, and the more difficult but not impossible matter of rationalising and regularising the hundreds of spelling patterns for around twenty English vowels. Overseas readers of English would find greatest benefits in a spelling that was consistent, streamlined by shedding its 5–10% of surplus letters in words, and with close visual resemblance to other languages as well as to present spelling. An aid to weaker readers and learners is to simply omit letters in words that serve no purpose to represent meaning or pronunciation, but may actually mislead. The aim is not the chaos of 'spelling as you speak' for everyone from Denver to Denpasar, but a standard, consistent, broad-band set of spelling conventions that can override dialect differences — 'Spelling Pronunciation' would also become more feasible, and aid greater uniformity and mutual comprehension across the globe.

> Spelling is a technology & technologies always need updating to improve their efficiency. *SB*

ii. Visual resemblance to vocabulary of other languages aids international comprehension of written English, especially because European languages which share its Romance and Teutonic roots have also spread across the world. English readers who do not know French, German, Italian or Spanish can still make many educated guesses in looking at texts in those languages, and this applies in reverse also. There is further enormous penetration of English and Latin vocabulary into all modern languages, [5] particularly to describe the innovations of the modern world, and this too facilitates learning other languages. International readers also benefit from cross-language spelling conventions in the roman script, such as stable consonants and Latin forms, including segments such as -ION. English spelling reform must therefore aim to improve rather than to remove those cross-language similarities in print — and this is possible.

iii. Short and simpl spellings can be decoded and then later recognised faster than elaborated spellings, — eg PROGRAM rather than PROGRAMME, ELEFANT than ELEPHANT, BURO than BUREAU. This is not at all the same as 'Shorter words mean faster reading' — the silly heading to a heavily copy-edited article that the author had entitled and written up as 'The technology of spelling'. Variety of word length in text is an aid to faster word identification for comprehension and remembering — just as variety of orthographies within written Japanese is considered to aid fast reading. Too much uniformity of appearance of almost uniformly short words was found to be one of the problems with Basic English. Clues to greater simplicity in English spelling are found in how many other languages, including pijins and creoles, re-spell their imported English vocabulary. Journals such as *English Today* monitor examples of Franglais, Russlish, Spanglish, Punglish (Punjabi), Japlish , and so on, including general mixes that Paul Jennings has labelled Minglish. Many words taken from or shared with English are now almost universal, with respellings that are usually simplifications, particularly of vowels, and that often recur in several languages. Examples are COFI, BIFSTEK, FUTBOL, ISCREM, KOMPUTA, PASPORT and KOLEJ. In an Indonesian children's picture book published in 1984, labels to pictures were up to 80% in 'Indonenglish' —

simply-spelled modern international vocabulary, such as DOKTOR, FOTO, OXSIGEN, INTERKOM, TENIS, ANTENA, the lowest proportion being 24% for a page of animals (**Yule, 1991**). The clear message from the international spellings of shared vocabulary is — simplify.

> *They spell it Vinci and pronounce it Vinchy; foreigners always spell better than they pronounce.*
> — Mark Twain An Innocent Abroad

iv. Continental usage for the five primary vowels letters a e i o u, as in PASTA, BALLET, POLICE, DEPOT, TABU, is sometimes urged for future English spelling because this pronunciation is most common in other roman-alphabet languages, and English stands alone with a e i o u pronounced as in BAT BET BIT NOT BUT.

The problem is one of consistency of the long vowels. However paradoxically, to maintain the present English usage for world use of English would be of more help to overseas learners. Switching to Continental letter-sound relationships would change the currently-similar visual appearances of an mmense vocabulary that is held in common, including technical and scientific terms, more than it would increase similarities, as well as disturbing many visual relationships between word families.   As long as spelling/sound relationships are consistent within a language, second-language learners can switch with ease to a new set of patterns easily — as Anglophone learners of say, German or Spanish, find out in half a day. It is also interesting in this respect, and in others too, to study how learners and users cope with bi-scriptal Serbo-Croatian .

v. Similar spellings for morphemes across related words are not as common in present spelling as commonly supposed, despite anecdotal evidence cited in support of the 'Chomsky theory' of 'optimum English spelling'. Nor are its probable advantages yet confirmed in research. However, an improved English spelling could certainly show word relationships and grammar more clearly and consistently, benefiting both readers and also learners of English vocabulary — eg, hypothetically — FLI/ FLIES/FLITE/FLU (fly/flies/flight/flew) or SAY/SAYS/SAYD/ DU/DUS/DUN/DID (do/does/done/did)   HI/HITE/HIER/HI-FI (High/height/higher/hi-fi)

vi. The present spelling convention that simplifies final vowels could be retained and regularised, to aid imediat word recognition and comprehension in reading text — as in PLAY, SEE, ALIBI, NO, TABU.

vii. This raises the question of diacritics. These horrify the native English-speaker, but are accepted more calmly by French, German, Spanish, Vietnamese, and others. The greatest vowel spelling problem in English is caused by the common toggling of 'short' vowels a e i o u and long vowels A E I O U, as in NATION/NATIONAL, FINAL/FINISH SUCCEED/SUCCESS GO/GONE If, when necessary, long vowels could be indicated by a simple diacritic such as a discreet grav accent, reading, lerning and spelling English could be greatly simplified. The clumsy strategies of dubld consonants and 'magic' silent 'e' would no longer be required, and dubld consonants could be reserved for clarifying stress within words when necessary, eg. UMBRELLA, COMITTY. (This paragraf would have required lerners' diacritics for nine of its 120 words — RAISE, NATIVE, SPEAK, VIETNAMESE, GREATEST, INDICATED, DISCREET, READING REQUIRED, but fewer markings for skilled readers.)

4.2 Learning the English language.
At present, teachers and students of English as a foreign language take for granted that English spelling is to be a burden on the memory rather than a rational exercise. Systematic spelling is hardly ever discussed at conferences or in textbooks. There are several reasons why Chinese and Japanese may seem to cope better with English spelling than say, Koreans, Indonesians and Vietnamese, once they have made the conceptual shift from ideografs to roman letters, but one of

the reasons must surely be their previous practice in disciplined rote learning in order to acquire their own complex written scripts.

An international English spelling for learners needs to be related fairly systematically as well as broadly to the spoken language, so one can be learnt with help from the other, despite different accents and vowel pronunciations, So it must be consistent, above everything else. Learners can cope fairly easily with around forty very common 'sight words' retained in present spelling, to maintain the present appearance of text for readers, but after that, regularity is needed. Words or word segments within words need to be fairly short and clear so that they are easily decoded. C-V-C combinations (consonants separated by vowels) are most easily decoded by foreign learners. Strings of consonants can be more difficult, not just for English speaking children but those who are not native English speakers. Cutting out all schwa vowels as 'surplus' may therefore not be desirable — but here, as in all other matters, research is required.

The principles of Italian spelling can be set out on a quarto page. The principles of English spelling, including its representation of morfemes and grammar, should few and simple enough to set out on two standard pages.

4.3 Speaking English.
 For foreigners learning to speak English and trying to use the printed word to help them, the greatest problems are firstly, the unpredictability in the variety and overlapping of vowel spelling patterns, especially with regards to the 'long' vowels, (vowels pronounced as in A E I O U), and secondly, the placement of initial stress in polysyllables when Latin prefixes are not recognised, cf acCOMmodation, DeTERgent, MELancoly, FIRMament and KILometer/KiLOMeter. The common EFL teaching practice today is to emphasise oral and conversational learning of language first, with the printed word as backup. So English spelling can come as a shock when it does not match (as in COME and DOES).

A distinction can be made between the English spellings that lead non-native speakers to confusion and incomprehensibility, and those which merely mark the speaker as an incomer with a different accent. In a pluralist multicultural society such as Australia has become, foreigners' different accents can still be understood, by and large, unless excessively thick ('Why can't these bloody Yorkshiremen learn English!") or there are major errors in stress placement and pronunciation of schwa vowels in words. Problems with some consonants hardly matter — notably /r/, /th/,/v/ and /w/. Difficulties in hearing and speaking some vowel sounds can be more serious, but others may not matter. For example, with the sentence "The people find most of the cost is always very heavy", common 'foreign' pro . . .unciations as in 'ze peppl . . . most off ze . . . iss veery' are understood, but 'finnd . . . coast . . . al- . . . heevy' would puzzle their hearers. It would be possibl to construct a scale of comprehensibility in mistaken pronunciations of English vowels in vocabulary derived from reading which could be helpful in considering spelling modification.

Research is also required to investigate how the pronunciation of English words is acquired. What can be picked up in one-trial learning? What requires more practice or even drill?

4.4 Spelling English.
At present English spelling for overseas learners is often not taught at all systematically. The 'usual spellings' for consonants and vowels may be taught somewhere around the beginning of a course, in an orderly or disorderly way, then the oddities come as special cases, dealt with only as they come up. With a systematic spelling, the writer in English could have a two-page sheet of spelling principles as a guide from the start.

5. Transition to an international spelling.

An email spoof that goes round the world simulates an European Union directiv for an anglicised eurospelling, supposedly to be imposed in five stages, ending with a triumphant

Ze drem vil finali kum tru . . . .

This joke could be re-written as four steps to improve English spelling that could actually be feasible, for investigation by research. (Yule 2000)

5.1 Reserch. This is no time to continue the 150-year-old reliance on arguing about reform, without objective investigations. Funded research is required. Every recommendation made in this article is a hypothesis that requires further investigation for confirmation or modification. (**Yule, 1986**). Psychologists have long studied English spelling and its users and learners, and worked with linguists. They have at last reached the stage of publishing research, such as Seymour's study of children in fifteen countries (Seymour 2001) that confirms the long-standing observations that English spelling is more difficult for learners than the spellings of some other European languages. Following this step, It is now time for Research & Development by cognitive psychologists into how English spelling can be made more user frendly, and for dropping the reluctance to do so. Assumptions about impossibility and undesirability have stood too long unqueried, and the field of spelling design has been left to the untested opinions of well-meaning individuals.

5.2 More user-frendly spelling can also develop in the same ways that the living language changes, informally, and thru many pathways, from the Internet and text-messajes to popular entertainment culture and advertising.

5.3 The media can be more open to discussion of the nature and means of improvements, to go further than the endless articles and arguments of the past 150 years debating the failings of the present system. It is in the interests of the press and book publishers to do so. Dictionaries can record the appearance of spelling changes in commerce, the Internet and everyday life by adding to their existing listings of alternatives spellings for English vocabulary.

5.4 However, if there is no co-ordination and research into spelling improvement, changes may just be continuing in the same way that has produced the mess that we already have — there will continue to be exceptions and unpredictabilities and too many spelling patterns, even if fewer than before. Spelling improvement needs monitoring and final decisions by an official international commission, with multilingual representation on it.

It is surely time to recognise that this man-made invention is capable of being improved. If English is to retain its value as an international language for the world, it must be possibl for its writing system to better serve the needs of all the world.

NOTES
[1] Surplus letters have ocasionaly been omitd and some consonants rationalised in this articl. It would be interesting to know how many of these changes have been noticed or overlooked.
[2] For example, John Roberts 30 Aug 2000. Warning for Anglophones. See also articles in the UK Guardian Weekly , 2000.
[3] See the Roman Lipi Parashad papers by Madhukar Gogate, who finally admitted failure of his long-running campaign to promote the roman alphabet as a secondary script for Indian languages, and found that fear of English spelling as one common reason for resistance.
[4] See articles in the UK Guardian Weekly, April 19–25, 2000, by Professor Barbara Seidlhofer of the University of Vienna, Professor Juliane House, of the University of Hamburg., and Dr Jennifer Jenkins of the London English Language Centre.

[5] For articles on the influence of the English language on Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, East and West German, Austrian German, Swiss German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Hong Kong, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Filipino, Swahili, and Yoruba Tok Pisin, see W. Viereck & W-D Bald (Eds.) English in contact with other languages. Budapest: Akademai Kiado, 1986.

References.

Roberts, John. 2000. Warning for Anglophones. Mailing list circulation, 30 Aug.

Seymour, P, 2001. Reserch reported in New Scientist , September 2001, p 8. Seymour's study investigated the literacy skills of about 600 primary school children in 15 countries, including Britain. [www.newscientist.com]

Yule, V. 1982. An international reform of English spelling and its advantages. Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses. Tenerife. 4.1982. 9–22.

— 1985. A roman script as an alternative script for Indian languages. Paper for First roman Lipi Sammelan. Bombay. Dec.

— 1986. The design of spelling to meet needs and abilities. Harvard Educational Review. 56.3.278–297.

— 1987. English spelling and Pidgin; examples of international English spelling. Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society. **1987/3.J6**, Item 13. Reprinted in English Today, 1988. 15.3.29–35.

— 1991. Indonenglish. English Today. 26.7. 42

Euro-English is the name of a new discussion group that has been formed that deals exclusively with the problem of International Spelling. The principal contributors are moderator Theo Halladay and Ken Goodwin. — Ed.

FURTHER BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Publications over the past twenty years that are directly relevant have appeared in the Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society. Relevant articles by the author include:

1982. A transitional reform for English spelling. In Proceedings of the 3rd international conference on spelling. Edinburgh. Spelling Progress Bulletin. **Winter 1982** Item 5.

1984. English as an international language, and its spelling. Language Monthly. 8. 24–25

1984. Learning English as a double language. Language Monthly. 13. 23–24

1989. Children's Dictionaries: Spelling and pronunciation. English Today. 17.1, 13–17.

1990. The design of spelling to meet abilities and needs of adult readers. In P. H. Peters (ed.) Frontiers of Style. Dictionary Research Centre. Macquarie University

1993. Improving English spelling for readers: the necessity for research. Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society. **1993/1 J14**. Item 3.

1994. Problems that face research in the design of English spelling. Visible Language. 28:1. 26–47

1995. The politics of international English spelling. In The politics of Literacy in Australia and the Asian-Pacific Region. ed. David Myers & Nicholas Walker. Northern Territory University Press. pp 41–48.

1996. Spelling needs research and research needs replication. Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society. **1996/1 J20**: Item 4.

1998. International English spelling and the Internet. Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society. **J23. 1998/1. Item 3**.

2000. Improving English Spelling. Monograph. Australian Centre for Social Innovations.

2001. Why English spelling has resisted reform since 1755. Australian Style. 9.1.4.

12. English Spelling and the Norman Conquest
Donald Scragg Review

Many of the complexities that are encountered in present-day English spelling are the result of English having a longer continuous written history than any other European language. Although the earliest examples of English are recorded in manuscripts dating from the eighth century, texts become much more numerous from the time of King Alfred. Alfred ruled England south of the Thames from 871 to 899. His successors in the tenth century, who gradually extended their rule over England were as committed to educational reform. As a consequence, from the 960s on increasing numbers of books were produced in England.

Literacy was largely a faculty enjoyed by the higher aristocracy and by members of the religious orders. Book production was a slow and expensive business. Books in the early period were made of parchment, usually the skins of sheep, which had to be prepared by cleaning, scraping and dipping, and writing was by hand. Paper production and the printing press arrived much later in the middle ages.

Nonetheless, when an elaborate school system was in place in the monasteries during the eleventh century, English book production was at a height. Many hundreds of books, most of them of considerable size, survive from this period, as well as thousands of documents, and what survives is presumably only the tip of a large iceberg. Though much of this writing was in Latin, the universal language of the church, a great deal was in English. In the tenth and eleventh centuries it may truly be said that the foundation of the English spelling system was laid.

Scholars have long been aware that by the end of the tenth century, control of the major monastic houses was maintained from Winchester, the seat of royal government. Not only were Winchester monks trained to write in a particular way but they in turn trained monks in other centres to write in the same way. In the many vernacular writings of the period, there is little reflection of the spoken dialects of different regions. Documents from as far apart as York, Canterbury and Worcester were written in the language of Winchester. England effectively had a standard uniform written language, the first European vernacular to have one. But by the twelfth century this had all gone, and it was not to re-emerge until the sixteenth century. It has often been said that the breakup of the standard language was in part if not wholly the result of the Norman Conquest. But the thesis has never been tested.

In May 2001 1 was given a grant of almost £270,000 by the Arts and Humanities Research Board of the Great Britain to undertake a three-year investigation into eleventh-century English at the Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies at the University of Manchester. We will examine the handwriting of dated documents and manuscripts, to establish a chronology of writing types. At tile same time, another group of researchers will be looking at the spelling forms in those dated documents for signs of any departures from tile accepted norms of the standard. If we can correlate changes in spelling during the eleventh century with developments in script, then we will be well on our way to understanding when, and perhaps where, the standard first began to disintegrate, and that is the first step towards understanding why it did so.

13. Illegal Alphabets and Adult Biliteracy:
Latino Migrants Crossing the Linguistic Border,

Kalmer, Thomás Mario. [2001] Lawrence Edbaum Assoc., N.J.

Judy B. Gilbert: Review and Commentary

EVRI BARI GUANTS TULEM INGLIS — spelling English with Spanish letter sound correspondences

JUDY B. GILBERT has an M.A. in linguistics from the University of California at Davis, and teaching credentials in bi-lingual education. She taught pronunciation for many years and now concentrates on teacher training. Her interests include the relationship between pronunciation and listening comprehension. She is the author of Clear Speech (1993, 2nd ad.) and co-author of Speaking Clearly (1999, British edition), CUP.

This book, which was originally a dissertation, is a provocative account of the efforts of a group of poorly educated Mexican illegal workers in the U.S. to work out a hybrid alphabet together in 1980. The purpose was not to learn to read English, but to have a written guide to help themselves learn the spoken language — an informal pronouncing dictionary. The members of the group listened repeatedly to native English speaking volunteers (with different regional accents), learned the sound of it by heart, then voted on various solutions to the problem of using Spanish letter-sound correspondences as a way to write spoken English.

In part, the system used doubled vowels to suggest length, as in **yuu** for /ju:/, and letters were assigned by following their phonological restrictions in Spanish: sometimes to suggest the stress pattern, sometimes to represent non-allowed sound placement, sometimes to use actual Spanish alphabetic-sound correspondence, as in **ll** for /zh/.

Following are a few examples:
jullulib? (Where d'you live?)   **samdel** (some day)
Evri bari guants tulem (Everybody wants to learn) **enai wan to du rait** (and I want you to do right)
nou bari (nobody) **llnou juer** (nowhere)   **ai ou yuu** (I owe you) **to loon** (the law)

This system was complicated by the fact that the workers were bilingual in Spanish and Tarascan. Kalmar says that a hybrid Tarascan /tə'raas kən / alphabet had been devised in 1939 by Swadesh, Lathrop, and Pike, as part of the Tarascan Project. (p.108) "The Tarascan Project became the showpiece of adult biliteracy campaigns ... elevated [by UNESCO, 1948] to paradigmatic status as a model for how to conduct adult biliteracy campaigns in third world countries .... The Tarascan Project established once and for all that indios — illiterate indigenous monolingual adults — **could learn to read and write both their own language and the metropolitan language in less than a month or two** — provided both languages were systematically coded in a single alphabet deliberately designed to be as hybrid as possible, on the principle of one letter, one hybrid phoneme."

Kalmar, who first heard English in Australia when he entered first grade, comments that he did not see Tarascan in written form until 1982 and this complicated his understanding of the alphabet he was reporting about. He wrote (p. 111) "Spanish is my first language, but I am more literate in English than in Spanish. I never seemed able to shake my mind sufficiently free of English literacy to hear English from the outside — the way it sounds to Spanish (let along Tarascan) ears innocent of English spelling. 1 was never able to predict which of various possible transcriptions they would choose as the best. Except for some simple monosyllables such as **frend** or **mach** [much], I was surprised by the strings of letters that the authors of [these] texts actually chose." . Nonetheless, the author, a trained linguist, then analyzed these solutions and concluded that they were systematic and practical.

COMMENT: The book provides an interesting presentation of the efforts of Mexican migrant workers to render spoken English. While I don't really see how it could help them learn to READ English, I do, indeed see how it could help them SPEAK it, by providing them a usable prompt to oral memory.

14. Letters

Letters are welcomed on any matters raised by items appearing In the JSSS, or on a spelling related discussion group, or on any observations relating to spelling that readers may wish to report.

Toward a "house style"

Steve writes, and I agree:

1 would like to see the society endorse one mild reform notation. This way we could start writing our own publications in this notation. We currently have about four candidates The forth notation has received little attention. It similar to the one that Valerie endorses. One that spells the same vowel sound up to four different ways. Laubach used such a system. We know that we can correctly write about 80% of the words in English with a little over 100 rules. If we accept 20 high frequency sight words and 40 rules we can probably correctly spell 85% of the words in three tries. One of the purposes of a new writing system is to identify the words most in need of respelling.

I rather like that idea — but I like even better the last approach that Steve suggests: ...
starting with phonetic English and deconstructing it by the addition of exception rules. What this suggests is that a person can quickly write phonetic English or by the application of the exception rules write something closer to traditional English.

Yes — I think that the public (including teachers) could and would accept this: a sort of "Quick-Start Written English" (analogous to the "quick-start" introductory pages at the beginning of computer-manuals: enough to get you started as a user, so that you can do some important things and then you can go on to learn the remainder of the material as your needs demand and as your time permits.) This sort of thing seems (to me) easier to sell (to a dubious and tradition-minded public) than anything which looks to them like simply changing/getting rid of the familiar ABC or the familiar (if stupid) ways in which we have come to use it. People would accept it, (particularly teachers), 1 think, because we could portray this system as a firm, orderly "bridge" for sure progress over difficulties (People fear a "new spelling" in large part because they imagine this must mean chaos. So show how it means ordered progress.) How I would like to see all this portrayed to the public and especially to teachers/ administrators:

BRIDGES INTO LITERACY.

Where **bridges** stands for "Beginners' Road Into Directly Grasping English Spelling")

Beginning on a Step by step, Mastering the spellings of sure, solid foundation — rule by rule....

Have a drawing of a bridge, with happy people crossing/standing on it, and words floating in the air above the various parts of the bridge — phonemically spelled words on the left, conventionally spelled words on the right, and various intermediate versions in between./ 1 do not think that a reform system that respells over 15% of the words in the language can be effectively sold to the public. The precise threshold probably needs to be investigated.

We could (and should) investigate this by posting a web-page survey: [see freespel.com] NOT (for this purpose) a word-by-word checklist such as RITE's, but a one-question survey that presents the matter as a little "story problem" or hypothetical experiment ... try something like this: All of the notations mentioned can be read almost as fast as the traditional notation. I would tend to endorse the notation which was the easiest to teach.

Kate Gladstone, Albany, N. Y.

What words should be respelled if 10% were the maximum?

I fiend it hard to beleev that English can be simplified without respelling mor than 40% of the words in the dictionary no matter what system wun chooses.

From your poynt of vew, is "come" a candidate for respeling? How wuhd you spel "borough"? "ignition"? Pete B.

SB: 100% Phonemic English would require 60% of the words to be respelled. Most phonemic systems respell more. Just check out **www.m-w.com** and you will have most of my preferred spellings.

Come = kəm = cam 1 cumm
borough = 'bərO = burro
borrow = borrO / baaro = bärO = baaro/borro
ignition = ig'niSən = ignishan

None of these words require respelling in order to be pronounced alphabetically and understood. Since "come" rhymes with "Roma", they could use some simplification: e.g., Com, boro.

Phonemic spelling [cam burro — in Spanglish] might obscure the traditional "eye rhyme"

What can we do to make written English more accessible?

At his inauguration on May 20th Xanana Gusmao, the new president of East Timor, historically a Portuguese colony and now a poverty-stricken island in the South Pacific, said in perfect English: "Today with humility — and before the international community — we take upon ourselves the obligations toward our people. We wanted to be ourselves, we wanted to take pride in being ourselves — a people and a nation. Today, with your assistance, we are effectively what we have striven to be." Imagine what it must have taken for an East Timorean to speak English with no significant accent. We can be arrogant about it and say, "Of course he wants to speak English." Or we could be humble. We could consider the healing power of a common language — a lingua franca — in a dangerously divided world. We might even ask ourselves what we could do to make our written language more readily acquired by the billions who long for the opportunities in store for those who read, write, and speak English.

— *Ed Rondthaler*

15. SIX Axioms on English Spelling in 3 transcriptions

The Six Axioms were first published by the Simplified Spelling Society in 1908 or shortly after. They are transcribed here in

a. Saxon Spanglish,
b. Unifon,
c. Johnson's archaic notation.

A dozen other phonemic notations could have been used (e.g., RITE, New Spelling, ALC Soundspel, Truespel, etc.).

a. Spanglish is very similar to Middle English in [1] its alphabet of ushifted symbol sound correspondences and [2] its marking of short stressed vowels. Digraphs (double letter symbols) indicate stress in multisyllable words.

b. Unifon was an entrant in the Shaw alphabet competition which was disqualified because Malone ignored the requirement that no Roman letter should be used.

Unlike Cut Spelling, Spanglish is an alphabet reform and a pronunciation guide spelling. It is a parallel script that can be used as an i.t.a. and to show how words should be spelled. New spellings only used when the traditionally spelled word cannot be pronounced alphabetically and understood: through = thru, thorough=thero/ thoro, although=altho.

1a. The letterz av the allfabet wer dezaind to repprisent spiech soundz; thaet iz the allfabetic prinncipl. Six rules for Saxon notation: a=ə, erz=arz= ərz, all='ael=*Al*, ol=*all*, the=dha or dhi=ð, eir/err=air

1b. Dc letcrz cv Dc alfcbet wcr dizInd to reprisent spEC saundz; that iz Dc alfabetik prinsipcl.

1c. The letters of the alphabet were designed to represent speech sounds; that is the alphabetic principle.

2a. The alfabettic principl meiks littracy iezy, alauing the rieder tu pranauns werds fram their spelling, and the raiter to spell them fram their soundz.

2b. Dc alfcbet ik prinsipcl mAks litcrasy Ezy, clqiN Dc rEdcr to prcnqns werdz frem ther speliN, and Dc rItcr to spel Dem frem ther sqndz.

2c. The alphabetic principle makes literacy easy, allowing the reader to pronounce words from their spelling, and the writer to spell them from their sounds.

3a. Az pronuncieishan cheinjez thru the eijez, the allfabetic prinncipl tendz to bi corrupted; the spelling av werds then nieds to bi adappted to show the nu saundz.

3b. Az prcnxnsEAScn CAnjcz Tru Dc Ajcz, Dc alfabetik prinsipcl tendz to bE korxptcd; Dc speliN cv wcrdz Den nEdz to bE cdaptcd to shO Dc nu saundz.

3c. As pronunciation changes through the ages, the alphabetic principle tends to be corrupted; the spelling of words then needs to be adapted to show the new sounds.

4a. Unnlaik ather languajez, English hazz not sisstematticly moddernaizd its spelling owver the paest 1,000 yirz, and tudey it oanly happhazzardly observz the alfabettic prinncipl.

4b. cnllk xDcr laNwcjcz, EngliS haz nqt sistematikcly modcrnIzd its speliN Ovcr Dc past 1,000 yirz, and tudA it Only haphazcrdli observz Dc alfabetik prinsipcl.

4c. Unlike other languages, English has not systematically modernized its spelling over the past 1,000 years, and today it only haphazardly observes the alphabetic principle.

5a. Negleckt av the allfabetic prinncipl nau meiks littracy unnessaserly difficult in English thruout the werdd, and lurrning, edjukeishan and comiunikeishan ol suffer

5c. Neglect of the alphabetic principle now makes literacy unnecessarily difficult in English throughout the world, and learning, education and communication all suffer.

6a. Prociedyerz aar needed to mannaj impruuvments to English spelling az a werld comyunikeishan sisstam.

6b. prcsEdYrz or nEdcd to mancj imprUvments tU EngliS speliN az a world kcmUnikAScn sistcm.

6c. Procedures are needed to manage improvements to English spelling as a world communication system.