# Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society J31, 2002/2.

## Editor: Steve Bett.

**Contents.**

*[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society J31 2002/2 pp1,2 in the printed version]*
[Steve Bett: see **Journals**, **Newsletters**]

# 1. Editorial

### What is wrong with a logographic writing system?

*'English orthography turns out to be rather close to an optimal system for spelling English' Chomsky, 1968, 1970*

Several scholars have argued that the English writing system is close to ideal and that there is nothing wrong with a logographic writing system — or as they refer to it — a historical-morpho-lexical writing system. [Stubbs, 1980; "Taylor, 2(X)0; Davidson, 1989; Chomsky, 1968; Chomsky, 1970 See **References**]

I have said that there is nothing wrong with a logographic writing system such as Chinese or the 60% logographic system such as the English writing system, other than being difficult to master, expensive to support, and probably too difficult for about 30% of the population.

*Most Anglophone children take three years to reach a literacy standard that children in languages with relatively consistent spellings can reach in one.* P. Seymour, 2001.

I also think that requiring non-native speakers to learn a new Britannic shifted vowel alphabet, which only works 40% of the time, will limit the level of mastery and the spread of English as a world language. Many non-native speakers of English who have picked up enough words to carry on a conversation will not take the time to learn traditional English spelling [tradspel]. See Gogate's article on Globish or Global English, Item 4.

Apologists for retaining tradspel, including many advocates of explicit phonics, suggest that with better teaching, all of the alleged difficulties involved in learning a partially logographic system would vanish.

California WL [whole language] teachers routinely accept a 25%, failure rate [Boden, 2002]. Phonics teachers often claim that they can get the failures below 10%. Some say below 1%. If they are right, then there might not be much point in regularizing English since 10% is the typical failure rate reported in Italian and Spanish elementary schools. There are cases where no child was left behind in an individual classroom. There is no evidence that this success can be generalized to the nation at large.

Most spelling reformers would be happy with a writing system as consistent as Spanish or Italian and do not think that the impact on teaching success would be much different than found in these countries. My expectation is that 2 years of schooling could be saved and that the percentage of those who fail to achieve full literacy could be reduced from around 30% to around 10%.

Dr. Richard Venezky [author of *The American Way of Spelling*] and other scholars scoff at such expectations. "The claims that we lose one to two years of education because of spelling irregularities or that international business is hampered by the same cause are quite hollow and are rarely bolstered by any empirical evidence." [Savant, p. 88] [see Campbell's references in **JSSS30** Item 6, for the evidence].

My only doubts are with respect to the level of phonemicy that is required to make the writing system significantly easier for those who struggle to achieve more than a 4th grade reading level. Is it enough to move from 40% to 75%? Or do we have to match the phonemic regularity of the Spanish and Italian writing systems to reap the benefits?

## Types of Writing Systems:
While actual writing systems tend to be mixes [see Shaeffer's article, Item 17], there are 3 basic types:

**1. Ideographic or Logographic.** The marks represent an idea or whole word. A symbol stands for a particular lexical unit [e.g. a morpheme]. It does not represent the phonetic shape of the morpheme.

The best known system of this kind is Chinese where a character may correspond to widely different pronunciations but will always have the same meaning.

English uses some logograms such as the number system. "4" means the same in English, Spanish, and French, but it will not be pronounced the same. [mobile phone] Texting may use

"4sale" but this use of 4 as a phonogram would be pronounced "kwaa-tro saal-ley" in Spanish. *Quatro sale*

The abbreviation "i.e." [id est] will be understood across different languages but will not be pronounced the same. To the extent that the symbol has a shared meaning without a shared pronunciation, it is logographic.

**2. Syllabic.** In a syllabic writing system, there is a definite relationship between symbol and sound that is lacking in logographic systems. Japanese has a partly syllabic writing system. Hotsuma, an ancient Japanese writing system, is classified as alphabetic but it has the look of a syllabary. A single block can contain a vowel and several consonants. "about" would use two letter spaces instead of five: e.g. [a][bout] Korean has a similar structure and may share a common Indian origin.

**3. Alphabetic.** In a pure alphabetic system, each letter would correspond to one and only one sound. As explained in Ralph Emerson's article [p. 4], writing systems may start out as alphabetic or phonemic but they never stay that way. The pronunciation of words will change over time. The only way to preserve the alphabet is to periodically respell the deviant words. This is the way that Spanish and Italian have retained a high level of phonemicy and an alphabetic regularity of over 85%.

While words have been respelled in English, this has not been done systematically. The result is a writing system that is arguably only 40% alphabetic today. While the new conventions added after 1066 by Norman scribes did not help, most of the damage was due to the failure to respell words affected by *the great vowel shift* in the 15th Century.

> Letters, the most useful invention that ever blessed mankind, lose a part of their value by no longer being representative of the sounds originally annexed to them. The effect is to destroy the benefits of the alphabet.
> — Noah Webster

D.S. Taylor [a scholar from the University of Leeds, UK] argues that spelling reformers are wrong in trying to restore the alphabet and regularize spelling. Many languages (French, Hebrew, Greek, etc.] have some words that are spelled historically rather than as currently pronounced. [Barr, 1976, 81]. The list includes languages said to have highly phonemic writing system such as German and Arabic. [Cf. Shaeffer, Item 17]

Taylor says that there is no reason for the writing system to reflect speech. There is no reason why one independent symbol system should be judged by the standards of the other.

Taylor says, "Since an alphabetic writing system can only reflect a particular dialect, the first question that would arise is *whose speech*?" Taylor then digresses into listing the problems of phonetic spelling which he claims would have to be revised every two or three years.

Nobody recommends phonetic spelling for a writing system. What is needed is a broad phonemic or diaphonic writing system based on broadcast English.

Such a system would have to be revised at the same rate as the pronunciation guide in the dictionary: about every ten or twenty years. This does not affect that many words since we are

talking about broad approximations. The shift would have to be a major one to warrant a change in the pronunciation guide spelling.

Taylor observes, words are not always pronounced the same way in different contexts within the same dialect. The word <and> for instance, has 11 pronunciations.

This too is a kind of a pseudo problem. What we spell in a reform spelling, is either an over-pronounced segmented word [citation spelling] or an abbreviation. "And" has three spellings: *and, ənd*, or *n*. Most reform writing systems keep the traditional spelling of this word. Spanglish uses /ənd/ which is spelled <and>. Shavian uses <n>.

Taylor wants to preserve the morphemic regularity of written English. Valerie Yule agrees and incorporates many morphemic regularities in her reformed writing systems. Joe Little 2001 showed that ALC SoundSpel has more morphemic regularity than tradspel.

The Saxon Alphabet reform preserves many morphemes because the conditions of respelling are so high. If the tradspel word can be understood as written, it is not respelled. *photograph and *photography are not changed in a Saxon reform. However, the Saxon Spanglish pronunciation guide spelling is foatagraef and fotaagrafy corresponding to IPA: /ˈfoutəgræf/  /fəˈtaːgrəfi /

**Conclusion:** So what is wrong with the traditional 60% logographic spelling? Nothing as long as you are willing to waste time and money on teaching it and can accept a high percentage of failures. A majority of the 70% who learn to read and write cannot spell with confidence because they have yet to over-learn the spelling of the whole words.

Taylor argues that a historical-morpholexical writing system is just as easy to learn as an alphabetic one. Phonics advocates claim that everyone would learn to read and write if their methods were widely adopted. There is no hard evidence to support either of these claims.

Spelling reformers may exaggerate the benefits of removing half of the irregularity in English. The writing system may need to be as regular as Spanish before the advantages of consistent spelling begin to show up. However, the results of cross cultural studies of orthographic regularity [e.g., Seymour, P. *New Scientist*, 2001, p.18f and Margaret Harris & Giyoo Hatano (1999) Learning to Read and Write: A Cross Linguistic Approach, Cambridge University Press] seem to support the reformers position more than the position of the apologists for historical spelling.  —Steve Bett

**References:**
Chomsky, Carol. 1970. 'Reading, Writing, and Phonology.' Reprinted from the **Harvard Educational Review** 40:2. In Smith, Frank, ed., 1973. Psycholinguistics and Reading. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc.
Chomsky, Noam & Morris Halle. 1968. **The Sound Pattern of English**. New York: Harper & Row.
Davidson, Keith. 1999. Breaking the Spell. **English Today**, Vol. 15, No. 3, July, Cambridge University Press.
Stubbs, Michael. 1980. Language and Literacy: **The sociolinguistics of reading & writing**, Ch. 3, 'Some principles of English spelling.' London: Routledge.
Venezky, Richard. Quoted in Savant, M.V. 2001. **The Art of Spelling**. p. 88f. Similar statements are made in Venezky's **The American Way of Spelling**. 2000

# 2. English and Its Literemes

## Ralph Emerson

An Update of the Author's 28 page article in *American Speech*

**Abstract:**
This paper summarizes the major points of the author's 1997 article "English Spelling and Its Relation to Sound" in *American Speech* 72, pp. 260–88. Surface orthography is shown to represent underlying units called 'literemes', which have a flexible relationship to dialect.

## 1. Introduction:

My interest in English spelling came about because of my interest in English dialects. It surprised me that we have many dialects in English that all use very different sounds, and yet we have a single system of spelling, which, whatever its failings, is clever enough so that every English speaker who uses it believes that it reflects his own dialect. When any of us reads a word like rain, our mind's ear hears it spoken in our own voice and accent. And this applies to every written word: each of us fondly imagines that its spelling represents our own pronunciation of it, our own private English. That may be one reason why most people hate the idea of making any changes in spelling: it would seem like an assault on a personal possession.

## 2. Your accent or mine?

In the same way, it can seem like a personal assault if we hear someone speaking in an accent we don't like. That experience is mythologized in *My Fair Lady,* in which Eliza Doolittle wins hearts and achieves success by losing her supposedly offensive Cockney accent. After years of saying "the rine in spine" (as the script has it), she finally learns to say "the rain in Spain," and the play ends happily. That episode seems very simple, but if we look at it more closely, it reveals many things about letters, speech, and the nature of the connection between them.

If we assume, as I said, that conventional spelling represents our own pronunciation of the language, then for most Anglophones, the spelling of *rain* represents the phones [*rein*] Eliza's Cockney pronunciation [rain] is so far from that that it sounds like a whole different word, which most of us would spell the same way the script does — *rine*, like *brine*. Note that Eliza herself wouldn't write it that way: to her, the pronunciation [rain] just means *rain*; only non-Cockneys would represent it as *rine*. A spelling like *rine* thus uses the letters as impromptu phonetic symbols. It's 'Symbolesque'. And like many Symbolesque spellings, it makes sense only to readers with the same accent as the writer, so I'd mark it with an * for 'accent-specific': "The @*rine* in @*spine*."

Conventional spelling is the opposite of accent-specific. Snobs may think conventional spelling really represents only "good" accents, and that *rain* is thus "really" [rein], but they're wrong. Conventional spelling (†) belongs equally to everybody. Whatever your pronunciation of the word *rain* is, †rain represents it. Accent-specific spellings are keyed to only one set of sounds in one particular situation, but conventional spelling is phonetically amorphous:

@*rine*  Cockney [rain] for -*rain* heard by standard speaker
†rain standard [rein], Cockney [rain], Scotch [re:n], etc.

Of course, the sound-value of conventional spelling is not entirely amorphous. We can pin it down in several ways with rhymes, for example. As we've seen, rhymes may mislead across dialects: if you're Cockney, your *rain* will rhyme with my *brine.* But that would never happen within our respective dialects. For each of us separately, *rain* would only rhyme with words like these:
*gain, main, vain...*
*rein, vein...*
*cane, mane, sane...*

Because everybody agrees that all these words rhyme, something obviously unifies them all. Yet the unifier can't be a sound, because the specific pronunciation of the rhyme isn't stable; and it can't be a spelling either, because the same rhyme is spelled in three different ways. So what I proposed in my article was an imaginary unifier, one that could be viewed in two ways, either as an abstract letter ('litereme') or as an abstract sound ('graphophoneme'). Written in literemes, *rain* is <<rAn>>; in graphophonemes it's //ren//. The litereme symbols are based on spelling, and the graphophonemes on phonetic symbols. They are two ways of portraying the same abstract entity, different but perfectly equivalent.

Literemes "embody the systemic intent of the letters as they are used in the spelling of a particular language" (284). In *rain* and its rhymes, the "intent" of the vowel spelling is traditionally summed up as 'long a', so I write the litereme as <<A>>, or more conveniently, 'A' (using caps instead of the earlier article's macrons). Each litereme is paired with a single graphophoneme, an equivalent phonic symbol "distilled from the [litereme'sl sturdiest phonemic realizations in a sampling of dialects" (265). Long *a*'s characteristic sound can be "distilled" into //e// (as I wrote it before, thinking of cardinal [e]). Poised between messy clusters of real spellings and real sounds, the two mediating abstractions of litereme and graphophoneme unify everything one-to-one:

graphemes: <-ain, -ein, -ane>
LITEREME <<A>> = //e// GRAPHOPHONEME
[ei, ai, e:] phones

Now, if we follow up the implications of that scheme, the first thing we see is that "conventional spelling ... represents ... literemic structure" (281). The literemes are a house; spellings are the coats of paint on it. *Rain's* rhyme '-An' can be painted *-ain,* or *-ane,* or prettied up as in *deign* or *Wayne,* but it's still the same house. (Just as the rhyme can be pronounced in any dialect, and it's still the same house.) Literemes are the real deal in simplified spelling — the true orthographic essence of our current conventional spelling.

## 3. Symbolesque versus literemic
In light of that, let's re-examine *rain, rine,* and *brine.* The conventional spellings †*rain* and †*brine* are costumes for the literemic forms 'rAn' and 'brIn', but the Symbolesque @*rine* is nothing but one man's attempt to represent the specific phones [rain]. Do you see how qualitatively different they are? @*Rine* is an ad hoc, spur-of-the-moment attempt to stop sound in its tracks: I hear a Cockney say the sounds [rain] and I write them down as *rine* according to my personal understanding of how the letters work. Somebody else with a standard accent like mine would see my *rine* and be able to reproduce the sounds I was trying to show — "Oh, that's [rain]." And if they knew the context, they'd be able to add, "Yeah, that's how Cockneys say †*rain.* Ha, ha." That's what's happening in *My Fair Lady.*

But spelling doesn't come with labels like @*rine.* If I write out *rine* on a slip of paper and show it to other standard accent speakers, they'll pronounce it with exactly the sounds I intended, because their understanding of spelling happens to be the same as mine; but if I show the slip of paper to an American Southerner, she'll pronounce *rine* as [ra:n], and if I show it to a Cockney like the unreformed Eliza, she'll say [roin]. This is "the great paradox of alphabetic writing: users set it down believing it to be concrete, but as soon as their backs are turned it melts into abstractness. Alphabetic writing always begins by representing specific sounds and always ends by representing pools of sounds" (282).

@*Rine* for [rain] is an example of orthography in all its intended purity, letters directly representing sounds. But the purity comes at a price: it's only applicable to me the writer and those who talk just like me. Of course, those are the conditions under which alphabetic writing began. Over twenty-five centuries ago in ancient Greece, tiny communities of people who all spoke alike began transcribing the sounds of their own speech into letters they had learned from Phoenician traders. The Greeks called the country of their benefactors Ip$^h$oi'nikeI, for example, and to write it they spelled out each sound as PH-O-I-N-I-K-Ē. When the Romans borrowed the name a few centuries afterwards, they kept the Greek pronunciation but wrote it PHOENICE in their own alphabet.

Two thousand years later, most of Europe still spells that name virtually the same way — *Phoenicia, Phénicie, Phönizien* — but the modem pronunciations all sound more like the Spanish version *Fenicia* than the ancient [p$^h$oi'nike]. For sounds always change: the Greek phi for aspirated *p* has blended into Latin litereme 'f'; the letter *c* has taken on some of the work of Latin 's', and so on. In those little Greek towns where everyone spoke alike, the first spellings all had the purity and immediacy of @*rine* for [rain]; but the further afield the spellings went, the vaguer their relation to the original sounds became. "All orthographies begin as Symbolesque, but once a representation becomes conventional, it becomes literemic and loses touch with the actual sounds it was intended to record" (282).

Yet whatever conventional spellings lose in purity, they gain in reach and power. If you pronounce the Symbolesque @*rine* in a Mississippi accent as [ra:n], it loses its whole point. But if you pronounce a conventional spelling like †*brine* as [bra:n], you don't hurt it a bit, because its real identity is no longer in its sounds but in the literemes 'brIn' — and those can be pronounced in any accent without losing their integrity. Symbolesque spelling is phonetic; conventional spelling is literemic.

What's the cut-off between the two? I guess a spelling becomes conventional when everybody agrees that it's conventional — maybe when it makes it into the dictionary. Greek and Latin spellings have been conventional for millennia now, and other English spellings have mostly been conventionalized since the mid-1600s. Yet new conventional spellings arise from Symbolesque origins all the time. Many of them begin just like @*rine*, as ad hoc spellings for dialect versions of existing words. For instance, so many early Americans used the vowel [ai] in the words †*roil* and †hoist that they gained by-forms spelled @*rile*, *heist*. When mainstream English adopted those as synonyms for 'provoke' and 'hold-up', they gradually achieved conventional status: @*rile* slowly became trite, a new word beside the older †*roil*. While that process took years, other Symbolesque spellings are instantly deputized as conventional when new words are invented out of thin air, like *dweeb*, or when foreign loanwords are spelled out English style, like *savvy* for Spanish *sabe.*

## 4. Literemes and their spellings

How does a literemic critique shed light on present-day English? I think it illuminates three things: first, that our spelling represents its own structure inefficiently; second, why that structure coordinates imperfectly with the individual structures of modern dialects; and finally, why the English use of the alphabet is out of kilter with the rest of the world's.

The crux of English spelling is the contrast between the long and short vowels, between *rain* and *ran*, 'rAn' and 'ran'. The ten literemes involved — five long and five short — account for the intent of at least 90% of the vowel spellings we see in any sample of text. Only four other vowel literemes are native to English: 'oi, oo, ou' as in *boy, toot, count*, and 'au', which is spelled *au, aw*, or *a*(l), as in *taut, taught, law, all, talk*. There are no literemic schwas, since spellings per se make no distinction between stressed and unstressed vowels.

The main weakness of English spelling — an astounding weakness — is that it is literally not equipped to mark that crucial difference between long and short. Conventional spelling does not mark its long vowels with Unifon caps (*rAn*), or New Spelling's *e*-digraphs (*raen*), or Valerie Yule's elegant grave accents (*ràm*). It has no consistent method at all, just a jumble of silent *e*'s (*cane*), dubious digraphs (*rain, rein*), and positional uses of the single vowels (contempor<a>neous).

As my earlier article explained, the English long/short contrast is ultimately rooted in orthographic syllables. English long vowels naturally occur in 'open' syllables — those in which the vowel itself is the last letter (*go, be, hi*). By contrast, short vowels are always glued to a following consonant, which creates a 'closed' syllable (*got, bet, hit*). Simple closed-vowel spellings like *ran* can only represent 'ran', not 'rAn'. That's why long-voweled closed-syllable words like *rain* and *cane* need their digraphs and silent *e's*.

In words of more than one syllable, the simple open/closed contrast is at work as surely as it is in *go* and *got.* Thus *go* makes *going,* with the syllables divided *go.ing*. One vowel coming right after another is a sure sign that the first vowel is long: *go.ing, sto.ic, ide.a.* By contrast, the sure sign of a short vowel is a double consonant like *-nd-* in *ten.der, thun.der* One consonant repeated serves the same purpose, like *-tt-* in *gotten.* Either way, the preceding vowel is marked as short: *gott.en, syll.able, ban.ner.* If a double consonant in the middle of a word marks a short vowel, then presumably a single consonant marks a long vowel? Sometimes: *o.ver, vi.tal, na.tive.* But just as often it does not, for the double-consonant rule is not consistently applied, and probably half of all short vowels precede a single consonant. Thus we have short *sev.en* beside long *e.ven, vivid* beside *vi.tal*, the verb *pol.ish* beside the adjective *Po.lish*. Although the intended vowel length becomes clear when we put in the little dots ("after the fact," as people have commented), the bare spellings themselves cannot tell us whether a vowel is long or short. Long vowels in polysyllables literally have no marker of their own. It's as astounding as the Titanic going to sea without enough lifeboats: as crucial as the difference is between its long and short vowels, English spelling is simply not equipped to mark it.

Obviously, the situation is not hopeless. Good guidelines exist for guessing whether a vowel is likely to be long or short in a particular position within a word of a particular etymology or morphemic structure. My earlier article explicitly laid many of those guidelines out. Most of them are simple enough for literate people to internalize unconsciously; and the degree to which they are internalized successfully is shown by the otherwise inexplicable fact that the whole English vocabulary, allowing for dialectal differences, has an almost entirely stable and agreed-upon pronunciation. If the spelling-sound relationship were truly chaotic or truly impenetrable,

pronunciation would be a free-for-all. Still, simply because something is getting done does not mean that it is being done well. If English cannot clearly mark the vital contrast between long and short vowel literemes, then it's doing a bad job of representing its own internal structure.

As I said, spellings can be thought of as paint on the literemes' timbers. An efficient paint job clarifies the structure underneath, and English has a mere whimsical patchwork instead. The literemes 'A + n' can claim half a dozen spellings: *cane*, rain, Wayne, deign, Maine, campaign. Or a single spelling like *g* can claim several literemes: sometimes it represents 'g' *(go, big),* sometimes it's 'j' *(gem, huge),* and sometimes it stands for nothing at all *(campaign, gnat).* A handful of English spellings like *who* are outright lies in that regard ('wh + O' for 'hoo' ). The literemes are fine: 'rAn, gO, big, jem, hUj, not, hoo'. What gives English orthography such a bad name is that the literemes are so poorly expressed by the surface spellings. A more efficient orthography would at least make the literemes' identity clear in each word a really ruthless one would spell them alike in every situation.

I keep claiming "Spelling represents literemes, spelling represents literemes," and you might justly ask, "If spelling is so vague, then how do we know what the literemes are?" By listening. In English we have to listen as well as look to know what the spellings mean. I know that *heaven* is 'heven' and *reason* is 'rEzon' because I know how they're pronounced; then I filter the pronunciations back through the spellings to find the "intent'" of the spelling in each case. Specifically, the pronunciations tell me the value of the mutable *ea* in each word's stressed syllable, and the spellings tell me the literemes behind the schwas in the unstressed syllables: short 'o' in *reason* and short 'e' in *heaven.*

A word can have several literemic interpretations over time and space, and sometimes we need to hear a word said aloud just to see which interpretation a particular speaker intends. We interpret †*reason* today as 'rEzon', but to Shakespeare it was 'rAzon', an irresistible pun for *raisin* 'rAzin' (*Henry IV, Part I*). Speakers today may choose between 'E' and 'I' in †*either* The literemes of †*close* depend on whether it is interpreted as a verb or an adjective, 'klOz' or 'klOs'. The varying literemes in each word depend on the innate instability of one segment in the spelling: the letter *s* may be hard or soft; and vowel digraphs like *ea* and *ei* rotate among literemes like cats among armchairs.

Dialectal context is vital too. I need to know who's speaking before I can say what literemes they're invoking. If I'm sure I'm listening to a Cockney, I'll know that [rain] is 'rAn' *rain;* if I'm listening to a standard accent, then it's the river 'rIn' *Rhine.* English has a lot of cross-dialectal homophones, and they're fun to find: the way the British say *paired* sounds like the American pronunciation of *pad; last* sounds like *lost; cart* like *cot.* Of course, real confusion seldom occurs because words like those are never uttered in isolation, only in contexts that make their identities clear. But the vagueness is there just the same. It is the price we pay for subsuming all our dialects into a single mass called English and daring to give it all a single collective spelling.

## 5. A pan-dialectal solution

That is not the only way to handle the problem. Generally, when languages grow large and split up into dialects, each dialect gets its own spelling. The overwhelming example in the West is how Latin split up into the different Romance languages. As the local street Latins of Italy, Spain, and France gradually transformed into separate regional dialects, the pronunciations changed too, and with them the spellings. When the Roman colonists of Spain and Italy began to soften the sound of †*lacus* 'lake' into ['lago], they started writing it that way too, at first merely as a Symbolesque

spelling, "our pronunciation" @*lago,* and then later, when the dialects had matured into national tongues, as the legitimate conventional form: "our word" †*lago.* In France, the same process produced †*lac.*

Comparably huge changes have happened in English dialects, but the English way of handling them has been to let people say *lago* or *lac* as long as they kept writing †*lacus*. The way we write English today represents a somewhat older form of our language — with respect to the spellings themselves, the English of the Middle Ages; with respect to the literemes, perhaps the English of the early 1700s. That was the last time that the phonemes of most dialects still had a consistent one-to-one relationship with the literemic/graphophonemic segments.

Modern dialects mostly represent branchings from 1700-style English, separate developments from it. Pronunciation differences in 1700 tended to follow literemic differences. Modern pronunciations tend to confound such differences, with different dialects confounding them in different ways. The words *cot, caught,* and *court,* for example, are all literemically distinct, 'kot, kaut, kOrt', and accordingly, they had three separate pronunciations in 1700. They still do along America's Atlantic coast, but in the rest of America today, two of those words have merged phonemically: *caught = cot* /ka:t/. A different two have merged in Britain and Australia: *caught = court* /ko:t/.

It's only the phonemes, however, that have changed in each case. The spellings and literemes remain as distinct as ever. If the spellings were changed to accommodate one of the newer dialects, it would confuse the issue for speakers of the others. The existing conventional spelling, while it does not precisely match anyone's specific phonemes today, does serve as a reference form that everyone can use in his or her own way. Each dialect simply has its own (relatively predictable) ways of interpreting the literemes, and different dialects co-exist on those terms.

My earlier article described the most important litereme-to-phoneme interpretations in modern dialects — especially those involving *r*'s and the vowels before them, which is where the most changes have taken place in the last few centuries (271–73). Most dialects in 1700 still had a post-vocalic *r,* and the presence of an *r* didn't affect the sound of a vowel much. That's exactly what we'd expect from looking at spellings like *pain* and *pair.* Again, let me stress that our spellings, literemes, and graphophonemes in 2002 are still exactly what they were in 1700:

*p + ai + n*   'pAn'   //pen//
*p + ai + r*   'pAr'   //per//

But three centuries ago, the actual pronunciations typically matched the graphophonemes segment for segment, /pe:n, pe:r/. In a handful of modern accents, like those of Scotland and parts of the Caribbean, pronunciations still do match that closely; but in all other places they have shifted a great deal. Most importantly, vowels before historical *r* have usually laxed to the point where they no longer match the values of comparably spelled vowels in other positions, and most British accents have furthermore dispensed with the *r*'s themselves, so our two words now sound much less alike than they once did:

|  | 1700 | Today |
|---|---|---|
| //pen// | /pe:n/ | /pein/ |
| //per// | /pe:r/ | /pɛr/ in US |
|  |  | /pe ə/ in UK |

The spellings *pain* and *pair* are the only obvious point of resemblance left. "The simple universal phonology of written English gives birth to the infinite particularities of spoken English" (267).

## 6. Latin again

When Spanish and French rewrote their local versions of Latin *lacus* as *lago* and *lac,* they changed the spelling to accommodate new pronunciations, but they weren't changing the values of the letters themselves. An ancient Roman girl seeing *lago* or *lac* would say them just like a modern Spaniard or Frenchwoman: ['lago, lak]. She would also say the Japanese loanword *sake* 'wine' correctly, ['sake]; but she would miss on English *lake* [leik]. English speakers somehow manage both:

*Sake* 'wine'   /'sa:kei/
*lake*          /leik/

Doing so involves real doublethink. Besides the long and short values of the five vowel letters, modern English speakers who pronounce a loanword or foreign name are contending with a third set of literemes that reflect the vowels' original Roman values //a, e, i, o, u//. Those remain the usual values in every language except English. Printed in outline below, they relate to the native English literemes like this:

My earlier article called these respective values 'Euroesque' and 'Britannic' (282–83: Euroesque //a/ lacks a consistent equivalent). As much the *a* and *e* in the Euroesque *sake* 'wine' look like the *a* and *e* in *lake,* they are really another order of being altogether. Comparing the top and bottom rows of the table above, we see that *sake's a* will be Continental, while its *e* will sound like English 'A':

As I have been suggesting all along, spellings are never concrete — they are always subject to competing analogies of interpretation. In dialect writing like @*rine* for †*train,* the competing analogies involve different accents; in loanwords, the competition is between homegrown analogies and international ones. Euroesque words in English are a large class that's daily getting larger, and we encounter them so often now that our doublethink about them has become almost automatic. The names *Tina, Rita,* and *China* all seem perfectly at home in English, for example, yet of the three, the only Britannic one — the only one pronounced according to a truly "English" analogy — is *China.* That's because it has been in English much longer than the others. New words and names coming into English from elsewhere, like *sake* wine and *Rwanda,* automatically join the Euroesque club. It's not the spellings per se that make them Euroesque, only the interpretations. *Sake* interpreted as Britannic is the /seik/ in *for heaven's sake.*

The Britannic words in English are the old ones, the AngloSaxon, Latin, and medieval French words that were already in the boat when the Great Vowel Shift came along, twisting our vowel graphophonemes so hard that they snapped and cut us loose from the rest of the world's spelling. Will we go back'? Are the legions of Euroesque spellings we see around us today in our readings and travels the emissaries sent to encourage us to return? If we go, there's much we'd have to leave behind. A Euroesquely spelled English would remain literemic, because all orthographies are, but its relation to the English we have now would be more like the relation of French or Italian to Latin — not the same, only a descendant, the genes diluted and updated for a new age.

# 3. The Simplification and Rationalization
# of the notation of sounds

## George Bernard Shaw — correspondence with I.J. Pitman, Feb. 1910

to be spoken [or imagined in silent reading], vocabulary, and grammar.
Includes both literacy and oracy so that English may be understood in both forms by all

*In 1910, when this was written, Shaw thought he had been successful in silencing the anti-phonetic apologists. Unfortunately, the anti-phonemic argument is alive and well today. It takes a different form within the society where many reformers are opposed to schemes that would be too difficult to sell. Shaw presents his arguments here against mini-reforms. A more detailed development of these ideas can be found in a 20 page preface to a 1941 book, The <u>Miraculous Birth</u> of <u>Language.</u>*

*There have been about five windows of opportunity in the past. Reformers simply arrived with too little too late. The footholds were lost because they were unable to get to the next plateau. In the early 1900's it was possible to call the newsletter of the SSA, the <u>Spelling Progress Bulletin</u>. At that time, a majority of language teachers and their professional societies thought there could be progress. An article in a popular magazine predicted a reformed spelling of American English by 1950. Today, most scholars have bought into the arguments of Bradley, Chomsky, and Venezky. They claim that progress is impossible and that reform provides no assured benefits.*

*Shaw criticizes linguists for lacking a debating instinct. **twdA, ther iz Evan a grAtar re'luktans for pro'feSanal liNgwists tw en'gAJ in publik de'bAt.** Shaw thought that a phonemic spelling of English would be mistaken for illiterate misspelling. It does not seem likely with the above EngliS transcription. Even if the caps were replaced with diacritics, the unigraphic spelling would still be odd and not likely to be confused with traditional English.*
*—SB*

It is hard to say that there is a psychological moment for reforming spelling, or the calendar, or for adding those two digits to our numbers which would combine the advantages of the decimal and duodecimal methods of computation. It may be, however, that we have at last succeeded in making the anti-phonetic stupidity unfashionable. But I confess I am not very sanguine about it. The only people who have got any money in the business are those silly Simplified Spelling Americans who have provided my friend William Archer with an office and a secretaryship in London. As far as I know, they are doing what in them lies to make the reform thoroughly unpopular and ridiculous.

I have been for a long time convinced that the two most important points to get into people's heads are, first, that unless the phonetic spelling is carried out with sufficient boldness and thoroughness to make it quite unlike ordinary spelling and so avoid that ludicrous effect of being simply illiterate misspelling which was so comic in the works of Artemus Ward, the reform will die of ridicule, and, second, *that if we do not spell words as they are pronounced, our readers* will *pronounce words as they are spelt, so that in the end we shall have a change in the English spoken language which is in no way desirable.* On this second point in particular I should always blame the phoneticians for a

lack of debating instinct which has prevented them from carrying the war into the enemy's country. The modern pronunciation of such words as 'oblige' proves that in the long run scholarly pronunciation cannot stand out against spelling.

This has been especially forced on my attention by my intercourse, in Labor and Socialist movements, with working men who read a great deal, but have no opportunity in their own class of hearing the words they read actually spoken. They therefore have to resort to *such pronunciation as the spelling may suggest to them:* for instance, semi-conscious becomes see-my-conscious. If this only led to their being laughed at, it would be painful and unjust; but it would not hurt the language. Unfortunately, it becomes accepted as *the standard pronunciation with quite appalling rapidity,* because if you and I persist in the Orthodox pronunciation, we are simply not understood, just as if you tell a London cabman to drive to Arundel street, he does not understand you; whereas if you tell him to drive to Rundle Street, he understands you at once. Perhaps he may be right I really do not know what the proper pronunciation of Arundel is; but the illustration is none the worse.

An insistence on these points has been practically my only contribution to the movement. I do not know whether I was the first to urge them; but certainly in the old days of Alexander J. Ellis and James Lecky, none of the men on our side made any use of then).

The man of that time I had most hopes for was Henry Sweet; but Sweet's utter want of any sort of social tact — sometimes even of common humanity — seems to make him hopeless except as a writer of books which are only read by specialists. At the time when Imperialism was booming, I induced the editor of one of the leading reviews to invite Sweet to write an article on the importance of phonetics as a means of not only making the English language easy to learn, but also of preventing it from finally splitting up into dialects which would make American and Australian and South African and Eurasian practically foreign languages. Sweet jumped at the opportunity to make a terrific attack on an Oxford professor whom he regarded as an imposter from the phonetic point of view, on the University for giving the professor the appointment, and on the Universe generally for tolerating the University. The editor of course refused to print the article (which would probably have involved him in a libel action) and if Sweet ever writes another magazine article, he will probably devote it to a similar denunciation of that editor of that magazine, and by extension, of the entire press of the world. I then tried to get a sort of Chair of Languages established at the London School of Economics; and if Sweet had been socially capable of following this up, and had been willing to shift his quarters to London, I believe I might have pulled it off. But Sweet has now got the Oxford habit of life in his antagonistic way just as hopelessly as any Don has got it in the conformist way; so nothing came of it.

What we want now is a phonetic institute of some kind or another, either independent, or as a branch of some of our great educational institutions. I believe the British Museum has already taken steps to procure and store for future reference phonographic records of contemporary speech. As a definite project, it might strike the imagination of the country a little, I should suggest that a fluid should be collected for the purpose of printing a *phonetic Shakespear* It so happens that at this moment we have one actor, Forbes Robertson, who, being Scotch by extraction, speaks a dignified, handsome, and what I should call correct English, and not the dialect of the motor car and the week-end hotel. [3] If we could get some good gramophone records of speeches from Robertson's Shakespearian parts, and agree upon a method of recording his pronunciation in ordinary type, so as to make the book available for the use of actors and the public generally, we

could employ some young man — say one of Sweet's pupils — to prepare a complete Shakespear. This, of course, would be a considerable job; but it has the advantage that if it were found too large an undertaking, it could be cut down to a selected number of plays, or even to one play: say Hamlet. I have sometimes thought of getting a gramophone record made of Robertson's delivery of the Sphinx speech in my own Caesar and Cleopatra and proceeding as above to issue a phonetic edition of the play as a sort of document in the history of the language. But I had only time to imagine these things; when it comes to action, I find myself always with two years arrears of pressing literary work on my hands and so nothing gets done. I daresay you are pretty much in the same predicament yourself. Until by some means, we can get a little group of trained phoneticians who will put all their time into the work for a modest salary, nothing but talk will come of it.

I need hardly say that it would be very delightful to make gramophone records of some of your poems, as spoken by yourself. The advantage of this sort of thing is that it gets rid of the entirely impossible and insoluble question as to whether your pronunciation is ideally correct, which is the rock that splits all the phonetic enterprises. If we could leave in the British Museum — failing a public institution specialized for phonetics — a record of your pronunciation, with a simple statement of your birthplace, and education, and class, and, if necessary, a string of testimonials from your contemporaries to say that your speech was that customary among educated Englishmen of your time, with any criticisms they like to add, as, for instance, that you pronounce such and such words like a Kentish man, or that you had an Oxford drawl, or had inherited some locution from an Irish grandmother, or anything else that might strike them, the phoneticians of the 25th century would at any rate have something to go on that we have not got with regard to Shakespear or Chaucer. In the same way, all question as to whether Robertson's pronunciation is correct could be set aside: the record would go down as Robertson's pronunciation for what it is worth, with of course the information that Robertson was accepted as the finest speaker on the British stage. If we had such a record of Garrick's pronunciation we should never dream of questioning its value simply because no twenty scholars of Garrick's time could have been induced to agree that his pronunciation was ideally correct.

I throw out these suggestions more or less at random. I do not exactly know what you propose that we should do though I am tolerably certain that 1 shall not have time to do anything of it. But if you can plan a campaign with any sort of promise in it, I am game to give it my blessing and subscribe a few pounds towards paying for the executive part of the business. —Yours faithfully, G. B. S.

[1] From the collection of Sir James Pitman. K. B. E.
[3] Shaw, in his will, chose & required, "the pronunciation of His Late Majesty, King George V;' of which there are plenty of audio-recordings.

*Reprinted by permission of the G.B. Shaw Estate and the Soc. of Authors.*

# 4. A Parallel Language for the World

## M.N. Gogate Simplified Global English

*Over half of the English speakers in the world today were not born in an English speaking country. When less than 50% of native born speakers can spell English words with confidence, it should not be surprising that those trying to learn English as a 2nd language have difficulties writing it. Gogate dreams of a parallel simplified written and spoken dialect that will be easier to learn and use. This Global English would be closer to standard English than a pidgin but would not have the irregularities found in its traditional written form.*

*Madhukar Gogage is an Indian Engineer who has worked on more than one writing reform. The following is mostly an edited transcript of one of his radio broadcasts. Its original title was The Peculiarities of English.*

Mankind uses hundreds of languages. Every language has some peculiarities. Grammar of some languages is quite complex. Some languages do not have sufficient number of words. Some languages have no script. Some languages are spoken by millions of persons. Some are spoken by just few hundred. I will describe some of the peculiarities of the English language.

Although England is the birthplace of English language, it has spread to many parts of the world. It is now used as a link language for International business and diplomacy. It is rich in all kinds of literature, including technical books and journals. It is studied as a second language by millions of people in many non-English countries. Today, over half of the speakers of English were not born in an English speaking country.

English is said to be a Germanic language because the high frequency function words are of German and Norse origin. On this backbone of several hundred Anglo Saxon words, English has absorbed thousands of words from other languages such as French, and Latin, and Greek. One can find Sanskrit words such as guru and pundit.

After the Norman French conquest in 1066, English acquired a duplicate vocabulary consisting of hundreds of French words. Although the Norman French scribes tampered with the spelling it remained highly phonemic. Words continued to be spelled as they were pronounced.

In the 15th Century there was a dramatic shift in the pronunciation of the long vowels in over half of the words in the language. Pronunciation shifts are not unusual and all languages experience them to some degree. The cumulative effect of the shift and the failure to respell the affected words was, as Webster noted, the destruction of the alphabet. These words were not respelled.

Because many of these words arrived in the 16th Century just after the alphabet had been effectively destroyed by the Great Vowel Shift, most of them were not respelled as they typically are in other languages where words are spelled as they are pronounced.

English is a mixture of several languages. It contains several hundred frequently used Anglo-Saxon words from the language spoken in ancient England. It has absorbed thousands of words from other languages such as French, Latin, German, Norse, and Greek. One can even find Sanskrit words. For example, Sanskrit words *guru* and *pundit* are used frequently in English. When words are borrowed, sometimes the original spelling is preserved but not the original pronunciation or exact meaning.

English grammar is fairly simple. Nouns in many other languages have grammatical gender and accordingly some verbs and adjectives undergo changes. The complexity is absent in English. Thus, the adjective "big" is common to all nouns such as man, woman, child, book, stone, clog, cat, river, idea, plan and so on. Moreover, this adjective applies to both singular and plural nouns. English nouns and position words are written separately, without any change in nouns. For example, note these words: in India, from India, to India. All words are separate and remain unchanged. Obviously, this is a great advantage for searching words in dictionaries. In many languages, the noun takes an oblique form to which is attached the positional word after the noun. The composite word becomes long and difficult for dictionary purposes.

Counting of large numbers is cyclic and simple in English. For example, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, etc forms a series. Next series is thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three etc. In many other languages all numbers, from one to hundred are unrelated and have to be memorized.

Another feature of English is its sense of equality. Pronouns *you*, *he she,* are applicable to all persons irrespective of their age and status. In many other languages, these pronouns take different forms, sometimes causing great inconvenience. While English may have terms like Your Majesty, Your Excellency, and His Lordship, it is basically a. democratic language. The American President is addressed as Mr. President.

We have reviewed many the good points of the English language. It's rich vocabulary, its simple grammar, its simple counting system. English has one major drawback which makes it difficult to learn and use — its irregular spelling.

English claims to be alphabetic. Historically both Old English and Middle English were alphabetic or highly phonemic but today a letter can be pronounced in a variety of different ways. The symbol [a], for example has a different pronunciation in *alone, act, art, all,* and *age.* Almost every letter in the English alphabet is silent in some word. The [b] in *debt,* for instance, is not pronounced nor is the [p] in *receipt.* The same sound is spelled [ie] in *believe* and then reversed in the word *receive.* Two different sounds in *have* and *behave* are spelled the same. The letter sequence [*ough*] is used with a variety of different pronunciations in such words as *through, enough,* and *although.* The list of absurdities goes on.

Why aren't the irregularities removed'? Why aren't words respelled to reflect current pronunciation? Highly phonemic languages often have widespread support for periodic reforms affecting about 400 words. English is so inconsistently spelled that over 50% of the words in the dictionary would have to be respelled to restore the alphabet. A reform of this magnitude seems unlikely to have much popular support among the already literate.

About 200 years ago, the first popular American dictionary was able to suggest a few hundred American spellings. Webster justified the changes on patriotic grounds and his reformed spellings were eventually accepted by the government.

By contrast, the list of reform spellings that were proposed about 100 years ago never got beyond being listed as variant spellings. Congress rescinded President Teddy Roosevelt's executive order to use 300 simplified spellings in government publications. By 1906, there was overwhelming bipartisan support for not tampering with the traditional writing system. Today, publishers in the UK and US as well as readers are locked into the overly complicated traditional spellings.

About the only people that seem dissatisfied with archaic or historical spelling are ESL students. Unlike English speaking school children, ESL students know better and resent having to deal with an illogical writing system.

Why not provide these second language learners with a simplified version of Global English that can be mastered in about one sixth the time. [1]

Global English or "Globish" would be close enough to standard English to be understood in both its written and spoken form.

This new parallel language would initially include about 2000 essential words with simplified spellings. Pronunciation will also be simplified by removing some sounds that are peculiar to English.

Globish words will always be written in small letters. Sentence breaks will be marked with triple dots. Capital letters would be reserved for proper names and to flag words that are not respelled.

Full details cannot be given in this radio talk. By way of example, the word, *busy, will* be written in Globish as [*bizi*]. *Business* would be [*biznes*].

This option deserves support of people in all countries. Let us give the legacy of an easy and logical [parallel] language to posterity.

**Note**
[1] Recent studies have shown that children can learn to read and write a highly phonemic orthography at a level achieved after six years of school in English speaking countries in one year. Since globish has a simplified pronunciation and a highly phonemic orthography, it can be mastered in about one sixth the time as the traditional English writing system.

Globish would be an understandable artificial dialect of English. Its written form would also be readable by those familiar with English. Globish combines some long and short vowels and reduces the number of pure vowels from 14 to 8. This sounds radical but Nebrija did the same in 1490 when he developed a written form of Castilian. Nebrija started with the dialect spoken by the Spanish court. He says he just "wrote it the way he spoke it" but this understates the effort he made to simplify its representation.

# 5. A Romanian Holiday in a Romanesque Notation

## zé do rock
### Many Horscars on dã Europeăni Roads

### Writing English in a Romanian Orthography

This is not the notation that Ze proposes for the Journal but it is a potentially good one for ESL students. Some of the reviewers found this story difficult to read partly because the orthography changes as the story progresses. There are some regularities as the author explains below:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| up-ago | ăp ăgo | yes | ies |
| under | ăndăr | peetsa | pita |
| chump | ciămp | eyes | cis |
| key | chi | ape | âpe, ep |
| kay | che, châ | how | hau |
| say | sec, cei | wood | wud |
| get | ghet | near | nir |
| frij | frige | | |

'A' is plein /a/ as în 'father', băt scurt. De ‚ă' is mor or les laic ă shwa, băt it can be stresd. As în italiona, ‚ce' and ‚ci' ar pronunţat ‚chay' (widaut glaid) and ‚chee'. If yu want to spel 'ke' and 'ki' yu hay to spel 'che' and 'chi'. Of cors dey dont hav 'th', naidăr în saund nor în rittăna language. 'E' is /e/, for f-sunetul (saund) dey alweys use 'f' (fenomen), 'ge' and 'gi' ar soft, if yu want /ge/ and /gi/ yu spel 'ghe' and 'ghi'. H is alweys pronunţat, ‚i' is /i/ and can also be used for /y/ (so dey wud spel ‚ies' for‚yes'). And finalul 'i' aftăr a consonantă is very weakly pronunţat, usually it just softens sunetul precedinghei consonant ă. Dublu 'ii' is lung, triplu is a bit lungăr. 'J' is as in franceza, wici meens dat dey spel 'garaj'. 'K' is used only for 'kilometru' and ădăr kilowărde. 'O' is alweys scurt, 'q'-wărde dont exista (quality = colitate, language (lingua) = limba, four (quatro) = patru), ‚r' is italian and alweys pronunţat, 'ş' is voiceless, 'ş' is 'sh', 'ţ' is 'ts' (aldo dey dont spel 'piţa' for pizza), 'u' is /u/, 'w' dăsnt exista, 'x' is /ks/ and only 'z' is used for sunetul /z/.

The complete story available on Saundspel.



a horscar foto

*This snippet from Ze's <u>story</u> is written in a pseudo Romanian script with a few Romanian endings and words thrown in. It represents how English might look if it were written in the Romanian writing system.*

Deer braziliani frendi!

Ai wud laik to tell yu ă bit ăbout Europa, for exemplu România. Because ai'm căming from there rait nau.

Mai departing point was Muenchen, in Germania. Wen yu tell peopăl that yu'r going to Romania, yu faind out that evry secănd persoană in dis căntry is ă român. Or was born there. Băt it cud also be that their anscestori wăr from there, or hăr hăsbănd, or thă dautăr.

After thă big bang in socialistii stati, ai thaut it wud obviăsly be easy to travel into dese căntries. Hau rong ai was! Ex-soviet republichele do as if they wud still liv ăndăr Stalin and evry turist wud be ă spion. Yu need thausends av papărs and invitaþii from ă nativ or ă complet pachet from ă travel agenþie, with thă whole jărny rezervat and payd, wich meens flaits, treini and hoteli. Ãdăr ex-socialisti căntris loosănd regulele a bit, băt still want ă viză, exept from EU-stati, because they dont want to hav any probleme with thă EU. Băt then they ask 10 taims mor măny from thă ădărs. This is very stupid. Doing laik that, they fraiten many turisti off. It is not that they ar swimming în măny & dont want turisti there. No, this is simplu stupiditate.

Ai as brazilian need of cors ă viză. There is ă huge craud în frănt ăf consulatul, ai need 2 ore (hours) to săbmit mai aplicaþie. Nobădy speacs germana, and dis consulat *is în Germania,* and România has milioni âv germana-speacVârs! Then ai wait wân week, go there âgain and hav to wait ănăthăr 2 ore to get mai viză.

Then ai remember that we hav to go thru Hungary. So ai go to the hungarian konzulátus. At th ă wall there is ă message: `The forms must be written clearly and not in cyrillic. Besides, the aplication is invalid.' Funny, dese europaiek.



Meibe dey went ,oderwais', not, bisaids', but who knows. Wen ai come nearer to de caunter, ai see anoder message and faind aut dat de hungarianök want 85 euro for a tranzit-vízum. In de end of de 80's ai wanted to travel dru Mongolia, but de vízum cost 60 Doicse Mark, ai refused to go. If dey dont want turistek dey shudnt get eny. Bai oat taim it was de most expensiv vízum ai had herd abaut. Nau de hungarianök want 85 EURO for a tranzit-vízum! No no, ai wont coopereit here. Dís píple ăr confusing kapitalizmus wid piratery !

Ai looc for ănăthăr way ant. Iugoslavii and croatii dont asc for ă viză from braziliani, maybe we can go.

# 6. Chris Upward

1939–2002
Senior Lecturer in German Aston University Birmingham, UK
Editor of the *Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society* 1985–90 • 1996–2000
Author, *Cut Spelling Handbook*

> It is with the greatest sadness your Committee has heard from Janet Upward that Christopher Upward died last 4th August at a hospice in Birmingham at the age of 63.
>
> There will be many members who will recall his unstinting devotion to our cause, his many years of contributions and his good will and companionship.

## Recollections of Chris Upward

I first met Chris in 1991 when I attended my first SSS meeting.

For most of the 1990s anyone arriving early for an SSS quarterly meeting at the YWCA Great Russell Street YMCA in London was bound to be greeted by Chris with all his papers for the meeting around him. This is because Chris was always the first to arrive even though he was probably the one who travelled furthest as he came from Birmingham.

On yor arrival Chris rose from his chair. He shook your hand. Then he immediately made you feel welcum. This applied especially to enny new member.

Then during the meeting if thair wer enny technical language matters or questions about the history of the SSS it was always Chris who ansered them.

He also had a great sense of humor as the following short cutting from the press in 1991 indicates:

The uther day the Simplified Spelling Society receeved a letter objecting to simplified spelling as being 'beyond the pail'.

That letter speaks volumes.
—Ron Footer [notice the misspelling of pale, above]

# 7. Tribute to Christopher Upward

## [1939 – August 4, 2002

We meet today to say farewell to a scholarly linguist and teacher, and to pay tribute to a man of principle and passion. I speak on behalf of members of the Simplified Spelling Society, many of whom from all parts of the world have already expressed in emails their sense of sorrow at the passing of an esteemed friend and colleague.

Christopher was passionate about the reform of the English spelling system, for the benefit of children whose difficulties in coping with the complexities of traditional orthography hinder their progress in other fields, and to face the problem of being considered illiterate because they failed to spell in the conventional manner. He joined the society 20 years ago, and was quickly elected to its committee, only being forced to withdraw from a very active participation in its affairs by increasing ill-health.

The society has a long history, during which there have been periods of relative somnolence followed by others of intense public and private activity. Chris was instrumental in pushing the society from a quiet period into a very active and public role during the 1980s. He took over the members' newsletter and transformed it into a twice yearly scholarly journal which commanded academic respect for the quality and breadth of its articles. His knowledge of the written form of many European languages was formidable, and he worked tirelessly at promoting his favoured scheme for reforming English, Cut Spelling, both within the society and in the world at large. His own writings are extensive; during his most active period, it wasn't unusual for him to publish five or six pieces on spelling the year, as well as producing two issues of the Journal and assembling material for his major works. The most important of these are his contribution to Tom McArthur's Oxford Companion to the English Language, and his incomplete Oxford guide to English spelling, which 1 can report from my reading of it as encyclopaedic and beautifully articulated. This and his simplified spelling work must ultimately be available on the Web.

Chris's scholarship survives him. His theoretical work on spelling represents a major advance in the academic study of the subject. In his handbook on Cut Spelling he gave the world the most important system of reform of the second half of the 20th century, and his analysis of written English will be used by any future worker in the field. He will be remembered by us who knew him as a gentle man in every sense of that term, a sociable man, a man whom one was always pleased to read and to engage with. The world will remember his scholarship and, one hopes admire his energy.

— Prof. Don Scragg

***Publications by Chris Upward***

[Chris Upward: see **Journals**, **Newsletters**, **Pamflet**, **Leaflets**, **Media**, **Book and Papers**.]

Upward, C. Editorials all issues of JSSS, 1985–89, 1996–2000.

(1985a) Spelling-reform in Germany ***News8 Summer 1985***, Item 7.

(1985b) Rationale & Rules of CS, with exercises. ***JSSS1 Autumn 1985***, Item 10.

(1986) CS debate Summer ***JSSS3 1986/2***, Item 7.

(1987a) The Ranj of Chris Upward's Work: "Heterographs in English," ***JSSS4, 1987/1***, Item 6.

(1987b) Cut Speling — a linguistic universl? ***JSSS5 1987/2***, Item 8.

(1987c). Can Cut Speling cut mispefng? ***JSSS6 1987/3***, Item 12.

(1988a). Can Cut Speling cut misprints? ***JSSS7 1988/1***, Item 9.

(1988b) Discussion with Hanks ***JSSS8 1988/2***.Item 9.

(1988c) Reviews: Hamilton, (1988d) Hawkins, (1988e) Crystal, (1988f) Mason, All in ***JSSS8 1988/2***, Item 13.

(1988g) Conflicting Eficiency Criteria in CS-1, ***JSSS9 1988/3***, Item 6

(1988h) Submissions to Literacy Policy Makers: "Submission to the National Curriculum English Working Group from the Simplified Spelling Society July 1988," ***JSSS9 1988/3***, Item 7; "The Society's 1992 Submission to the National Curriculum Council," ***JSSS14, 1993/1***, Item 2.

(1988i) Editorial (Linguistic Strategies). ***JSSS9, 1988/3*** Item 1.

(1988j) English Spelling and Educational Progress, Committee for Linguistics in Education (British Association for Applied Linguistics, Linguistics Association of Great Britain) Working Papers No. 11.See **Books and Papers.**

(1988). 'English Spelling & Educational Progress' review. Rondthaler. ***JSSS10, 1989***, Item 11.

(1989a) Conflicting Eficiency Criteria in CS-2, ***JSSS10, 1989/1***, Item 7.

(1989b) Discussion with Gregersen, ***JSSS11, 1989/2***.Item 12.

(1989c) Regarding Chris' Interest in the German Spelling Reform: Gerhard Augst; Chris Upward; and Institut fur deutsche Sprache, "The Latest on Re-regulating Written German," ***JSSS11, 1989/2***, Item 5.

(1989d) Editorial (Exploiting Alternative Spellings), ***JSSS11, 1989/2***. Item 1

(1991a) A role for dictionaires in spelling reform: A French example. **SSS *Newsletter N1,* April 91**, Item 3.

(1991b). Harmnizing Cut Spelng &New Spelling, ***JSSS12 1992/1***, Item 2.

(1992b) Rankng Visul Disturbnce of Letr Omissions — a Pilot Experimnt, ***JSSS13 1992/2***, Item 4.

(1992c) Launchng th Cut Spelng Handbook, ***JSSS13 1992/2***, Item 5.

(1992d) Review with Yue E Li. ***JSSS13 1992/2***. Item 6.

(1992e) "German & English Spelling Difficulty Compared." ***JSSS13, 1992/2,*** Item 11. (A short article by Chris, plus two others that more or less go with it [this triptych alreddy sujested by Valerie]: David V. Moseley, "Spelling Difficulties Limit Written Expression," ***JSSS13, 1992/2***, Item 9; Gwenllian Thorstad, "Literacy Skills of English and Italian Children," ***JSSS13, 1992/2***, Item 10; and possibly, Simpl Speling, "Most illiterate English children would succeed in other languages," **SS12. November 2000**, Item 7, report of Ken Spencer's address to the AGM.

(1993a) Review of Brown, A ***JSSS14 1993/1***, Item 7.

(1993b) Review of Gresham, A ***JSSS14 1993/1***, Item 10.

(1993c) 'Quite good' or 'totaly unacceptbl'? Review of NFER, ***JSSS15 1993/2***, Item 6.

(1993d) "English Spelling and Its Reform," Terminologie & Traduction, 1993), Commission of the European Community, Luxembourg.

(1994a) His Reserch into Misspellings, and Analysis to Determin Which Spelling Features Cause the Most Trubble: "Err analysis: som reflections on aims, methods, limitations & importnce, with a fur1hr demnstration." Part I, **_JSSS16, 1994/1_**, Item 6.

(1994b) _Err Analysis_, Part 2, **_JSSS17, 1994/2_**, Item 4.

(1994c) Classic Concordance of Cacographic Chaos, **_JSSS17, 1994/2_**, Items 6 & 7.

(1994d) Dislexia & Dysability, **_JSSS17, 1994/2_**, Item 9.

(1995x) No ansrs here yet. Review of ALBSU:Elkinsmyth, C & Bynner, 1. **_JSSS18 1995/1_**, Item 11.

(1995b) Reviews of ALBSU Basic Skills in Colleges/Prisons, **_JSSS18 1995/1_** Item 14.

(1995c) Founding Fathers: Who were the men who launched the SSS? **Newsletter N9, August 1995,** Item 5.

(1995e). Orthografy vs Litracy: Findings of IEA Survey. **_JSSS19 1995/2_**, Item 2.

(1995(f) Discussions of NCE/NFER 'Standards in Literacy & Numeracy, 1948–1994, **_JSSS19 1995/2_**. Item 4.

(1996x) Orthografic Ownrship: An approach to wiring suport for spelng reform'? **SSS _Newsletter N10,_ April 1996**, Item 7.

(1996b) Bob Brown: A tribute. **_JSSS20 1996/1_**. Item 2.

(1996c) Pulcini, V. Italian Spelling, and how it treats English loanwords. **_JSSS20 1996/1_**, Item 4.

(1996d) Basic Skills Agency, Writing Skills: A survey of how well people can spell and punctuate review. **_JSSS20 1996/1_**, Item 11.

(1996e) The Cut Spelling Handbook, 2nd edition, foreword. **_JSSS20 1996/1_**, Item 12.

(1996f) Society to redefine aim, objectives. General Meeting. Newsletter **_SS1. Dec 1996,_** Item 1.

(1997a) Th Potential of Stylgides as Vehicls for Spelng Reform. **_JSSS21 1997/1_**, Item 5.

(1997b) "Alarm Bels Ring for Fonics and/or Spelng Reform." Christopher Upward anlyzs Aspects of Writing in 16+ English Examinations between 1980 & 1984. **_JSSS22 1997/2_**, Item 11.

(1998a) Virtuoso Orthografc Hichhiking: Ze do Rock 'fom winde ferfeelt' review **_JSSS23 1998/1_**, Item 8.

(1998b) Basic Skills Agency (March 1998) 'Survey of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Levels in every district and unitary authority in England' review. **_JSSS23 1998/1_**, Item 13.

(1998c) Siobhdn Carey, Sampson Low, Jacqui Hansbro (1997) 'Adult Literacy in Britain review. **_JSSS23, 1998/1_**, Item 13.

(1998d) Edward Carney 'English Spelling' review. **_JSSS23, 1998/1_**, Item 14.

(1998e) Overcoming orthografic frontirs, Pt 1. **_JSSS24, 1998/2_**,  Item 4.

(1998f) A Quartr-Century of th Queen's English Society review. **_JSSS24, 1998/2_**, Item 7.

(1998g) Global Visions — Spelling Blindspot: Graddol G 'The Future of English' review. **_JSSS24, 1998/2_**, Item 8.

(1998h) From the Simplified Spelling Society: A Response to Langscape 1. In _English Today 55._ Cambridge: University Press.

(1999a) Overcoming orthografic frontirs, Pt 1 **_JSSS25 ,1999/1_**, Item 7.

(1999b) Anglo (-Japanese Non-) Dyslexia: research by Wydell/Butterworth. **_JSSS26, 1999/2_**, Item 11.

(1999c) Wat can welsh teach English?: Research by Reynolds, et al. **_JSSS26, 1999/2,_** Item 12.

(19994) In defence of spelling reform. In _English Today 57._ Cambridge: University Press.

(2000a) Revlations of a Cross-Linguistic Perspectiv: Harris/Hatano 'Learning to Red and Write' review. **_JSSS27, 2000/1_**, Item 12.

(2000b). John Downing's i.t.a. Evaluation. **_JSSS28, 2000/2_** Item 4.

# 8. Introduction to Decodable Words

## by Steve Bett

*An alphabetic code refers to the assignments between a set of abstract sound segments that are critical in distinguishing the meaning of words [phonemes] and a set of visual symbols that can represent them on paper or other substrate. All languages are 100% phonemic or sound based. Written languages are phonemic to the extent that there is a one to one relationship between phonemes of the spoken language and the symbols used to visualize it. Children seem to naturally acquire the spoken language used around them. If the written language were structured in a similar way, they might acquire it as easily.*

*Acquiring speech and mastering speech requires lots of practice. A similar amount of practice would be required to master the written language. Groff's essay is about providing the right kind of practice materials.*

*I have a problem with calling the phonic code the combination of [1] the regular associations between sounds and symbols and [2] the exception rules. There is nothing phonic about an exception. Exception rules do keep a notation systematic or predictable. It is usually the reassignment of a sound in a certain environment or position in a word. In Spanglish, for instance, an exception is made for the representation of the schwa sound before [r]. The unstressed mid lax vowel is normally [a] but before [r] and in a terminal position after a voiced [th] it is changed to an [e], the mother — tha mather — the mather. Spanglish tries to minimize the number of exceptions to the basic alphabetic code and keep the number under ten. Regularized English had over 100 exception rules.*

*"The chief priest wore a colored collar" would be transcribed "Tha chief priest wor a cullard collar." After incorporating the exception rule, the sentence would be rendered "The chief priest wor a cullered collar." In this sentence there is no net gain in TO similarity. However, across the board it does help.*

*The anti-phonic exception rule allows spelling to deviate from the established sound signs. In order to eliminate code overlaps — perhaps the most annoying feature of traditional English orthography, Axel Wijk had to add 100 exception rules. Wijk still had multiple spellings in his regularized English. It was reader friendly but not speller friendly.*

*Reader friendly text in a phonics class involves avoiding spellings that represent exceptions to the phonics rules and using stories composed of words that reinforce the relationships between sound and symbol covered in the phonic rules. Some of the sound symbol relationships are shown in the chart below.*

# 9. Decodable Words Versus Predictable Text

## Patrick Groff
### Professor of Education Emeritus • San Diego State University

The idea of "decodable words" is one of the basic principles of direct, intensive, systematic, early, and comprehensive (DISEC) instruction of a prearranged hierarchy of discrete phonics information. Soon after the alphabetic code (the concept that each speech sound in a language can be represented by a letter) was conceived, a method of teaching this phonics information to novice readers was devised.

The most logical practice to this effect has been to bring to beginning readers' conscious awareness the speech sounds in the language. This phonemic awareness is accomplished by showing fledgling readers a letter, while at the same time pronouncing a speech sound that the letter commonly represents. Then, the learners look at the letter in question, and repeat the given speech sound. These speech sound-letter correspondences are called phonics rules.

| Sound | ae | aar | b | h | hw | ks/gs | kw |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Letter | a | ar | b | h | wh | x | qu |
| Example | at | are | bib | hot | where | six | quick |
| Words | bat | car | | ah | | example | |
| | | | | | | egs-ampl | |

| kw | l | M | ŋ | p | θ | ð | v | n | j | ʒ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| qu | l | m | ng | p | th | th | v | w | y | zh |
| quick | lit | am | ring | per | thin | the | valve | wow | yell | vision |
| | | | bank | | | | | | | |

Regularity in the TO to be effective in getting neophyte readers ready (a) to look at letters in the serial order in which they appear in familiar words, (b) to attach appropriate speech sounds to each letter (or letter cluster) in words, and (c) to blend together the speech sounds generated so as to produce an approximate pronunciation of a recognizable word. Beginning readers readily can infer the authentic pronunciation of a familiar written word if they gain access to its approximate pronunciation, it is found experimentally.

This process of written word recognition is called "decoding." A "decodable" word therefore is a familiar one that a learner has been prepared ahead of time to sound-out (attach speech sounds to each of) its letters. Decodable texts thus are ones that contain only familiar words that students have previously been prepared to decode through the application of phonics rules. It is discovered empirically that beginning readers are more successful in accurately reading decodable texts than they are in reading texts that contain words students have had no prior DISEC phonics instruction on how to identify.

As opposed to decoding written words through the application of phonics rules, the experimentally discredited Whole Language (WL) approach to teaching children to identify written words uses

what WL experts call "predictable texts." In this regard, the "Whole" in WL refers to the WL principle that children new to reading best learn to recognize written words within the context of whole words, sentences, paragraphs, and stories. To understand adequately the meaning of "predictable" in predictable texts, as WL exploits the term, it is necessary to explain at some length what constitutes WL reading instruction.

Instead of emphasizing young students' attainment of knowledge of phonics rules, and how to apply them to read words, WL reading instruction concentrates on a different procedure. This is encouraging children to use the contexts of written sentences, paragraphs, and stories to guess at the identities of their words. Rather than teaching children a comprehensive amount of phonics information, and how to apply it to decode words, WL instructors reduce the number of phonics rules children learn to a bare minimum.

In this respect, it often is recommended by WL luminaries that children's knowledge of only the consonant speech sound-letter correspondences that occur at the beginnings of words is necessary. This WL doctrine stipulates that application of a highly limited amount of phonics knowledge, along with guessing at the names of written words from sentence, paragraph, and story contexts, is the most time-effective way for beginning readers to master written word recognition skills. However, the vast majority of critical surveys of what relevant experimental investigations have to say on this issue reveal something else. It is that this WI, doctrine, along with its other unique ones, is not corroborated by empirical findings.

My many observations of WL teaching of reading in action, plus my extensive perusal of the writings of leaders of the WL movement, reveal other reasons why this form of reading tutelage is relatively time-ineffective. In WL classrooms, the entire class of illiterate children first sit as a group on a rug facing their teacher, who reads aloud to them, several times, an easy to understand story. Much time is devoted to stimulating children to engage in openended discussions of the story's simplistic content, to expressing idiosyncratic reactions as to concepts and meanings in it, to repeating words and sentences the teacher has read aloud, and to acting-out the story's narrative.

Following these activities, the WL teacher displays an enlarged copy of the story previously read aloud. The children, who are unschooled in how letters represent speech sounds, are directed to "follow along," as the teacher again and again reads aloud the given story. Occasionally, the WL teacher will stop, point out an individual word in a story, and request the pupils to repeat it. Sometimes, an explanatory remark will be made by the teacher about the initial consonant speech sound-letter correspondence of these words.

However, it is impossible to know in this procedure to what extent the entire class of children actually is looking at words in the story being read aloud. It is my impression that it is customary for some children to not even look in the direction of the enlarged copy of the story on display. Also problematical is whether any child who repeats a word in the story, upon a request by the teacher, is looking at it.

The next order of activities in the WL reading development approach is to break up the entire class into smaller-sized groups, and reiterate with each group what transpired before. Whole Language dogma claims that this rearrangement of students allows the teacher ample opportunity to discover, and remedy if necessary, how well children are progressing toward the acquisition of reading ability.

At the end of this second stage of WL reading instruction, it is held that children are satisfactorily prepared to read independently the story in question. Accordingly, they are sent back to their seats to carry out that assignment. Now, WL teachers busy themselves with engaging children on a one-on-one basis. Experts in WL reading instruction express great pride in the latter accomplishment, although pertinent experimental findings do not validate it as a time-effective instructional strategy.

The stories involved in all the above WL procedures are ones selected because they are "predictable texts." That is to say, the stories are deliberately written so that they repeat many times certain words, phrases, or sentences. A WL principle is that words, phrases, and sentences in these texts become predictable, i.e., foreseeable or logically calculable by beginning readers, if these pupils look at them a given number of times.

For anyone familiar with the history of reading instruction in the U.S., WL assumptions about the efficacy of predictable texts clearly are borrowings from the now notorious "look-say" method of reading instruction (that nonetheless was highly popular for generations in America's public schools). Look-say reading instruction textbooks also downgrade the importance of teaching phonics rules in a DISEC manner.

This method's foremost presumption is that the time it takes for novice readers to recognize written words via phonics instruction could be shortened significantly. It was held that if nonreaders were repetitively shown whole written words, until they were recognized as "sight" words, this would speed up their overall acquisition of reading ability. Sight words are ones children recognize rapidly, without sounding-out their letters.

It now is well-established experimentally that the look-say methodology has fatal flaws. Children taught in this manner somehow are able to remember the identities of a relatively small number of words. However, they soon suffer an overload on their memory systems, and begin guessing wildly at the names of words in sentences. Co-instantaneously, pupils' ability to accurately comprehend what they have read is badly affected.

This latter fault in WL reading teaching is hoped to be compensated for by urging beginning readers to add, omit, or substitute words or concepts in written materials — as they see fit. However, that is a vain expectation, as objective examinations of the results of WL reading instruction reveal. In California, for example, WL reading teaching recently was more popular than in any other state. As a consequence, the standardized reading test scores of young children in this state devolved to the lowest in the nation.

Direct Instruction — A method of instruction developed by Siegfred Engelmann, Oregon State University, in the 1960s. Teacher is in control of the interaction telling, showing, demonstrating, and prompting rapid active responding of the learners. Teacher follows field tested scripts and employs frequent systematic assessment to insure mastery.

[John J Reilly: see **Journals**]

# 10. Book Review by John Reilly

God Help All Little Children Read, Write, and Spell — Modular English by Ian Duck
1st Books, 2000 ISBN: 1-58820-179-1 174 Pages, $9.95 Paperback, $3.95 E-book

Ian Duck is a quantum physicist at Rice University in Texas. In this brief, polemical book, he makes a case for reforming the traditional spelling of English, proposes his own transcription scheme, and outlines a celebrity-driven reform program. The issues he discusses are familiar from the reform debates of the last 100 years, but it's interesting to see a single individual's solution. The book represents the kind of narrowcast pamphleteering that hardly anyone was in a position to do before the advent of print-on-demand publishing. One hopes we see more of it in the future.

The author has done his bit as a volunteer literacy tutor. Though the book is barren of citation, he is obviously familiar with the literature about the "literacy underclass."

The system that the author proposes, "Modular English," is based on the usage of letters and letter combinations in small, common words. Again, the system is not terribly different from others devised during the 20th century. A sample shows where the author came down on most of the debates that vex would-be reformers:

**DUCKSPEL**
"Yae, thoe Ie wok throo thuh valee uv thuh shadoe uv deth, Ie wil feer noe eevl; for Thow art with mee: Thie rod and Thie staf thae komfirt mee."

**SPANGLISH**
Yey, tho I wok thru the vally av the shaddo av deth, I wil fir no ievl; for thau aart with mi: thai rod aend thai staff they cumfert mi.

**ENgliS**
yA, thO Y wok thrw Da vqIE av Da SqdO av deT, Y wil fir nO Eval; for thow crt wiD mE: DY rcd qnd DY stqf DA cumfart mE.

# 11. Investigating Spelling Reform Satire

## Cornell Kimball

### Ze drem uv a lojikl kohirnt spelling will finali kum tru

Many of us have got a kick out of the spelling reform satire that the European Commission is adopting English as the official language, but will need to respell English foneticaly first. It's been published in newspaper and magazine items in Europe, and is frequently seen on the Internet (see **Spoofs**) and sent as e-mail. Here is a paragraff from it:

> In the first year, 's' will replace the soft 'c'. Sertainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard 'c' will be dropped in favour of the 'k'. This should klear up konfusion and keyboards kan have one less letter.

 And the piece ends: Ze drem vil finali kum tru!

It's been mentioned a few times in Simplified Spelling Society publications; Valerie Yule made reference to it in a couple of pieces in *JSSS* 30 ( Item 4).  Steve Bett and Valerie have copies of it on their Web sites.

Some may have also seen a spelling reform satire that was "written by Mark Twain" that basically begins:

> A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling

> For example, in Year 1 that useless letter "c" would be dropped to be replased either by "k" or "s," and likewise "x" would no longer be part of the alphabet.  The only kase in which "c" would be retained would be the "ch" formation, which will be dealt with later.

At first blush it might seem, then, that the 'EU' language satire was basically taken from a piece by Mark Twain.  But another curious item is that from what I've been able to uncover, it's unlikely that Mark Twain did write such a piece.  And it seems that the basic source of both of those is a piece by a writer named W. K. Lessing (under the pseudonym Dolton Edwards), called "Meihem in Ce Klasrum", first published in a U.S. magazine called *Astounding Science Fiction* (now Analog Science Fiction and Fact) in 1946.

I haven't been able to find this "A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling" in any of Twain's works.  Thru the Internet I asked people very familiar with Twain's writings about it, and none of them knew of it appearing in any of Twain's works.

An Internet discussion group called "alt.usage.english" has a basic information sheet.  Concerning "A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling", it says: "Many web sites attribute this piece to Mark Twain, but Twain scholars at the University of California could find no supporting evidence for that."

Also, the 'Twain' piece has appeared in print as written by an M. J. Shields. This is noted in the book "Another Almanac of  Words at Play", by Willard R. Espy, (Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York, 1980, on pages 79–80). At least one source on the Internet says that M. J. Shields wrote this in a letter to The Economist magazine (then later reprinted in Willard Espy's book), tho I haven't been able to find any further evidence of this. The appendix of  Espy's book doesn't give any source for the Shields piece.

From any evidence I've been able to garner, and from theories of others, it appears that the 'M. J. Shields' piece appeared somewhere in print first, then later a version of it without a name on it somehow got attributed to Mark Twain.

But also from everything I can turn up, it appears that the 'original' behind any of these is the article "Meihem in Ce Klasrum", by a writer named W. K. Lessing (with the pen name of Dolton Edwards) that was first published in Astounding Science Fiction in 1946. That article has paragraffs that read very similar to both the 'EU' satire and the "Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling". Here are three paragraffs from "Meihem in Ce Klasrum":

> In 1946, for example, we would urge the elimination of the soft "c," for which we would substitute "s." Sertainly, such an improvement would be selebrated in all sivic-minded sircles …

> … it would be announsed that the double konsonant "ph" no longer existed, and that the sound would henseforth be written with "f" in all words. This would make sutsh words as "fonograf" twenty persent shorter in print …

> … Even Mr. Yaw [Shaw], wi beliv, wud be hapi in ce noleg cat his drims fainali keim tru.

"Meihem in Ce Klasrum" was also reprinted in *Torch*, a Smithsonian Institution publication, and was reprinted in the U.S. magazine Life on May 6, 1957.

I don't have firm evidence of exactly when or where the 'EU' satire or the "Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling" first appeared. But it does seem plausible, from what I have uncovered, that this the first of these basic satires was "Meihem in Ce Klasrum", and the ideas (in some cases, actual words or frases) were taken from that and later used to make "A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling" and the satire about the European Commission respelling English fonetically.

Here are the full versions of the three satires.

## The 'EU' satire basically runs:

The European Commission has just announced an agreement whereby English will be the official language of the EU rather than German, which was the other possibility.

As part of the negotiations Her Majesty's Government conceded that English spelling had some room for improvement and has accepted a 5 year phase-in plan of modifications that will lead to 'Euro-English' as the language will be known.

In the first year, 's' will replace the soft 'c'. Sertainly, this will make the sivil servants jump with joy. The hard 'c' will be dropped in favour of the 'k'. This should klear up konfusion and keyboards kan have one less letter.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year when the troublesome 'ph' will be replased with the 'f '. This will make words like 'fotograf ' 20% shorter.

In the 3rd year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expected to reach the stage where more komplikated changes are possible. Governments will enkorage the removal of double leters which have always ben a deterent to akurate speling. Also al wil agre that the horible mes of the silent 'e' in the languag is disgraseful and it should go away.

By the 4th yer peopl wil be reseptiv to steps such as replasing 'th' with 'z' and 'w' with 'v' to beter align the modified language with the kapabilities of the Euro speaker.

During ze fifz yer ze unesesary 'o' kan be dropd from vords kontaining 'ou' and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After ziz fifz yer ve vil hav a rali sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor truble or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozer.

Ze drem vil finali kum tru !

## The full satire (three paragraffs) that's attributed to Mark Twain and M. J. Shields basically goes:

A Plan for the Improvement of English Spelling, by Mark Twain

For example, in Year 1 that useless letter "c" would be dropped to be replased either by "k" or "s," and likewise "x" would no longer be part of the alphabet. The only kase in which "c" would be retained would be the "ch" formation, which will be dealt with later. Year 2 might reform "w" spelling, so that "which" and "one" would take the same konsonant, wile Year 3 might well abolish "y" replasing it with "i" and Iear 4 might fiks the "g / j" anomali wonse and for all.

Jenerally, then, the improvement would kontinue iear bai iear with iear 5 doing awai with useless double konsonants, and iears 6–12 or so modifaiing vowlz and the rimeining voist and unvoist konsonants. Bai iear 15 or sou, it wud fainali bi posibl tu meik ius ov thi ridandant letez "c," "y," and "x" bai now jast a memori in the maindz ov ould doderez tu riplais "ch," "sh," and "th" rispektivli.

Fainali, xen, aafte sam 20 iers ov orxogrefkl riform, wi wud hev a lojikl, kohirnt speling in ius xrewawt xe Ingliy-spiking werld.

## And here is the W. K. Lessing ( Dolton Edwards ) piece as it appeared in the September 1946 issue of Astounding Science Fiction magazine:

Meihem In Ce Klasrum
by Dolton Edwards

Because we are still bearing some of the scars of our brief skirmish with II-B English, it is natural that we should be enchanted with Mr. George Bernard Shaw's proposal for a simplified alphabet.

Obviously, as Mr. Shaw points out, English spelling is in much need of a general overhauling and streamlining. However, our resistance to any changes requiring a large expenditure of mental effort in the near future would cause us to view with some apprehension the possibility of some day receiving a morning paper printed in — to us — Greek.

Our own plan would achieve the same end as the legislation proposed by Mr. Shaw, but in a less shocking manner, as it consists merely of an acceleration of the normal processes by which the language is continually modernized.

As a catalytic agent, we would suggest that a "National Easy Language Week" be proclaimed, which the President would inaugurate, outlining some short cut to concentrate on during the week, and to be adopted during the ensuing year. All school children would be given a holiday, the lost time being the equivalent of that gained by the spelling short cut.

In 1946, for example, we would urge the elimination of the soft "c," for which we would substitute "s." Sertainly, such an improvement would be selebrated in all sivic-minded sircles as being suffisiently worth the trouble, and students in all sities in the land would be reseptive toward any change eliminating the nesessity of learning the difference between the two letters.

In 1947, sinse only the hard "c" would be left, it would be possible to substitute "k" for it, both letters being pronounsed identikally. Imagine how greatly only two years of this prosess would klarify the konfusion in the minds of students. Already we would have eliminated an entire letter from the alphabet. Typewriters and linotypes kould all be built with one less letter, and all the manpower and materials previously devoted to making "c's" kould be turned toward raising the national standard of  living.

In the fase of so many notable improvements, it is easy to foresee that by 1948, "National Easy Language Week" would be a pronounsed sukses. All skhool tshildren would be looking forward with konsiderable exsitement to the holiday, and in a blaze of national publisity it would be announsed that the double konsonant "ph" no longer existed, and that the sound would henseforth be written with "f " in all words. This would make sutsh words as "fonograf" twenty persent shorter in print.

By 1949, publik interest in a fonetik alfabet kan be expekted to have inkreased to the point where a more radikal step forward kan be taken without fear of undue kritisism. We would therefore urge the elimination at that time of al unesesary double leters, whitsh, although quite harmles, have always ben a nuisanse in the language and a desided deterent to akurate speling. Try it yourself in the next leter you write, and se if both writing and reading are not fasilitated.

With so mutsh progrs already made, it might be posible in 1950 to delve further into the posibilities of fonetik speling. After due konsideration of the reseption aforded the previous steps, it should be expedient by this time to spel al difthongs fonetikaly. Most students do not realize that the long "i" and "y," as in "time" and "by," are aktualy the difthong "ai," as it is writen in "aisle," and that the long "a" in "fate" is in reality the difthong "ei" as in "rein." Although perhaps not imediately aparent, the seiving in taime and efort wil be tremendous when we leiter elimineite the sailent "e," as meide posible bai this last tsheinge.

For, as is wel known, the horible mes of  "e's" apearing in our writen language is kaused prinsipaly bai the present nesesity of indekeiting whether a vowel is long or short. Therefore, in 1951 we kould simply elimineite al sailent "e's" and kontinu to read and wrait merily along as though we wer in an atomik eig of edukation.

In 1951 we would urg a greit step forward. Sins bai this taim it would hav ben four years sins anywun had usd the leter "c," we would sugest that the "National Easy Languag Wek" for 1951 be devoted to substitution of  "c" for "Th." To be sur it would be som taim befor peopl would bekom akustomd to reading ceir newspapers and buks wic sutsh sentenses in cem as "Ceodor caught he had cre cousand cistls crust crough ce cik of  his cumb."

In ce seim maner, bai meiking eatsh leter hav its own sound and cat sound only, we kould shorten ce languag stil mor. In 1952 we would eliminait ce "y"; cen in 1953 we kould us ce leter to indekeit ce "sh" sound, cerbai klarifaiing words laik yugar and yur, as wel as redusing bai wun mor leter al words laik "yut," "yor," and so forc. Cink, cen, of al ce benefits to be geined bai ce distinktion whitsh wil cen be meid between words laik :

| Tradspel | Drem | ENalis | Spanglish |
|----------|------|--------|-----------|
| ocean | oyean | oSan | óshan |
| machine | Mayin | maSEn | machien |
| racial | reyial | rasal | réshal |

Al sutsh divers weis of wraiting wun sound would no longer exist, and whenever wun keim akros a "y" sound he would know exaktli what to wrait.

Kontinuing cis proses, ier after ier, we would eventuali hav a reali sensibl writen langug. By 1975, wi ventyur tu sei, cer wud bi no mor uv ces teribli trublsum difikultis, wic no tu leters usd to indikeit

ce seim nois, and laikwais no tui noises riten wic ce seim leter. Even Mr. Yaw, wi beliv, wud be hapi in ce noleg cat his drims fainali keim tru.

## Tseindzaz — An Afterword by Steve Bett

Compare the last paragraph to a more consistent Spanglish transcription which shows stress.

"Continnuing this proges, yir after yir, wi wvd eventually hav a realy sensibl rittan langwaj. Bai 1975, wi venntiur to say therr wvd bi no mor av thiez terribly trubalsam difficultyz, wich no to letterz iuzd to inndikeit the seim noiz and laikwaiz no to noizaz rittan with the seim letter. Ieven Mr. Shaw, wi believ, wvd bi happy in the nolaj that hiz driemz fainaly keim tru."

The orthographic changes in the story were chosen for their visual impact and comic oddness. On closer inspection, the final stage of the comic reform fails as a fully consistent phonemic writing system. One can compare it with Spanglish (below) which makes many of the same euroesque changes but does not adopt k for c, tsh for ch, or z for dh: "Ze tseindzaz" = 'The eheinjef

Another difference: Spanglish does not promote a stages reform. It is simply a parallel phonemic script that can be used as an i.t.a. and a dictionary pronunciation guide. The goal of Spanglish is to make spelling as predictable as Italian and Spanish spelling while retaining some resemblance to the traditional spelling. Spanglish can be read without a key & devolves into a more traditional form when used as an i.t.a.

I would like to see Spanglish as a more phonemic version of RITE but I have yet to find the rules that would permit one to move from a Spanglish spelling <akiumaleit> to a RITE spelling <acumulate>. Tradspel: <accumulate>. This devolution or transition is fairly easy but others are more difficult.

Saxon-Spanglish comes closer to the goal of predictable spelling than ALC SoundSpel because it has a symbol for schwa [a] and uses it for almost all unstressed vowels. There are ten rules which cover the exceptions such as with syllabic vowels [appl not appal]. ALC Soundspel simply copies tradspel which is great for TO adept readers but difficult for spellers. Unstressed vowels are a major source of spelling errors.

Spanglish is based on the Saxon alphabet that was used from about 800 CE until the great vowel shift [ca. 1450] It is basically the Latin alphabet with two extra phonograms: aesh and eth. Letters that were added since 1200 are also included: J V Y Z. There is only one substitution in Spanglish v for /U/ [v was a common way to represent U in Latin]. "anuther upper cut then a rait hvk" The   u before a consonant has the value of a stressed schwa or "uh" sound. v, y, and w are considered to be semi-vowels. Y and W are vowels 80% of the time but retain some consonant characteristics such as marking syllable boundaries. Other ambiguities: What — hwot or wot or wat where wit = wuht. Where/wear = hwerr / werr / wear

The satire indicates that a series of small changes leading to the "Euroesque orthography" can be rather bumpy. Just as one gets used to one spelling, it is changed again. It also indicates just how comically disturbing it is to substitute new letters in familiar spellings. mayin for rnashien is terribl but maSEn isn't much better.

# 12. Introduction to the Shaw Alphabet

## Steve Bett, Ph.D.

*An **alphabet reform has** always been considered to be a "non-starter" by spelling reformers and they have often failed to exploit the attention that an alphabet reform and parallel scripts can bring to the problems that spelling reformers wish to address. Alphabet reformers such as Franklin, Twain, and Shaw, preferred a parallel phonemic transcription system to one that added unsightly and annoying new spellings to the traditional orthography. They were not piece meal spelling reformers or advocates of mini-reforms.*

The **Shaw Alphabet** *is* a non-Roman phonemic transcription system for the "King's English". The script was designed by Kinglsey Read in strict accordance to the specifications written by playwright G. Bernard Shaw in 1941 and in his 1950 Will. It consists of 48 phonograms: 36 pure phonemes plus 12 combinations. Shaw was interested in alphabet reform, not spelling reform.



While the **Shaw Alphabet** can be learned with a few hours of concentrated deciphering, it was not designed to take advantage of the fact that 23 of the letters in the traditional alphabet can be phonemic. The effort to obscure historical associations can be seen in the characters chosen for *Th* and *Dh* which could have been associated with the Icelandic *thorn* þ and crossed Ð ð. The shapes are there but they have been reversed with the p-shaped *thorn* associated with the */Dh/* sound. Shavian was designed as a non-Roman extended alphabet. Any resemblance to Roman shapes [e.g., o and s] is accidental.

**Unifon,** another phonemic transcription system, simply adds 17 new characters to the existing alphabet to cover the sounds that are not well defined. As a result, Unifon can be learned twice as fast as Shavian by those already familiar with the traditional sound-symbol relationships. There would be no advantage if learned from scratch.

All phonemic systems respell at least 60% of the words in the dictionary. Only 40% of the traditional word spellings resemble the spelling in the dictionary pronunciation guide. Thus while someone could read the passage written in Unifon [below], they would find the Unifon spellings odd and perhaps ugly. Twain and Shaw thought that an entirely new phonemic alphabet could be appreciated as beautiful the way that Arabic or another written foreign languages might be found beautiful.

---

**•twAn and •Sx Txt that c nU fOnEmik alfcbet kCd bE cprESEAtcd.** Unifon *YnifOn*
**•twAn qnd •So Tot Dqt a nu fOnEmik qlfabet kvd bE aprESEAtad.** ENgliS
**•twān and •so Dot Lat a nu fonēmik alfəbet kūd bē aprēšātəd.** *ENgliS* downsized

***twEɴ Aɴd SY TYt HAt a ɴM fOɴlmik Alfabet kUd bI aprISIEted.*** Shavian SYvia̶ɴ̶ <u>Lionspaw,</u>

***Twein aend Shaw thawt thaet a nu foniemic allfabet cud bi aprieshieited.*** digraphic Spanglish

---

When shapes follow sounds, phonemic notations are easy to learn. Once you know the alphabet or symbol-sound correspondences, you can begin to write. 40 paired-associates can be learned in 30 minutes. Children in countries with phonemic languages take about 6 months and reach a level of skill at the end of one year that English speaking children do not match until the end of their 3rd year. The same rapid progress should be attainable in phonemic English. The i.t.a. research showed that while early progress was remarkable, most of the gain was lost during the transition to the traditional orthography.

In the early research by Downing, the i.t.a. was never taught using a mastery approach. Flynn (2001) uses it to allow each of her remedial reading students to progress at their own rate. When the i.t.a. was used with this method it was found to be five times better than four other phonics programs.

Because of the connection between spoken sounds and written words in phonemic English, [citation] spelling becomes close to 100% predictable. By contrast, traditional spelling is at only about 20% predictable until the dictionary is memorized. Dewey found over 560 ways to spell 41 speech sounds. However, five spellings account for about 75% of the spellings of any particular speech sound.

The list of [alleged] advantages for Shavian include [1] it conserves space, [2] it does not require as many strokes of the pen, [3] it is typographically pleasing, and [4] it will not be interpreted as an ignorant misspelling of English.

In his introduction to Androcles and the Lion, Pitman says, "Shaw's alphabet is both more legible and one-third more economical in space than traditional printing." There is a 10% savings due to elimination of redundant letters. The advantage for Shavian might not hold up if compared to Cut Spelling in a condensed font instead of a book face.

Item 4 was particularly important to Shaw and Twain who were sensitive to the public criticisms of simplified respellings — some of which they penned themselves.

Twain wrote, "To see our [traditional] letters put together in ways to which we are not accustomed offends the eye, and also takes the EXPRESSION out of the words:"

*Ley on Macduff **and dammd bi hi hu ferst craiz howld enuff!***
rittan in Spanglish repeated below in Shavian

*An inoffensive Shavian transcription of the above. Twain used a Burnz version of Pitman Shorthand to make the point*

"It doesn't thrill you as it used to do." The simplifications have sucked the thrill all out of it." Twain continues. "But a written character with which we are NOT ACQUAINTED does not offend us — Greek, Hebrew. Russian, Arabic, and the others — they have an interesting look, and we see beauty in them, too. "The mystery hidden in these things has a fascination for us: we can't come across a page of shorthand without being impressed by it and wishing we could read it."

The way to learn Shavian is to make use of the fact that the voiced unvoiced pairs are related both in sound and shape. As can be seen from the list of consonants below. *bib* is a rotated *peep.* In PMF and Shavian, all of the consonant characters are related in much the same way that **p** and **b** are in the traditional writing system. A similar device was used in Pitman shorthand where the voiced svmbol was a bold version of the unvoiced svmbol.

**Shavian Consonants**
The vowel chart below shows the IPA and keyboard equivalents for the Shavian phonograms. If you want to represent George Bernard Shaw you type jYrj barnyrd SY The combinations or, er, and a:r have ligatured phonograms: P D R. So it becomes jPj bDnRd SY. "Bernard" could be pronounced as bxnDd.

## Shavian — IPA Notation — Keyboard
dark red — Shavian letter shapes: A e I o u U — short vowels

yellow — IPA symbols: æ, ei, I, δ, ʊ
dark green — keyboard symbols for almost all Shavian fonts such as Lionspaw. This is not a well thought out ascii system. See SAMPA, Kirshenbaum and Unifon for better QWERTY conventions.
1st group — 6 short vowels the ash [æl was the Saxon addition to the Latin alphabet.
2nd group — 8 long vowels. Schwa [ə] as in / əgou/ is not necessarily long but it is free. E and O can be articulated as pure vowels or diphthongs so they are listed twice. E=ei, O= əU.

[James Pitman: see **Bulletins**, **Anthology**, **Journals**]

# 13. Introduction to Shaw's Alfabet

## Sir James Pitman

Excerpts from Sir James Pitman's Introduction to the Shaw edition of *Androcles and the Lion* p. 12–15
*With the Shaw edition of Penguin Books **Androcles and the Lion,** you have both the traditional writing system and the Shavian transcriptions on facing pages. [Amazon price about $10]*

Why should anyone wish to use [the Shaw alphabet]'? And why should there be any departure from the familiar forms of the Roman alphabet in which English is printed and written?

The characters themselves are very distinct. To prove them more legible, open the book and hold it upside down in front of a mirror.

The economy in space and greater simplicity of characters ought also to increase the speed and ease of *writing* — even more than it does the ease of reading. Many of the characters easily join into pairs; the sounds of the language are completely characterized, thus permitting abbreviation with great reliability.

Shaw found traditional script too laborious, and Pitman's shorthand too economical.

Though at this time we can only guess, it is probable that an abbreviated handwriting speed of 60–100 words a minute, with complete reliability of reading, will be possible for those who attain 'automatic' facility with Shaw's alphabet. In other words, reading may be 50–75 per cent, and writing 80–100 per cent faster, and even 200–300 per cent, by using simple abbreviations.

Shaw insisted that, unless his alphabet were to offer the substantial advantages he himself desired, there would be no reason for adding to the existing media of communication, which include: typewriting, shorthand, morse, semaphore, and braille, in addition to the Roman alphabet which is itself represented by three quite different sets of signs (as in ALPHABET, alphabet, *alphabet* ) Upper case, lowercase, italic.

Although this means starting from scratch, remember that Isaac Pitman, whose shorthand Shaw used for all his writings, also did so with a system offering the same advantages as Shaw's alphabet: that is, the saving of time, effort, and money.



Sir James Pitman teaches 4 boys the i.t.a. spelling of "ies creem"

Shaw did not want you and me to *abandon* the Roman alphabet. The long established Roman figures (I,II,III,IV,V,VI,VII,VIII,IX) remain even after the Arabic figures (the newer and handier 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9) have found favour. We now use both, with greater convenience. The new figures were not imposed, nor the old supplanted.
Similarly, Shaw believed, uses would be found for a new and handier alphabet *without* abandoning the old one.

If those who tried it found it advantageous, they would use it, and by it would gain what following it deserved. If its benefits were substantial enough, it would spread and establish itself through merit — as Arabic numerals did despite the then complete satisfaction with Roman numerals.

Utilitarian advantage is thus the principle governing the new alphabet. Shaw was unique in pointing out that substantial economy could be attained only (a) if the designer were to depart from a system evolved by the Romans 2,000 years ago for carving their public notices in stone; (b) if a single set of alphabetical characters were used — abolishing the different look of words in capitals,

small letters, and linked handwritten letters; and (c) if each distinct sound of the language were spelt with its own unvarying character.

These three factors in designing, taken together, made a non-Roman alphabet essential. Of course, there is nothing revolutionary in that. There are hundreds of non-Roman alphabets — and there are several variations within the Roman alphabet,

HERE IS A SENTENCE, here is a sentence, hir iz a sentens, *here is a sentence*
[Greek] ηρ ισ α σεντενσ  [Russian] ИР ИС а СеНТеНС

Thus these four *English* words may already be represented in a number of existing alphabets. Those who know Greek and English, Russian and English, etc., will have no difficulty in reading that sentence immediately in as many alphabets as they know — and it is considered at school that once a child has learned his A, B, C, D, he is well placed to learn also his a,b,c,d, his *a, b, c, d*, his α, β, Γ, δ, [Greek] and his А, б, Г, д. (Russian].

In personal and intimate writing the forty-eight (40+8) characters of the Shaw alphabet may faithfully portray the pronunciation of the individual; but, as Shaw pointed out, too eccentric a dialect may hamper, and even destroy, effective communication. He considered that, though there was no need to standardize writing if not intended for publication, there was every need for conformity in print; standard spellings being particularly desirable when that print is intended for circulation throughout the English-speaking world.


Sir James Pitman

**1890–1968 President of the SSS 1960–1968**

In his Will, Shaw specified just such a standardization for this play. He laid down for it a 'pronunciation to resemble that recorded of His Majesty our late King George V and sometimes described as Northern English'. He was an expert in stage direction and, so it may be supposed, considered this pronunciation to be the best basis for comprehension with acceptability in reading as he had found it to be in speech from the stage.

But by all means write as you think fit, and leave experts to standardize printers' spelling.

JAMES PITMAN

*[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society J31 p26 in the printed version]*

# 14. Tribute to Laurence Raymond Fennelly, 1926–2002

Lawrence "Laurie" Fennelly died in January 2002 at the age of 85. Laurie joined the Spelling Society in the 19606 and served as its treasurer from 1985 to 1987. From 1987 to 1991, he was the secretary of the Spelling Society.

Laurie was the leader of the working party on New Spelling 90 and wrote the **NS90 leaflet** and **Pamflet 12 NS90**.

NS90 continues to be one of the favorite alternative writing systems among society members. I recall favorable comments from Ron Footer and Ian Hunter. Ron is now a proponent of RITE, a writing system with more exception rules and a closer correspondence to T.O.

Laurie joined SSS in the 19606 and he may have joined the committee earlier than our current information. He was the author of two journal articles: "Revision of "New Spelling'," *JSSS Autumn 1985* Item 2 and "Revised New Spelling — The Position in 1987," *JSSS 1987/3*, Item 10. One of the basic changes was the use of Y for the new spelling <ie>.

Chris Upward wrote about Laurie in January, "He was, I think one can say, the SSSs most active orthografr in th late 1980s, producing th `New Spelling 90' pamflet, and I found my argumnts with him then most stimulating."

# 15. The Ambiguous E

## Steve Bett

**Spelling Reformers and Alphabet Reformers have different ideas on how to deal with it**

The e for /e/ respelling is sometimes referred to as SR-1 or the initial Spelling Reform. Harry Lindgren [1969 suggested that all other respelling be postponed until people started using "the clear short vowel sound in *bet"* every time this sound is used in a word.] Ch. 3, Spelling *Reform: A New Approach,* Alpha Books, 1969].

Most **Spelling reformers** want to move toward phonemic spelling in small steps (see Item 11). In Lindgren's view, the next step [SR-2 would be another easily grasped rule such as **f** for /f/. Each rule could be supplemented with a list of the words affected. SR-1 changes the spelling of about 800 common words.

Alphabet reformers, however, can live with most of the traditional spellings listed below because they can be pronounced according to the restored alphabet and generally understood in context. What disturbs alphabet reformers are **code overlaps** or using the same symbol for two sounds: e.g., *break, breakfast* and *beak* [**breik, brekfast, biek**] The difference between /breik/ and /bi:k/ is phonemic. The difference between ME *breakfast* and *brekfast* isn't. If *break* and *beak* were respelled, *breakfast* would not have to be respelled since [ea] could be pronounced as in 15th Century. Middle English [eə] and be understood. In 1400, the words, *break* and *beak,* were also pronounced as spelled and except for duration almost rhymed with *break* and *beck.* An alphabet reformer would be content to respell one word in "This *triet* is a break from breakfast." A spelling reformer might insist that treat, break, breakfast be respelled. The criteria of complete consistency is different from the criteria of close enough to be understood.

Sometimes the 2 criteria arrive at the same recommendation: In the list below: *friend* [frend], *cleanse* [clenz], and *jeopardy* [jepperdy] would be respelled because pronouncing these words as spelled might be confusing.

A restored Saxon alphabet such as the one on the left is different from some reform alphabets in one respect: The component letters in digraphs are pronounced. Contrast this with New Spelling where silent letters are used as markers. Ae=/ei/, ie=/ ai/.

| Saxon Spanglish Alfabet | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A<br>AGO | AA<br>CAAR | AE<br>CAET | AI<br>AIS AIL | B<br>BIBB | C (KS)<br>CANCEL |
| Ch<br>CHERCH | D<br>DIDD | UR ER<br>SURRFER | E, EA<br>BREAD | EI EY<br>VEIN THEY | F<br>FAIV |
| G<br>GIGGL | H<br>HORS | I.<br>IZ TIPPY | IE Y<br>FIELD | J<br>JUDJ | K Q<br>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 |

In New Spelling, [ae] is treated as one symbol and cannot be analyzed. The **i** in *ie* is not the same as the **i** in *it*. The combination [ie] is unrelated to the sounds of the component letters. The digraphs are "sight symbols". This makes them as hard to teach as a new letter and not quite as easy to figure out as IPA's alphabetical digraphs: [ei, aa, ii, oo, ou, iu/ju].

Consistent marking is all that is needed for a phonemic alphabet. However, different approaches to phonemic spelling result in different decisions with respect to the adequacy or inadequacy of some traditional spellings.

The Ambiguous E with Saxon Spanglish Respellings of /e/ and /a/

| We write short e": | We pronounce short e": | We write short e": | We pronounce short "e". |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| the *@ | tha thi / *the | head ea | hed / hedd |
| *mother *@r | muthar [GA] *mʌth@r | *friend ie | frend / frennd |
| bell e | bel / bell | *heifer ei | heffer |
| men e | men / mean | aesthetic ae | esthettic |
| many a | meny / menny y unstrest | *jeopardy eo | jepperdy |
| burial u | berrial / berial | guest ue | gest / guest |
| *said ai | sed / sedd | quest ue | quest / kwest |
| *says ay | sez / sezz | *cleanse ea-e | clenz / clenna |
| *money ey | muny / munny / many | *belle e-e | bel / belly |

*exception rules:* e substituted for schwa-a after *th* and before *r* tha → the muthar →  muthar
*ea is pronounceable as an extended /e/ ae is pronounceable as ee Neither of these spellings are difficult if the ea in *break* and *beak* are respelled [breik] and [biek] [or repronounced brek and bek. Saxon-Spanglish is basically Middle English spelling without silent letters. It is designed more to assist understanding of traditional spelling than to replace it. It can be used to identify the 10–15% of English spellings that need to be respelled in order to be understood when pronounced as spelled: *friend, jeopardy, cleanse,* and *belle* in the above list.

S.Bett, Ed.

# 16. The Ultimate State of Spelling Reform

## Paul Fletcher
**Piecemeal improvements should not conflict with ultimate phonemic spelling.**

*Paul Fletcher is an ex-civil servant with qualification in French, German and Spanish. He has belonged to the SSS for a number of years, is an ex-committee member and edits the Personal View series of the Society's publications.*

It is assumed that the ultimate aim of all members is a reformed spelling system which can compare favourably with the systems of other major languages, even though opinions may differ as to how "phonetic" the final system may be. We need to consider what the ultimate aim of the SSS should be and devise a strategy to that end. The title of the Society, Simplified Spelling Society seems to suggest that the spelling of English is basically acceptable and that if it were simplified that would be the adequate solution. But in fact the spelling of English is so muddled and the **rules, such as they are, so** full of exceptions, it is not possible to tinker with existing spelling and produce a coherent system. It is little wonder that many members are attracted to spelling reform by a desire to scrap existing spelling in favourof a completely new scheme. The aim of such reformers is to produce an internally logical system which does not aim to leave as many words as possible unaltered (although in some cases is may, almost coincidentally, do so).

It is generally accepted that wholesale reform could come about only as a result of government or intergovernmental action. The complete lack of interest in spelling reform exhibited by governments to date has led to members proposing initiatives for various partial reforms which it is hoped will come about through other channels such as publishers and dictionary makers. Whether wholesale reform should be the ultimate aim seems to be regarded by many members as an academic issue. Indeed, it is not clear how many members see piecemeal reforms as all that is desirable or possible. There is certainly a widespread feeling that the public can stomach only a few small changes at a time. The evidence advanced for this view is the reaction to proposals in other European languages. At this rate it would take several centuries to reform our spelling. Yet these other languages already have spelling systems which in the main are far more phonetic or at least more regular than English and which thus only require some updating and fine-tuning. Ennglish spelling on the other hand is essentially corrupt and chaotic. It requires root and branch reform.

It is not surprising therefore that many people are attracted to spelling reform by perceiving that a completely new phonetic system is the answer and much energy among members is spent on devising them. The arguments set out below aim to show that a completely new, phonetic, system is in fact the only feasible long-term solution for the problems of English spelling.

Reforms which merely attempt to regularize some conventions of existing spelling tend either to make so few changes that the reader needs to peruse a whole paragraph or more before noticing that any changes have been made at all or they attempt to regularize peculiarities which cause many words to be altered without forming part of a satisfactory overall system.
The problem with English is of course essentially a vowel problem and is caused by two features of English pronunciation:

a)    short and long sounds existing side by side forming words often with completely different meanings;

b)     the sound shift, affecting mainly the long sounds of a, e, and o, which occurred in the Middle Ages without corresponding changes being made in the spelling.

Some languages have only vowels which are all more or less the same length, e.g., Spanish. But in nearly all languages where the distinction is important, the same vowel is used in the long version and some means is used to distinguish it from the short sound, whether by accent or doubling or some consonantal convention such as doubling, add an e or add an h.

In English there is no clear relationship in the spelling between short and long versions of a, e and i. It is confused by the sound shift not being acknowledged by the spelling

aft, can (short) raft, can't (long) also we have such aberrations as laugh in fact the long a is more often pronounced /e:/ or /ei/ — pale, pail e as in get exists in its long form in foreign words such as fete, but is more usually conveyed by an a as indicated as above — pale.

Short i as in din reflects its long version usually only with the help of an e — brief, machine. Otherwise /i:/ is often portrayed by ee or ea. More often long i is a victim of the sound change and is pronounced /ai/ a form which occurs only rarely in English (aisle) but is otherwise i helped by some special rule dine, final, etc.

What a mess. Attempts to choose one of the existing spelling forms and standardise on that can only lead to internal contradictions. Thus to standardize on ai/pail falls foul of the diphthong /ai/ which as indicated below is arrived at logically by combining short a with short i. Similarly to choose ee for /i:/ makes no sense when compared with short e/get: there is no logical reason why doubling the e should produce the long version of a completely different sound.

The other two vowels are also troublesome:

Short o as in loft has admittedly a counterpart in the long version which can be pronounced several ways — the posh o of RP ,/o:/ or /ou/;

Short u (/u/) as in put is something reflected in its long form (lute), but short u, at least in RP and General American, is a peculiar sound halfway to /a/ which seems to exist in hardly any other languages and the long version is normally /yu/ — due, or versions like few where there is again no visual connection between long and short vowel sounds.

**Advantages and Attraction of Complete Reform**
Partial reforms often lack internal consistency and do not compare with the logic and simplicity, and therefore case of learning, to be found in a simple logical system. It is not at all clear that the public would spurn a completely fresh system which entailed wholesale change but was phonetic and internally consistent. A scheme which partly accepts existing conventions and attempts to graft on to its new proposals or which accepts existing conventions and regularises them, cannot hope to have the internal consistency of a completely new system. It is rather like the metric system. It was not possible to adapt imperial to metric measurements. It was necessary to make a complete break with the past. Similarly with spelling. An internally consistent and complete system must surely have a greater chance of acceptance than any half measures.

**Diphthongs**
The same need to apply logic and order applies to the diphthongs. Any coherent and easily understood system for diphthongs must ensure that they are derived from their component pure sounds. This is the norm in most European languages, as can be seen from the table below:
ITA symbol     /a/     /u/     /au/     /i/

| | /ai/ | /e/ /ei/ /o/ /oi/ | | Spanglis | as uu ou,au ie | ei aill ai ai aai |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German | a u au i | | | i0 e Y | | |
| French | a ou aou i | | | ai | | |
| Spanish | a u au i | | | e-e,eh,ee- | o eu, rarrely: of | |
| Italian | a u au,ao i | | | e | eill | o- |
| Duthc | a oe ou,au i | | | e ei | o of | |
| English | ah oo, ou,ow ee | | | e ei | o of e ei,if o ooi | |
| Englis | c w ou E | | | e ai | o of e A O of e ei ow oi,oy | |

Thus, it will be noted that while the formation of diphthongs in Spanish and Italian is transparent and obvious, this is not the case with a few of them in German, more in French and Dutch and all but one (oi) in English. Other languages throughout the world mostly use the Latin vowel system (which in TO terms might be conveyed as ah,eh,eeh, oh, ooh) and form their diphthongs in a regular fashion: Mao, Mau-Mau, Maori, Macau, Hawaii, Mumbai, Sendai, Shanghai, Cairo.

All this analysis has been made by reformers and others before. The point of doing it again is to remind ourselves what is at stake and to come to conclusions about what we think the ultimate fate of English should be. One might conclude that it is impossible or at least difficult to devise a transparent and logical vowel system unless the spelling is phonetic. Thus the ultimate aim must surely be that which is taken for granted in most languages, namely a phonetic alphabet and spelling system. Not all the languages of Europe are phonetic (though they are all far more regular than English). But we must not take Europe as the norm. Fortunately the two other European languages which are spoken most widely abroad, Spanish and Portuguese, are pretty regular if not entirely phonetic already. Most other languages, whether they employ the Roman script or are regularly transliterated into it for foreign consumption are also regular or phonetic.

Yet many reformers do not think that a purely phonetic system is feasible or appropriate for English. Obviously they see a need for improved spelling in what has become the world's foremost language, but do not think complete standardization in a phonetic form is possible because of the problem of local accents. Most other languages have local accents and many are lumbered with dialects as well. The latter really do require variant spelling. To remind people of their roots the local newspaper may feature a paragraph in the local dialect. Swiss German children speak the local Schwyzer-deutsch dialect, but when they go to school they have to learn standard German as a separate language. Fortunately the variants of standard English nowhere seem to amount to separate dialect (Pidgins are a different matter).

The problem of different accents can be overcome. There is no need for the spelling system to be sufficiently scientific to satisfy a linguist expert. A loose fit is feasible. Some sounds can be coalesced into one spelling without confusion or difficulty. Most languages have their local variations without the predictable and regular ways. When the Scotsman says fish it sounds to other people like fush but he doesn't hesitate to spell it with an i; similarly the New Zealander with pin and pen, and the North American with intervocalic t which to outsiders sounds like a d (daughder instead of daughter). Again, in Southern Germany eu(/oi/) and ei (/ai/) both seem to he pronounced /ai/, but the Germans can live with that. In Spanish, there are standard differences between Castilian and American Spanish which again cause no problems in the standard spelling.

A phonetic spelling system is not therefore incompatible with a language featuring varying accents. It would be arrogant to say that English should be an exception to that rule.

When it comes to really variant pronunciations, alternative words, particularly involving consonants, there is no alternative to variant spellings in even a halfway phonetic system: variants like

schedule/skedule, missle/missile, will need separate spellings. 1 see no objection to that, just as choice of vocabulary varies (e.g., pavement/ sidewalk, warfie/ dockworker).

**Working towards a phonemic system**
If we accept that the ultimate aim of reforming English spelling is to devise a phonetic system, it follows that we need a strategy for reform which has that in view as the ultimate solution. At the same time it is important not to prejudge what that phonetic system should be. Many members, myself included, have firm ideas about a phonetic system for English. But ours is a broad church and it will probably be officialdom which chooses the system to be adopted.

So, any proposal for interim change should be so framed as to not prejudice wholesale phonetic reform. In default of such a programme there is a danger that pragmatic attempts to effect piecemeal improvements will degenerate into muddle

and chaos, and prejudge the future pattern. One solution is to accept that some words will alter two or three times before the final scheme: breath>breeth>briith, or whatever. However, unless reform took place over a very long time, perhaps centuries, such changes would be very confusing and so unacceptable. Since it is to be hoped that the whole process of reform will take a generation at most, two or more changes per word should be avoided so as to avoid confusion.

Again, it is difficult to suggest interim proposals for the vowels which do not make assumptions about the ultimate pattern. To change breathe to breeth, say, presupposes that the final solution for /i:/ should be ee, and so one wonders what the solution for /i/ should be, bearing in mind as argued above that the spelling for the long version of a vowell sound should derive from the short. In general, spelling reform would not appear to be a fertile field for the Anglo-Saxon genius for pragmatic piecemeal solutions. We should resist the urge to do something radical, merely to be shown to bring about some change after nearly a hundred years of fruitless effort.

In a desperate attempt to gain the support of conservatives some reformers have even drawn up lists of common words which would remain unaltered. I think this is a mistake and it smacks of the "muddling through" condemned above. If they survived to the final solution such words would stick out like sore thumbs and remain in limbo as a vast body of exceptions to the rules. The point of a phonetic system is to have no exceptions to the rules.

**Interim Solutions**
Any intereim changes should be confined to the lightest of prunings, affecting mainly redundant consonants, the very slightest form of Cut Spelling so that substantive changes to the vowels in due course will not be affected. The aim should be to reduce the number of rules, not create more, to regularise whole classes of words rather than merely remove isolated anomalies. Examples:

a)   Change ph to f —foto, tyfoid, fase.
b)   Omit silent initial letters as in nife, neumatic, nat, sychic, nome, now and knowledge, naw. It is suggested the change be confined to initial consonants because while some consonants within words can be omittedfle( g) m, others like si( gi) n cannot without affecting the pronunciation.
c)   Change vocalic y to i except at the end of a word, as in tire, pire, hiper, rithm, Pirric, fisical (Rithm, fisic, flem and perhaps other words, would undergo to changes, but both could occur at once).
d)   drop final non-performing magic e as in giv and hav. e) Omit silent gh, often the relic of a suppressed fricative, as in welt, sleit, freit, neibour, fraut. Igh remains a problem, since omitting the gh would affect the pronunciation.

# 17. Spelling Systems Have Always Been Mixes and Have Drawn Ideas from Multiple Sources

## Niklaus Shaeffer, Basel, Switzerland
**This article is a part of a long essay covering most of the world's writing systems. Only the sections that pertain to English have been excerpted here.**

## 1. Introduction
Spelling systems are heterogeneous systems that derive from several sources. There are probably no ex nihilo writing systems. Even the "Ur-Alphabet", namely the Phoenician, developed from several sources. Although there are scholars who derive alphabets such as the Runic or the Ogham alphabet from a single source, this seems very unlikely.

> **That English spelling is eclectic is not the problem — the problem is that English spelling mixes different systems without being consistent. Other systems — from Ancient Greek to modern Wolof spelling — are eclectic and consistent at the same time.**

The creators of spelling systems are, as Miller (68) pointed out, multi-lingual and familiar with several older systems. Politics also play an important role in adapting alphabets. Those in power are able to choose their kind of alphabet. Reasons for adapting a certain alphabet may vary over time. Religion, nationalism and identity in general is probably the main force. The need to innovate and to mix different scripts is not only the result of the phonetic shape of a given language, but also due to the pressure on a political entity to have a script of their own, in order not to get confused with other groups. This political pressure also is responsible for the conservativism often encountered when it comes to changing already established systems.

English spelling with its inconsistent, historical and etymological (sometimes even pseudo-etymological) mix of the Anglo-Saxon, the Anglo-Norman and other traditions is perceived as a national symbol by many speakers of English. That English spelling is eclectic is not the problem — the problem is that English spelling mixes different systems without being consistent. Other systems — from Ancient Greek to modern Wolof spelling — are eclectic and consistent at the same time.

Nationalism has also led to some innovation. Webster's minor simplifications were generally accepted and adopted by the U.S. government. These were enough to make American spelling slightly different from British spelling. But in general English orthography since the 18th century has remained a very conservative system where reform is virtually absent.

## 2. The Semitic Alphabets and their Origins.
The first partly alphabetic spellings can be found in the Middle Kingdom (Sass 26). According to Bauer (Coulmas 1998: 141) the Semites borrowed the principle of consonantal alphabetic orthography (Skoyles) from the Egyptians. Gardiner (1916, in Coulmas 1989: 140) Cretan and Hittite origins are sometimes suggested. The most probable case, however, is an extensive Egyptian influence and at least graphic influence from other sources.

In the beginning, the Semitic alphabets did not contain vowel graphemes. That is why some scholars see these alphabets as syllabaries (Gelb 147 ff., Powell 238 ff.). However, syllabaries consist of items that always designate a "consonant + vowel" or in some cases "vowel". Consonantal alphabets, on the other hand, only have signs that designate consonants. It is not clear why the Semites in the beginning did not designate vowels — some scholars claim that this has something to do with the paucity of vowels present in early Semitic (as in Classical Arabic), others state that the system of Semitic roots is the cause of this system: Daniels (DB 27) claims that "the Semitic abjads do fit the structure of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic very well". A syllabic system would not be fit for Semitic languages — due to the phonological properties of those languages. In Japanese, on the other hand, a consonant is always followed by a vowel, therefore syllabic writing is in a way more than fit for Japanese. The English word hotel for example is written as ho-te-ru and is also pronounced trisyllabically. Greek on the other hand is hard to write syllabically. ******v for example would have to be written as *su-ki-ze-nu. Hence, the syllabic Linear B which was used by the Mycenaeans and was derived from the earlier Minoan system (Linear A) was a system that was not created for Greek, but for a still unknown language with a phonetic structure probably similar to Japanese. Miller (18 ff.) gives the following example: /p̣hásgana/ was written as pa-ka-na (id. 19) in Linear B.

## 2.1. Matres lectionis.
**consonants used for vowel transcription**
According to Sass (5), already in the Middle Kingdom there were some cases of matres lectionis, i.e. consonant graphemes which were used to transcribe vowels in foreign words, namely in Punic (Jensen 290, Naveh 62), Aramaic and Hebrew (hê, wâw, jôd; sometimes even 'âlep; Naveh 62). — In Modern Hebrew (Ivrit), this system is used in non-Biblical words such as xatûl ('cat'), which is spelled xtvl. Naveh (ibid.) notes that the earliest Aramaic and Hebrew documents already used matres lectionis. Some scholars argue that therefore the Greeks must have borrowed their alphabet from the Arameans. But the practice has older roots: the Semitic cuneiform alphabet of Ugarit (13th ct. BC) already has matres lectionis (Naveh 138).

## 3. The Greek Alphabet.
The fact that the Greek alphabet derives from an earlier Semitic script is uncontested, the exact source(s) of the Greek alphabet are however controversial. Sass (94) mentions the Proto-Canaanite and the Phoenician scripts, Coulmas (1989: 142) and Naveh (1979: 55) mention only the Phoenician alphabet.

The Greeks were the first people who generalized the alphabetic designation of vowels. They probably did so unconsciously, but opinions on this topic are characterized by great dissension. It is not clear whether Greeks and Semites made the distinction between vowels and consonants the same way present western civilization does. Bernal (128) mentions Phoenician colonization of Greece: bilingualism was probably rather frequent — also for economic reasons. Without communication, there is no commerce. This in turn seems to imply that — as in the case of other alphabets — primarily bilingual or multilingual people are those who adapt alphabets. The Greek alphabet is probably not the result of a unique and isolated adoption, but a multi-layered process based on several Semitic alphabets. Other scripts — Miller (52) even mentions graphic Linear B influence — may also have played a part.

Maybe it is also necessary to examine whether Greeks and Phoenicians made the same distinctions between different Semitic languages that scholars make today.

## 4. The Etruscan Alphabet.
The Etruscan alphabet derives from the Greek. It is however not clear whether the process of adaptation took place in Italy or in Greece/Asia Minor. It was in any case a Western Greek alphabet.

## 5. The Latin Alphabet.
The Latin alphabet derives mainly from the Etruscan script. According to Hammarstrom (in Jensen 521), the letters for B, D, O, X hail from a Southern Italian Greek alphabet. However, there are Etruscan abecedaria with B, D, O, X (Sampson 108). Rix (203) claims that the sound values of those letters in Latin is to be attributed to Greek influence. The letters themselves were probably all present when the Romans took over the alphabet from the Etruscans (Wachter 33).

It is uncontested that the alphabet is mainly of Etruscan origin. The sound value of C proves that clearly. Etruscan had no voiced plosives, so this symbol — derived from the Greek gamma — came to stand for the unvoiced /k/ in Etruscan — as later in Latin. Jensen (521) notes that the letters C, K, Q were originally used in Latin according to Etruscan usage: C in front of /e, i/; K in front of /a/; Q in front of /u, o/. The letters thus stand for different allophones of /k/ (in the case of Latin, also /g/ and probably the phonemes / k_w/ and /g_w/ in the case of QU and GU). These spelling rules are due to the names of the letters: gamma or gemma; kappa; qoppa or quppa (Wachter 15). In Etruscan there was no /o/, so Q was used both in front of /o/ and /u/ in Latin. Y and Z were later additions taken from the Greek alphabet. G was created approximately in the 3rd century BC by Spurius Carvilius Ruga as a modification of C (Sampson 109). * (digamma) stood for /w/ in both Etruscan and Latin, but the Romans simplified the *H-/f/combination to F /f/. The semivowels /w, j/ and the vowels /u, u:, i, i:/ were written with the same letters, namely V and I respectively.

## 6. The Runes.
The runes were created by speakers of Germanic dialects in order to write their languages. Although some scholars claim the runes to be entirely of Greek (Morris in Odenstedt 359) or Latin (Odenstedt 362) origin, most scholars view this alphabet as a script of mixed origin. Seebold (441), Krause (38 ff.), Jensen (571) and Coulmas (1996: 444 ff.) think that the Runic alphabet is a mixture of North Italic/Alpine alphabets with additional Latin influence. This most frequent school of thought is certainly more realistic than the monogenetic explanations provided by Morris and Odenstedt.

Some letters are obviously Latin in origin, for example the runes for /f/ and /r/, others remind clearly — at least on a formal level — of Alpine letters, for example the /h/-rune. There are also symbols that could be either Latin or Alpine, e.g. the /i/-rune. Bernal (36) thinks that there was also some substrate alphabet involved, Miller (62) claims that the origins of the runic alphabet are archaic-Mediterranean. Both do not specify their ideas. Miller (ibid.) also writes that the phonetic parameters on which the runic alphabet is based are ultimately clearly Semitic and links them to the scripts of Byblos and Ugarit as well as the Phoenician alphabet.

Several different Runic scripts developed, including an Anglo-Saxon system that even had different symbols for /k/ and /c/ (modern English /tS/). The latter was symbolized by the old /k/-rune; a new symbol was created for Anglo-Saxon /k/.

## 7. Old English — Anglo-Saxon
### and the influence of Latin Orthography

Many languages all over the world are spelled with Latin characters. Old English, too, came to be written by means of Latin characters instead of the former Runic system. However, not all phonemes of OE had Latin counterparts. At first, /w/ and /th/ were represented by means of runic letters (wynn and thorn respectively) and eth. The Anglo-Saxons learned the Latin alphabet from Irish monks. Early manuscripts symbolized the phoneme /ð/ with the Runic thorn as well as the newly created eth. They symbolized both the voiced and the voiceless allophones of /ð/. /w/ was first symbolized by <u, uu> and then replaced by the Runic wynn (Weimann 59). Not only Irish scribes had an influence on Anglo-Saxon spelling: Greek members of the Canterbury mission introduced <y> with its Greek value /y/ (formerly /u/) into English spelling (Kniesza 26). The relationship between Northumbrian monasteries and those of northern Ireland was very close. Therefore, northern spelling conventions were closer to these sources than to the south, where wynn, thorn and eth were used. Instead, Northumbrian spelling has <th> and <u>. <th> "has always been recognized as an alternative to thorn by English writers" and "was used to transcribe Greek theta" (Scragg 2). Although Northumbrian scribes started to use thorn and wynn, they disappeared in both Scots and English — probably due to their inavailability to printers. The Lindisfarne texts have both wynn and <w> (Kniesza 29). Even before the Norman influx, Northumbrians used <ch> for /ts/. Furthermore, diacritics or doubling of vowel letters are typical of Northumbrian spelling (30). In the Middle English period, Norman influence formed and changed English spelling. <ch>, <qu> were typical French graphemes that were rare before. The simplification <sch> to <sh> (Scragg 46) and other digraphs with <-h> as their second element may have been coined after <ch> (id. 30).

In Scots, <hw> or <wh> was written as <quh> more often, and <sh> was also rare; the scribes preferring the older <sch> grapheme (Kniesza 32). Digraphs with <i> were also typical of Scots (id. 40) In this context, it is, as Kniesza (33) states, also essential to have a look round and make a similar analysis not only of the neighbouring dialects (of Scots] but of all languages whose speakers played an important historical-cultural role in the life of Scotland: French, Dutch/Flemish and soon. This is because writing can be influenced externally, and the adoption of a certain spelling habit does not necessarily mean the adoption of the underlying pronunciation, let alone a parallel process in sound changes.

Scragg (17) has looked more closely at "foreign" influences. First, Latin conventions lead to a certain degree of confusion: <th> and <ch> were introduced and <ae> was often used instead of <e>. The sounds [ç] and [x] were sometimes represented by Anglo-Norman <s> as well as Old English [h] and the new grapheme yogh and yogh plus <h> (23) — probably due to the absence of these sounds in French. Scragg (49) mentions the introduction of the new <ie> grapheme which was taken over from French. Even Spanish influence may be present in English spelling, as Scragg (57) notes, namely the <l> in the word emerald which is sometimes ascribed to sixteenth century Spanish influence.

In 1476, William Caxton established the first press in England (Scragg 5). Caxton also translated himself, and according to Scragg (66) "he seems heavily influenced by his sources, the most

notorious of his permanent contributions to the language being the introduction of the Dutch convention <gh> for /g/ in ghost, a native word spelt gost until the later fifteenth century." <gh> may actually be a Dutch grapheme introduced into English; however, the grapheme was almost certainly not pronounced as /g/.

The spelling in Middle Dutch was in any case strongly influenced by French writers. In old texts we can, for example, often find -ghe- or -ghi- instead of the modern -ge- or -gi-. This means that the letter <g> must have been pronounced [x] as in modern Dutch (ie like the <ch> in Scottish "loch"), and not like the French <g> which had changed to voiced <zj> in front of /e/ and /i/ (as in the English word "leisure"). (Dünser et al.) English translation by Dr. John Gledhill.

Therefore, Caxton's choice of' spelling is probably solely graphic and not based on phonetic properties. He also used other "Dutch spellings". In one of his translations from the Dutch, Reynard the Fox (1481), he wrote goed instead of good and ruymen for make room. Dutch goed was at this time probably already pronounced as /u/. Words like good, foot, stood had alternative pronunciations with /u:/ until the 17th century (Cruttenden 113).

The <uy> spelling in ruymen seems to imply a diphthongized pronunciation (or maybe an older Dutch pronunciation /u:/).

The phoneme /d3/ that was symbolized in OE either as <cg> or in some cases <gg> due to contact with Old French orthography was now spelled either as <i> or <g> (only before <e, i>). (66/67) The spelling <gu-> before <i, e> was also due to French influence: guest instead of gest. 16th century Italian influence lead to spellings such as ghest or ghess which reflect the Italian way of distinguishing between palatal and non-palatal pronunciations before <i, e> (ibid.)

Both Scots and English spelling — as we have seen, Scots and English were probably more heterogeneous at an earlier stage which makes the term "Anglo-Saxon" more fit to describe the language — have been subject to many different influences.

1. Irish      4. Dutch
2. Latin      5. Italian
3. French    6. Spanish

And many others — e.g. Icelandic (geysir), Gaelic (loch), Portuguese (piranha), German and German transcription of Yiddish (dachshund, schmuck). English and Scots spelling is a living example of a system that has various origins and even applies different rules at the same time, due to the different systems that formed English spelling in the past.

## 8. Conclusion.

Monogenetic theories are usually unfit to explain the origins of alphabets and writing systems. This is true in both older alphabets as well as orthography of modern languages. There have been probably no ex nihilo alphabets or writing systems. Alphabets that have been created from a single source are very hard to find. As culture in general is always eclectic, so are alphabets and other scripts. Most often multilingual people who already know several tongues and scripts create new scripts. Modern day spelling systems are no exception to this rule. The heterogeneous origins of spelling systems are also the result of politics. Especially in modern times, nations identified themselves not only with their language, but also with their script.

## Partial list of references

Bernal, Martin. 1990. Cadmean Letters. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Berry, Jack. 1977. "The 'Making of Alphabets' Revisited" In: Fishman 3–16.

Coulmas, Florian. 1989. The Writing Systems of the World. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd.

—. 1985. Sprache und Staat. Studien zur Sprachplanung. Berlin and NY: Walter de Gruyter.

—. 1996. The Blackwell encyclopaedia of writing systems. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Crystal, David. 1997. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language. Cambridge: CUP.

Daniels, Peter T. and William Bright. 1996. The World's Writing Systems. NY and Oxford: OUP 1996. (=DB)

Diringer, David. 1986. The Alphabet. A Key to the History of Mankind. 3rd. Ed . Vols. I and II. Completely revised. London : Hutchinson.

Driver, G. R. 1976. Semitic Writing. From Pictograph to Alphabet. Newly revised edition. Oxford: OUP.

Dünser, Julian et al. 1997. Geschiedenis van het Nederlands

Elliott, Ralph W. 'The runic script" In: Daniels/Bright S. 333–339.

Everson, Michael et al. 1997. "On the status of the Latin letter þorn and of its sorting order"

Firmage, Richard A. 1993. The alphabet abecedarium. Some notes on letters. Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher.

Gelb, I.J. 1969 11952] A Study of Writing. Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P.

Gordon, A.E. 1973. The Letter Names of the Latin alphabet. Berkley, LA and London: U of California P.

Gundersen, Dag. 1977. "Successes and Failures in the Reformation of Norwegian Orthography" In: Fishman 247–265.

Harris-Northall, Ray. 1992. "Devoicing, deaffrication and word-final -z" In: Hispanic Linguistics 4:2 (Spring 1992)

Hooker, J.T (introd.) 1990. Reading the Past. Ancient Writing from Cuneiform to the Alphabet. London: British Museum Press.

Izady, Mehrdad R. "The Concise Encyclopaedia of Kurdistan. A PanKurdish Alphabet."

Jensen, Hans. 1970. Sign Symbol and Script. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. Transl. of Die Schrift in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften. 1958, as revised by the author.

Miller, D. Gary. 1994. Ancient scripts and phonological knowledge. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Naveh, Joseph. 1979. Die Entstehung des Alphabets. Transl. of Origins of the Alphabet. Zurich and Köln. Benziger.

—. 1982. Early History of the Alphabet. An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University. Leiden: E. J. Brill

Powell, Barry B. 1991. Homer and the Origin of the Greek Alphabet. Cambridge: CUP.

Sampson, Geoffrey. 1985. Writing Systems. London (etc.): Hutchinson.

Sass, Benjamin. 1991. Studia Alphabetica. On the origin and early history of the Northwest Semitic, South Semitic and Greek alphabets. CH-Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Scragg, D.G. 1974. A History of English Spelling. MUP/Barnes & Noble.

Skoyles, John R. 1977. The origin of Classical Greek culture: Huntergatherers of the alphabet.

Swiggers, Pierre. 1996. "Transmission of the Phoenician script to the west" In: Daniels/Bright S.261–270.

Threatte, Leslie. 1996. "The Greek alphabet" In: Daniels/Bright S. 271–280.

# 18. Letters & Summaries of On-Line Discussions

*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.*

## A minimal respell "house-style" proposal
While there has been considerable debate as to what to adopt as a house style, we probably have not made any advances over the ten 1883 reform proposals of the American Philological Society: — Ed.

The changes affecting 3500 words fell into 10 basic categories: /E/=e, /^/=u, /f/ =f or ff, /tS/=ch, /z/ = z, ...

## 1883 REFORM
• Drop final silent "-e", e.g., ar, definit, giv, singl.
• Spell "ea" as "e" if pronounced as a short "e", e.g., hed, helth, lether, ment [basically Lindgren's SR-l].
• Spell "o" as "u" if pronounced as such, e.g., abuv, cumpany, dun, frum.
• Spell "ou" as "u" or "o", e.g., trubl, tuch, glamor ; + change "gh" in : ruf, etc.
• Drop "-ue" or "u", giving: catalog, prolog, leag, gard, gess.
• Change "gh" and "ph" to "f" if sound is "f", e.g., laf, fonetic, frase, geografy.
• Spell voiced "s" as "z", e.g., enterprize, fuze, queazy, surprize, eazel.
• Drop " t " in "-tch", giving: cach, fech, pach, pich, swich.
• Eliminate double consonants in multisyllable words that do not mark a short stressed vowel. Like CutSpelling, the original proposal went beyond this changing not only bailif, & accommodation, but also forgotn, and guil.
• Keep the <-ed> past tense morpheme only if preceded by a soft c or g or by a long vowel

This reform is one answer to the question: **What words need to be respelled** if the maximum number of respellings is 10% in any running sample of 1000 words.

Another answer is to respell only those words that cannot be understood if pronounced as written. This respell proposal would respell such words as enough, through, although, and the other *"ough"* words. This is also referred to as the SAXON alphabet reform.

## The Best Way to Represent the Sounds of English
Mark O'Conner writes: We could fully "address all the problems with the current writing system" by replacing it with a one-symbol-per-phoneme alphabet for English. But since conservative prejudice will not permit this in, at least, the currently   foreseeable future, perhaps we should ask instead: *"What alternative will best ameliorate the problems of the present alphabet and the present spelling?*

These problems include: unpredictable spelling, unreliable guide to pronunciation, difficult to teach & learn.

It would be unfair to assume that such a scheme must "address" (in the sense of "fix") all the problems inherent in these rather imperfect systems. What is wanted *is the best amelioration that can be implemented.*

*Mark's ReadWrite notation uses color coding and 7 optional levels of hinting. Kate Gladstone said " Mark's process strikes me as the best thing I've seen yet (in terms of its chances for seeing wide use as a way to achieve the goals of a better spelling without disturbing the people who don't want or don't need hints". To check out ReadRight contact O'Conner at mark@australianpoet.com*

### Voice of American Pronunciation Guide.

PG spellings of all the names in the news can be found at this site in "menu-spell" and as an audio file. e.g., BREZHNEV, LEONID ILYICH **BREHZH**-nyehf, lay-o-**NEED** eel-**YIHCH**
Brezhnyef, Leyonied Ielyich [Spanglish] *breZnyef, *IAOnEd ElyiC [ENgliS]

**Bridges to Literacy.** Theme in support of a new i.t.a. where **bridges** stands for "Beginners' Road Into Directly Grasping English Spelling" Spanglish was designed as a bridge English. Start with a highly phonemic i.t.a. and come up with ways to devolve it into the traditional spelling. Pitman's i.t.a. transcriptions added silent letters without justification, used traditional spelling rather than sound to spell unstressed vowels, and failed to explain how traditional spellings could evolve from i.t.a. spellings. The Spanglish i.t.a. does not repeat these errors but admits that 15% of tradspel cannot be explained and have to be memorized as logograms or sight words.

# PROPOSALS

### Half Baked Ideas.

Allan Campbell has actively endorsed a publicity first campaign and Steve Bett has proposed several ways to increase public exposure and public access to reform proposals. These proposals are not fully thought out and require more input from the membership. Please write.

### The Alternative Spelling Bee.

The society has often claimed that logical spelling would be much more predictable than historical spelling. An alternative spelling bee would be a place to prove this. What we need are rules that define what we mean by a logical spelling. In 40% of the cases, traditional spelling is logical. There is often more than one logical spelling. What is logical depends on what exception rules are allowed such as spelling /geit/ as <gate>.

### More SR Books for the libraries.

There are not many books in the libraries that even mention spelling reform and fewer that in any way endorse it. We have the reprint rights to a hundred years of essays on spelling reform and we should make these generally available to the public. The first book in the series would be a 300 page anthology of articles from the Spelling Progress Bulletin and The Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society. The working title is **100 years of spelling reform**. Members would receive a free copy of the book. Donations would be accepted to cover the costs of marketing 200 copies at $12 each to the libraries.

**Proposal for a political referendum on spelling reform.**
Going thru the process of formulating a proposal that would he on a State political ballot would be a good exercise. What kind of reform would stand a chance of being endorsed by 51% of the residents of a state'?

**Sponsor a new Shaw alphabet type contest.**
The exercise would be setting up the rules to be used in evaluating competing schemes. The exercise would get the membership to focus on specifics. One of our problems is that we cannot agree on what we want. Some say we don't need any new schemes but this is something that people will respond to so it will put spelling reform in the spotlight. It would probably take a $5,000 investment but it should generate over $50,000) in publicity and new memberships.


Steve,
Enjoyed your gauntlet essay very much. Fassinating that one cannot answer such vital questions. I suspect youre correct that printing orthors' rights was the salient reason for convergence and conformity but thats quite a time lag up till Samuel Johnson.

I was working yesterday on target words fur the 3rd World Vote of www.freespeling.com in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (opened 11.8.1602)

Am dining with a chum in Christ Church College (1524) this evening under the portraits of 8 British Prime Ministers; shall put your conundrum to them. I forget the collective for a Common Room full of pedants. Probly just a Pride?

I just hope 1 can avoid making seriously bad jokes about voiceless fricasee of ciken and who took the third o out of pronunciation? — always annoyed me that! But I shall certainly try to entertain your points (with attribution) in a chat show on Radio Scotland on Monday morning
— *Richard Wade*


**Children of the Code**
The PBS [US Public Broadcasting System] program will be concentrating on showing the hidden costs associated with maintaining a logographic writing system. It shows the need to change the code if we want to get the benefits of a simpler alphabetic system.

It is not that the logographic system does not work. It just does not work for everyone and trying to get it to work for the bottom half of the class is more expensive than moving to a new more consistent code.

**Where do we spend our time and money?** On [1] Convincing people of the need for change, or [2] Implementing a particular change'!

Allan Campbell wrote:
So, lets conserve our eftrts, and put them where they ar enrjy and cost efficient — convincing peple of the need for chanje.

John Responded:

Ah, but thats just it: Convinsng peepl of the need for a chainj is hardr than implementng a chainj. I resntly had won of thoas blyndngly obvius epifanies about this. If U can imajn such a tthing, hardly eniwun cairs about spelng. This aplys as much to the publix atitued to TO as to thair reaxion to reform when it is propoasd to them. The subject is esensialy invizabl. Englishspeekrs wit spel witth whatevr sistm is prezentd to them. Just doant ask them to tthink about it.

And the fact is that chainj is hapning, eavn axeleraitng. Becaus of the proliferaision of informl electronicly transmitd text, and allso becaus of the declyn of the study of Latn and French in the englishspeeking wrld, the tradisionl, etimolojicl ortthogrfy of English is in vizabl retreet.

The funxion of a spelng reform organizasion then, is to du in a mor sistematic fasion whot sour of our membrs hav been doing invidualy. That is, collectng nu spelngs as they apear, and bringng the atension of editrs and the wydr public to the betr wuns. Tu maik recomendaisions, howevr, we realy du need at leest an implyd sistm.

Allan wrote:
U may wet be on the road to Damascus. I dont no, but yor blinding experience makes me think of our electrl systrn. In case u dont no, about five years ago we chanjed from the traditionl Westminster 'first-past-the-post' systm, in which the party with the most electrat seats became govrnmnt, and until the next election could do just about as it plesed — an 'elected dictatorship'.

In a refrendm, we narroly decided to chanje to the much mor democratic mixed membr proportionl (MMP) systm used in Germany. This organizes each partys proportion of seats almost exactly in line with its proportion of the popular vote. And leads to issu-by-issu decisions.

But the crucial point in this argument is that most peple who voted for it really didnt no wat it was or how it workd. Comentators agree that the vote was larjly a protest vote against members of Parliament. The two major parties oposed MMP. And tho i think there myt be a hyr proportion who now hav some idea of its workngs, i think there is still a wide ignrance. But it would win by a bigr marjn now if a vote was held.

I ges there is a component of 'we wit do wat u ask' in spelng as in the above politicl voting. But there is also an educated suspicion and distrust as evidenced by my frends comment at the dinr the othr nyt. And an educated oposition.

***Archer's New Spelling: It mae be wel to ad dhat dhe formz widh which we are familyar ar not aulwaez dhoez prefurd bie our graet poets. Shakespeare haz els, maner, tung, tel, dasht, stopt, carvd, sadnes; Milton; suspens, gladsom, falshood, dred, labord, farewel, sented, sovran; Dryden, dropt, contest; Tennyson woz an Onorary Vies-Prezident, ov dhe Inglish Speling Reform Asoesyaeshon, and, in spiet of dhe strong feeling for "korekt speling' in hiz dae, he did not hezitaet to spel dipt, drest, lapt, dropt, ets.. But it is dhe printerz, and not dhe graet rieterz, huu hav deturmind our speling, widh dhe solitary edsepshon ov Dr. Johnson; and, az we hav seen,, he reguelariezd whot he found — he did not reform.***

# 19. Six Axioms on English Spelling in 3 transcriptions

The Six Axioms were first published by the Simplified Spelling Society in 1908. A variety of other schemes could have been used [e.g. RITE, New Spelling, Truespel, Spelriyt, etc.].
Journal 30 has transcriptions in a. Saxon Spanglish, b. Unifon, c. Johnson's archaic notation.

| a. ALC SoundSpel | b. ENgliS [SoundSpel forum]; | c. Iqliz |
|---|---|---|
| a. SoundSpel is a digraphic 80% phonemic notation with 20 or so sight words. | b. ENgliS is a unigraphic 98% phonemic notation. As written, it lacks a true consonant form of w and y. [W,j] | |
| 1a. The leters of the alfabet wer deziend to reprezent speech sounds. That is the alfabetic prinsipl. [transcription by Ed Roundthaler. Notation: ALC SoundSpel, previously known as American Spelling] | 1b. •*Da letarz ov Di qlfabet wR dizYnd to reprizent spEC sowndz; thqt iz Di qlfabetik prinsipal.* | 1c. The leters ov the alfabet wer desined to represent speech sounds; that is the alfabbetic prinsipal. [transcription and notation by Gus Hasselquist, see his web for the exception rules] |
| 2a. The alfabet prinsipl maeks literasy eezy, alowing the reeder to pronouns werds frum thair speling, and the rieter to spel them from thair sounds. | 2b. •*Di qlfabetik prinsipal mAks litarasy Ezy, alowiN Da rEdar to pranowns wurdz frum ther speliN, qnd Da rYtar tw spel Dem frum Der sowndz.* | 2c. The alfabbetic prinsipal makes liturasy eesy, alowing the reeder to pronouns werds from thair speling, and the riter to spel them from thair sounds. |
| 3a. As pronunsiaeshun chaenjes thru the aejus, the alfabetic prinsipl tends to be corupted; the speling of werds needs to be adapted to sho the nue sounds. | 3b. •*qz pranunsEAsSan CAnjaz Trw Dc Ajaz, Da qlfabetik prinsipal tendz to bE koruptad; Da speliN Ov wRdz Den nEdz to bE adqptad tw shO Da nw sowndz.* | 3c. As pronunsiation chainjes thru the ages, the alfabbetic prinsipal tends to be curupted; the speling ov werds then needs to be adapted to sho the nu sounds. |
| 4a. Unliek uther langgwejes, English haz not sistematicaly moderniezd its speling oever the past 1000 yeers, and todae it oenly haphazardly obzervs the alfabetic prinsipl and its uther prinsipls to reprezent the English langgwej. | 4b. •*unlYk uDar lgNwijaz, •EngliS hqz nct sistamlatikaly modarnYzd its speliN Ovar Da past 1,000 yirz, qnd twdA it Only hqphazardly obsRvz Da qlfabetik prinsipal.* | 4c. Unlike other langwejes, English has not sistematicaly modernised its speling over the past 1,000 yirs, and tuday it oanly haphasurdly observs the alfabbetic prinsipal. |
| 5a. Neglect of the alfabetic prinsipl and uezers' needs now maeks literasy unnesesairily dificult in English thruout the werdd, and lerning, edjucaeshun and comuenicaeshun all sufer. | 5b. •*Neglect ov Da alfabetik prinsipal qnd Uzarz nEdz now mAks litarasy unneseserily difKult* | 5c. Neglect ov the alfabbetic prinsipal and usersnow makes liturasy unnesarily dificult in English thruout the werdd, and lerning, edewcation and comewnication of sufur. |
| 6a. Proseejers ar needed to reeserch and manej improovments in English speling as a werld comuenicaeshun sistem. | 6b. •*prasEjarz cr nEdad tw rEsarC qnd mgnaj imprwVments in ENgliS speliN qz a world kamUnikASan sistam.* | 6c. Proseedyers ar needed to research and manij improvements to English speling as a werld comewnication sistem. |