

Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society J32, 2003/1.

Editor: Steve Bett.

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[Steve Bett: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#)]

1. Editorial.

Steve Bett.

Moving from logographic lexical spelling to phonemic spelling.

The proposals of the Simplified Spelling Board of 1906 and the Simplified Spelling Society of 1908 were attempts to seek out the lines of least resistance to spelling change. Earlier phonemic spelling associations were thought to advocate reform proposals that were too radical for any popular acceptance. The first compromise, suggested by Alexander Ellis, was to retain the shifted long vowels. In England, this led to the endorsement of New Spelling which became the house style for most internal publications of the society until around 1920.

The following quote illustrates New Spelling and the opinion of the Simplified Spelling Board who considered this scheme to be too disruptive.

Orthografee iz liek soesieutee; it wil nevr bee entierlee reeformd but wee kan at leest maek it les vishus.

An alternative ASCII transcription uses caps instead of digraphs to augment the alphabet and recognizes schwa-a and schwi-y as a means of showing the characteristic alternating stress pattern in English.

.orTcgrafy iz IYk sosYaty; it wil nevar bE entYrly rEformd but wE cqn at lEst mAk it les viSas.

— *Sainte-Beuve EngliS transcription*

The 1906 Simplified Spelling Board circulars listed the following faults of traditional spelling:

How truly vicious our present spelling is anyone can see for himself. It is unworthy of a practical people. It misrepresents the derivations of the words, it is wholly unscientific; it is as wasteful as it is absurd; and it is inferior to the spelling of French and German and far inferior to the spelling of Italian and Spanish. How is it that the most businesslike of nations [England and America] have been so long content with the most unbusinesslike of orthographies.

English is now the most barbarously spelt of any cultivated tongue in Christendom. We are weltering in an orthographic chaos in which a multitude of signs are presented by the same sound and a multitude of sounds by the same sign. One and the same sound is now represented by *e* in *let*, by *ea* in *head*, by *ei* in *heifer*, by *eo* in *leopard*, by *av* in *says*, by *ai* in *said*, and by *a* in *many*. Seven different symbols for a single vowel sound. To make matters worse, these same symbols represent other vowel sounds in other words. [See **Preposterous.**]

Most consonants are better spelled but the same sound is represented by *s* in *sure*, by *sh* in *ship*, by *sci* in *conscience*, by *ci* in *suspicion*, by *ce* in *ocean*, by *ti* in *notion*, and by *xi* in *anxious* — again, seven different symbols for a single sound /S/.

The above was written by academics on the Simplified Spelling Board and published by the U.S. Government Printing Office in 1906. It was part of an introduction to Roosevelt's 300 simplified spellings.

The SSB did not advocate radical reform. They wanted to minimize disruption. They looked at the existing variant spellings in English and advocated that the status 300 of the approximately 2000 variants be upgraded to preferred. [The full list is at on ALC web.]

Orthographic Goals.

The reaction to this rational suggestion was so violent that Mario Pei and other advocates of radical reform concluded that since the conservative storm of objection was not related to the extent of the reform, we might as well advocate one that had the merit of being 100% logical and consistent. Pei said,

Anything short of a complete phonetization of English is a complete waste of time. Of what avail to respell a few words and leave the stumbling blocks?

[Preface to Tauber's History of Spelling Reform, 1968]

The editorials that appeared around the country between 1905 to 1908 were primarily against what these reforms could lead to. One editorial cartoon had Roosevelt kicking the dictionary out of the White House.

Those who protest are going to move by analogy to an imaginary full reform in order to make their point. The European commission satire of staged reform [[JSSS 31](#) Item 11] is a recent example.

Phonetization is only one of the orthographic goals advanced by SSS members: **Blain** [Item 7] suggests **consistent, phonemic, compact, familiar, and email friendly**. In her article in this issue, [Item 5], **Dr. Yule** recommends user friendly spellings over phonemic spellings. Certainly, **ease of learning** has to be included in any complete list of goals.

What are the lines of least resistance?

The conventional wisdom of 1906 was that it was futile to attempt a radical revision of English orthography. "Radical" was interpreted as anything more than a 50% improvement in the spelling of English or any proposal that would respell more than 10% of the 50% that needed to be respelled.

The general public is not going to be receptive to any change that makes reading more difficult even if the change makes reading that much less difficult for the beginning reader.

Finding the limits of annoyance is certainly important for choosing a house style. I do recommend a form of minimal disruption for material designed for a wide audience. f for /f/ except for function words has been suggested as a starting point. This convention is used both by **Isobel Raven** [Item 9) and **Valerie Yule** [Item 5).

Surveys of spelling preferences have been conducted since 1986. They generally show that the about 60% of the public would accept any readable consistent spelling of English. According to Georg Geiger [2003, Saundspel message], the public favors long vowels marked with diacritics to the digraphic representation used by New Spelling:

Orthografy iz lýk sosýety; It wil never bé entýrly reformd but wé can at lést mák it les vishas.

— Sainte-Beuve Diacritic Spanglish transcription.

Altho this is not it, there is an attempt to come up with a compromise diacritic notation in the Saundspel group. To be considered a legitimate SSS proposal, the scheme has to be endorsed by two members. **Valerie Yule** [Item 5.] would reject <iz> for is and prefers to use grave accents instead of macrons or acute accents to mark "long" vowels.

Reform under the radar — 2 stage approaches:

Webster was able to sneak his original reforms in under the radar by getting a Congressional endorsement of his 1805 and 1828 dictionaries. The official spelling of American English contained many more than the 300 respellings that Roosevelt endorsed in his executive order but they were hidden among 70,000 words that were not respelled.

Roosevelt might have been more successful if he had simply enforced the Webster 1828 spellings or had suggested that the USGPO use the Funk & Wagnall's dictionary which included them.

A similar "sneaky" approach to reform is found in the two stage proposal [Item 2). Instead of going head to head with habit, habits are modified by introducing the new spellings as an i.t.a. and a pronunciation guide. The goal is for adults to become almost as familiar with PG spellings as with traditional spellings.

The i.t.a. was tried before but not as part of a reform strategy and not as part of a teaching method designed to improve mastery of the basic code and basic spelling patterns. The first i.t.a. involved the used of a transcribed basal reader. Teachers were not required to change their methods of teaching.

The two stage approach involves attaching the new i.t.a. [or initial learning medium] to a writing to read strategy and a dictionary that uses the same pronunciation guide spelling. The PG spellings are used only 3 months rather than 2 years as with the 1960 i.t.a. Three months is all the time it takes to master the consistent basic code and begin the transition to the complex code.

How long does it take to teach reading and writing when the writing system is transparent?

The more complex the code, the longer it takes to master. Laubach said he could teach any language with a reasonably phonemic writing system in less than 160 contact hours or 3 months [about 2 hrs./day). He also said that 95% of the 300 languages he had taught were reasonably phonemic.

Russian school teachers claim to be able to teach children how to read and write Russian in 4 months [Flesch, 1983]. This is a month longer than Laubach but 5 years shorter than what most English and American teachers achieve.

Philip Seymour in a series of cross cultural studies was able to document that students in most countries reach a level of reading and writing proficiency in the 2nd year that English school children fail to achieve in their 4th year. [see forthcoming article in the *British Jour of Psych*]

Most Anglophone children take 3 years to reach a literacy standard that children in languages with relatively consistent spellings can reach in one.

[JSSS 30](#), Item 11

Other than French and English, almost all of the 300 languages Laubach taught were spelled as they were spoken. French, like English, has many ways to spell a sound, but unlike English, there is only one way to pronounce a French spelling.

We no longer teach people how to multiply with Roman numerals because there is an easier way to do it. What we need to demonstrate is that there is an easier way to write English. If the goal is communication, why not use the most efficient writing system?

Less than 5% of Britains, Americans, and Australians can spell in English without mistakes, or without dictionaries or computer spell-checkers — but the most serious problem is not the inability to write — it is the high proportion of the population who have not learned to read.

Selecting a base dialect for regularized English.

In this issue, our new president, **John Wells**, addresses the problem that I conveniently ignored in my article on the number of phonemes in English [[JSSS 30](#) Item 5]. Agreeing on the 36 uncombined phonemes in English is not the same as agreeing that words can be represented the same way in all dialects. Spelling that is changed to accommodate one accent may disrupt another. Many seemingly odd spellings such as <any> and <one> are actually pronounced that way in some dialect of English.

Bother and *Father* do not necessarily rhyme but they will be pronounced the same by most Americans. Most pronunciation dictionaries for General American will use the same symbol <a:> for both vowels. UK dictionaries disagree.

As Wells says [Item 2], no English spelling reform is not going to satisfy everyone. The Spanish writing system failed to represent all regional dialects yet it satisfies most people most of the time. This is as much as we can hope for. If we just select a base dialect, we can easily achieve the goal of having a writing system as phonemic and transparent as the Spanish.

I have suggested using NBC English as the base dialect. I have also suggested that <o> and <a> remain ambivalent as they are in traditional spelling and pronunciation. *Bother* and *Father* can be rhymed or not. "He tot the tot" can be understood in context without a sharp distinction in the pronunciation of tO:t and tA:t.

2. The Two Stage Approach to Spelling Reform.

Steve Bett.

Should the society endorse a parallel pronunciation guide writing system?

Instead of trying a frontal assault on traditional spelling, this proposal recommends an end run. First accustom the reader to a pronunciation guide spelling by 1. using it in a children's dictionary and 2. using it as an i.t.a. to introduce preschoolers to the basic code. Using this "road to the code" the reader will never forget how to sound-spell and as a result sound spellings will not look that odd. Sapéna will be just as familiar as subpoena and much easier to pronounce and spell.

1. The Quandary: The kind of minimal change that the public would find acceptable will not be sufficient to solve the literacy problem.

Pronunciation guide spelling systems have been rejected by minimalists on the grounds that they are too radical. The public will never accept such a "wholesale" drastic change in the representation of spoken English. On the other hand, few of the benefits observed in the teaching and learning of highly phonemic writing systems such as Italian and Spanish will be realized until the English writing system achieves a comparable level of consistency and phonemicity.

According to Columbia linguist, Mario Pei, anything short of complete phonetization is a complete waste of time [1968]. It is not enough to remove a few stumbling blocks.

If the minimalists were successful in changing the spelling of 100 or even 1000 words in a 72,000-word dictionary, this would not be enough to make a dent in the literacy problem. A minimal change ["patchwork reform"] may send a message and put a dent in the indifference to spelling reform but it will not make English easier to teach and learn.

2. The Relative Regularity of English [7%], French [23%] and Spanish [83%].

The regularity of English has been estimated at between 7% and 85%. It all depends on how you define the regular and how you measure it [Yule, Item 5, Dewey 1978]. One measure of phonemicity or regularity is the number of phonemes divided by the number of spellings. Spanish has 24 phonemes and 29 ways to represent them. This makes the Spanish writing system 83% regular. If the regularity of English were measured the same way it would be only 7% regular. According to G. Dewey [1971], English has 41 phonemes and 561 ways to represent them. $41/561=7\%$. French: $30/130 = 23\%$.

If such regularity represented the relative ease with which an orthography is learned, then Spanish would be 11.9 times easier than English. Children would be able to learn to read and write in this orthography over 10 times as fast as they could learn English.

Can someone learn to encode and decode in Spanish ten times as fast as they can in English? So far, studies have been able to document that Spanish speaking children can acquire reading and writing skills in the phonemic Spanish writing system about five times faster than in English speaking children can learn to read and write English. [see **Campbell's list of studies in [JSSS30](#) Item 6**].

It is not unusual for a Spanish or Italian child to be able to read aloud a newspaper. This doesn't mean that they can fully understand what they have read. A study in the 1960's revealed that half

of the high school graduates in Eastern Kentucky could not duplicate this feat. They could not read aloud enough words in a newspaper article to make any sense of it.

A study of German and English dyslexics isolated a similar problem. English students with reading disabilities usually could not sound out multisyllable words. German dyslexics usually could. Both were slow but the Germans were slow and accurate. [Wimmer & Landerl, 1997.]

3. The first step: Over-learn sound spelling and the basic code.

Before suggesting that sound spelling be a replacement for the traditional writing system, a way must be found to accustom the public to it, and to the radical changes in spelling required for a pronunciation guide system.

At the present time, there is little familiarity with the alternatives to traditional spelling. To a traditional adept, substituting a sound spelling for a traditional spelling usually looks odd and out of place.

It is mostly a case of familiarity. Few would object to LITE for light because the variant spelling is ubiquitous in advertisements for beer.

Acceptance Requires Familiarity.

Although shorter and probably more readable, LITE and THRU continue to be low prestige variants. These variants, however, have achieved what needs to be achieved for all proposed respellings. Before the public will even consider a respelling, it has to be familiar.

The present proposal accomplishes two things: it accustoms the public to alternate spellings and it provides a rationale for why the variant should be used instead of the traditional form.

4. Are mini reforms the only way to minimize disruption?

To make English orthography as transparent as Spanish, a radical reform is required affecting as much as 60% of the words in the dictionary.

For the last 100 years, the proponents of phonemic spelling have thought that the only way to achieve their goal would be thru a series of 5% reforms. The first 5 reforms would fail to make a dent in the literacy problem so they could only be appreciated in terms of being more logical.

There is another way to introduce phonemic spelling that does not involve 50 years of turmoil. It still takes about 50 years but the new spelling is learned as a parallel pronunciation guide spelling. When a majority of users are familiar with two systems, then the switch can be made without much disruption. The change would be that traditional spelling would not be taught until college. Those that wanted to access our heritage of print could do so on their own. After the transition, reading old books would not be as difficult as reading Old English.

The benefit would be more universal literacy. Instead of up to 40% not being able to read the newspaper we would have 40% who would have no access to our "heritage of print". Over 95% would be able to read the newspaper.

We would be using "dumbed down" spelling but why not? The power of the insults would not have the same impact on a populace that was familiar with the pros and cons of the two writing systems.

The two stage proposal involves starting out children with a transparent orthography that reflects the basic code. After three months of writing with the phonemic writing system, the children would learn several other highly likely ways to spell the same 42 sounds.

The phonemic writing system would coexist with the traditional writing system as the pronunciation guide spelling in a dictionary. If successful, it would become the dominant pronunciation guide spelling in all new dictionaries.

To complete the two stage approach will take at least twenty years and as many as 60 years. The new PG spelling and associated dictionaries would have to be used in 60% of the schools for at least ten years. At least 100 million people would have to become familiar with the new spelling and be convinced that it represented how words should be spelled before a radical revision would have a chance of success.

Some would argue that general familiarity and acceptance of the proper way to represent spoken English has to be accepted before any new spelling would be accepted. People can read *brite lite thru* and *altho* as easily as they can the traditional equivalents. This has not increased their use outside the advertising world. Currently *Lite* and *thru* are not generally considered to be "proper".

How do you account for the preference for the longer obscure spelling over the shorter sound spelling? It is easy enough to list over 300 similar spellings that are well known enough to be listed as variant spellings in at least one dictionary. [see the **American Literacy Council list**] People continue to use such spellings as *through* because they are considered proper, learned, and correct.

How do you change these opinions?

Frank Laubach in one of his books, *Forty Years with the Silent Billions*, defines literacy as the ability to read a newspaper. This is the level of literacy that nearly 40% of those attending the schools in English speaking countries fail to achieve. Many can read 4th grade children's books and have a sight word vocabulary of several hundred words. This is not sufficient to read a newspaper aloud and with understanding because they are tripped up by almost every multi-syllable word.

"English has a booby trap in almost every word." It takes the prize as the "World's worst spelt language" — Frank C. Laubach 1970.

Laubach taught classes in over 300 languages. None of them, he said, were as difficult to teach as English. French, he remarked, requires more lessons than most languages because there are so many groups of letters that stand for the same sound, like <eau> pronounced "o" meaning water [p.293f]. It is necessary to teach every one of the letter clusters. French has over 130 phonograms for about 30 phonemes. And yet French is not as difficult as English because the spellings have only one interpretation. There are virtually no exceptions. <eau> has but one interpretation: /o/. "English, on the other hand, has a *booby trap* in almost every word." There are six different ways, for instance, to pronounce the string <ough>.

5. The Proposal.

The proposal is to start with a writing system that is more regular than Spanish and get it accepted as the pronunciation guide spelling in dictionaries and taught as an initial teaching alphabet in the classroom. While mini-reforms could still be pursued, the purpose of the standardizing on a pronunciation guide spelling optimized for writing and typing would be to accustom the public to the kind of drastic changes that would be required to upgrade the writing system to the level of Spanish.

The minimalists are right, if such drastic changes were attempted in one step, the proposal would be rejected. However, if it was not introduced until over half of the public was already familiar with it, the situation would be different. The new spelling would no longer look that odd.

1. Invent a PG spelling system that looks good in print and can be rapidly typed.
2. Use the notation as the PG [pronunciation guide] in a children's dictionary. Eventually get all dictionaries to adopt the notation.
3. Use it as an i.t.a. in a writing to read program to teach basic code.
4. Although used initially, the PG code continues as a parallel writing system. It is not scaffolding to be discarded as with the original i.t.a.'s.
5. Moving the parallel writing system into the mainstream may take 50 years. Wholesale spelling reform has to wait until 50% of the population is familiar with it as a parallel system.

No attempt should be made to replace the traditional writing system until the public is ready: The public can be said to be ready when [a] they are almost as familiar with the PG spelling as with the traditional spelling and [b] when a majority can fully grasp the superiority of a less complex alphabetical writing system. Until that time, the PG writing system is simply a parallel writing system that doubles as a dictionary pronunciation guide and is used to introduce the basic code.

6. Teaching two codes: Using the simpler consistent code to introduce the regularities of English spelling.

Although those exposed to Pitman's i.t.a. achieved reading proficiency levels twice as fast as those who had to contend with the irregular code, it was not sold as an alternative way to build phonemic awareness. PA is the awareness of how an alphabet is supposed to work including the awareness of the sounds associated with certain letters and letter combinations.

When up to 40% of the students encountered difficulties transitioning to traditional spelling, those difficulties were often attributed to the i.t.a. rather than to the complexities of the traditional writing system. Had it been explained that the i.t.a. teaches only 41 of the 300+ overlapping sound symbol relationships needed to be a proficient reader and writer in the traditional system, some of the backlash might have been avoided. The i.t.a. student was not prepared for the onslaught of irregularity but since the 41 relationships they had over-learned represented the dominant spelling patterns in English, they were better prepared than most of those who had taken the traditional route.

About 10% of the children in the i.t.a. class were transitioned to TO before they had fully mastered the i.t.a. [**Downing** ...] Using a different method, Malone was able to insure that all students had mastered Unifon before they transitioned. He found that they were ready to transition after 3 months with Unifon and saw no benefits in prolonging exposure to the consistent code if the goal was proficiency in the traditional code. In contrast to the 3 months, Pitman's i.t.a. basal reader program took 2 years to complete.

Malone [1962] provided no explicit training in the common ways that the 40 sounds of Unifon are spelled in English. This seems like a good idea for those who might not pick this up on their own. By learning the 5 most frequent ways to spell each of the "long" vowels, students would have mastered 85% of the ways that these sounds are spelled in the dictionary..

Although the i.t.a. was considered by some to be pronunciation guide spelling, Pitman never made such a claim. He seemed to go out of his way to emphasize that it was not a pronunciation guide. Its potential as a "writing to read" program was rarely tested. As initially deployed, it was a basal reader series with a "funny font" and an augmented alphabet. Stories were not written 100% phonemically but in a manner that mimicked the traditional writing system. The 5 transcribed books in the basal reader series usually took 2 years to complete. After book 5, children were expected to transition to the traditional orthography.

The real point of the approach was never fully explained. It was simply a way of introducing the basic code by postponing exposure to irregular spellings. Had the basic code been established as the goal, then children could have transitioned to traditional print as soon as they had learned it.

Later studies have shown that 3 months exposure to a phonemic writing system is sufficient for 95% to over-learn the basic code in a writing to read program. 40% of the words in English are already written in the basic code and another 40% introduce only one irregularity.

The basic code is obvious in a phonemic writing system because it is simply a consistent way of writing the 41 basic sounds of English speech. Memorize 41 symbol-sound correspondences and you have it. Some people can memorize 41 paired associates in 15 minutes. Even the most memory challenged student can memorize the sound-symbol correspondences in 3 weeks.

The problem with prolonging the exposure to phonemic spellings is that students will start to memorize spellings as word-signs. *Giv*, *ryt* and *hav* will start looking *rite*.

The goal of the original i.t.a. research was to see if changing the medium [the alphabet] would make a difference so no attempt was made to find the optimal method of instruction. It did make a difference in the sense that children progressed through the basal reader almost twice as fast as those in the control group. They probably did not progress as fast as children learning how to read Italian and Spanish because of the lack of parental support and assistance.

Because of the idea that the teaching method didn't matter, this research program is unlike many pilot programs where every effort is made to maximize the impact of the new feature.

More recent studies [Flynn, 2002] have indicated that the i.t.a. advocates were on the right track. When taught using a different method, it has been shown to be five times as effective in remedial reading programs as the next best phonics program in teaching phonemic awareness. The i.t.a. was also found to be much more effective in teaching reading and writing as measured by the traditional performance measures.

7. Difficulties in Producing Pronunciation Guide Spelling Systems.

Although New Spelling was very close to a pronunciation guide spelling system, one can also argue that a writable PG system has never been advocated in quite the same way as in this proposal. The proposal endorsed by a half dozen people on Saundspel and the SSS lists is to promote a standardized parallel PG [pronunciation guide] writing system. This does not conflict with the desire to make a dent in the indifference to reform by proposing and promoting a mini-reform such as **f** for /f/. It is simply a second front. An alternative strategy.

Linguists such as Wells might object on the grounds that everyone should learn and use IPA. IPA has made great strides in the 1990's. It has become a much more popular PG for dictionaries. ESL teachers now use this code more than any other to represent English speech. The basic problem with IPA is that only extended Unicode fonts support some of the turned or rotated characters it uses.

The popularity of IPA as a parallel notation would be increased if the code could be easily handwritten and keyboarded. A rapid handwritten phonemic code that could be typeset was Shaw's dream. With the decline in handwriting skills, the dream today is more for a rapidly typed phonemic code.

Phonemic writing involves the manipulation of at least 40 symbols representing the 36 pure or uncombined phonemes and a few commonly used combinations. Phonemic keyboards and scripts have a symbol for every sound that has the power to change the meaning of a word.

There is almost an infinite number of vowel sounds that the human ear can discriminate. Spoken English, however, has only 14 categories of vowel sounds capable of changing the meaning of a word. 14 phonemes but only 5 phonograms.

It is difficult to represent 14 phonemes with only 5 phonograms but other Germanic languages are faced with the same problem and have evolved better solutions. For example, a first year student of German makes fewer spelling errors in German than when the same essay is written in English. [Upward, [1992 JSSS13 item 11](#)].

IPA's solution in addition to importing a few Greek symbols and a few new symbols that Isaac Pitman and others had developed was to rotate the letters. This was a clever idea in the era of handset type. It is not such a great idea in the digital type era.

Those who developed the first computing standards [ASCII] were not aware of these needs and so neglected to augment the alphabet. Some augmentation was added in the mid 1990's. The Latin 1 character set contains enough characters to fully represent all European writing systems. The IPA character set, however, was not popular enough at the time to be included.

The IPA has become an increasing popular phonemic notation for representing English. Henry Sweet, was one of the few that ever used it for representing large blocks of text. He called his system "broad romic" to distinguish his transcription from one that would be used to describe a dialect.

Examples of Pronunciation Guide Systems

Yule argues that a purely fonemic spelling for English even if it were practical may not be the best solution. She prefers a solution that considers the needs and abilities of end users, particularly those with learning disabilities. The basic idea is that morphemic regularity may be easier than phonemic regularity.

Various attempts have been made to find a way to write phonemic English using what is available on the keyboard. The proposal below uses the Latin 1 character set which is supported by your Internet browser but not by all email systems.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Xi: wi cánt icspéct gŭvørnmnts tu txéndj spéling radicli sevrl taimz in ø sentxøri! it wud bi øbsœerd! EVRÍKING wud hav tu bi ri-printid! <Roly from Oxford, UK></p> | <p>ALX: Wí kant ikspékt guvernémnts tu chaenj spéling radikelí séverel týmz in a sénceri! It wød bí ebsurd! EVERÍÞING wød hav tu bí ríprinted. <Alex Walker from CA> áéíóúôûý</p> |
|---|---|

The notations **above** use Latin 1 characters. The ones **below** use only ASCII & the QWERTY keyboard. They would be more compatible with older email readers that strip out HTML code.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Unigraphic solution-ENgliS EN: .wE kqnt expect governments tw chaenj speliN radikaly sevRal tYmz in a senCary. It wvd bE absurd! .evRyTiN wvd hav tu bE rEprintad. <Steve Bett from Louisiana></p> | <p>Digraphic solution-Spanglish SS: Wi cant expeckt governments tu cheinj speling radicly sevral taimz in a cenchery! It wvd bi absurd! EVERYTHING wvd hav tu bi reprinted! <Steve Bett from Louisiana></p> |
|--|--|

A few exception rules help the Spanglish spelling system to be more like tradspel [traditional spelling].

The rules for Spanglish include:

1. Stress on the first syllable unless marked.
2. **u** before a consonant is always a stressed /^h/ the sound in up. [the up-u]. ur = 3' as in *her* /h3'/
3. **a** is always unstressed in multisyllable words as in ago /@/. There is no relative stress in a monosyllabic words so about the only one syllable schwas are the lone <a> and the terminal <e> in <the>. Before this rule was added, there were always two ways to write a monosyllable [unstressed or stressed]: e.g. her or hur. Now <her> has to be interpreted as in IPA <hair/heir> when it appears in a one syllable word. As in tradspel, there is a sometimes confusing switch when we move to multisyllable words: The letter string *her* in <other> would be spelled <u**th**er> and pronounced /udhar/ where the **a** represents schwa.

Publishers just want a standardized writing system. Since the publication of **Johnson's Dictionary** in 1755, they have had what they wanted and they would just as soon keep it that way.

Few publishers are going to be interested in changing the spelling of a hundred or more words. The fact that Webster was able to change the spelling of over 1000 words is truly amazing when you think about the possible resistance.

It was not possible to extend Webster's reforms when it was tried again in 1906. The conservatives were able to get widespread support after the newspapers published a series of popular editorials against what President Roosevelt had proposed in his executive order.

So far I have only been able to dig up one editorial that appeared in the Louisville Courier Journal and one editorial cartoon. There must of been hundreds of these. Roosevelt was forced to rescind his executive order after Congress voted 140 to 23 not to appropriate funds for its implementation. The only Newspaper to adopt the reform was the Chicago Tribune. They justified their spellings with the Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary, the only dictionary to support the reformed spellings. Funk was a member of the Simplified Spelling Board.

Given the potential for conservative backlash, there is a much better chance for getting dictionary publishers to change their PG writing systems than to get the general public to drop even one of their familiar spellings.

About the only people that would not be annoyed by spelling change would be those who had not acquired the habit. There is probably little chance that you can democratically change the spelling of half of the 1000 most common words unless the changes were already accepted as variant spellings.

For instance, it might be possible to change from *light* to LITE because people are quite familiar with the alternate spelling from beer ads. If this is true, then the task is one of getting more phonemic spellings into the dictionary as alternative or variant spellings.

One of the most productive ways to do this would be to change the spellings used in the dictionary pronunciation guide.

If we had a writable pronunciation guide spelling, this would tend to dictate the ideal spelling. The word is pronounced /eny/ but we spell it <any>. The word is pronounced /worant/ but we spell it <warrant>. The word is pronounced /giv/ but we spell it <give> as if it rhymed with hive.

I think there is a much better chance of changing the practices of 3,000 publishers than it is to change the practices of over 300 million readers.

The problem with the multiplicity of pronunciation guides is that few people have any ability to use it for spelling. Few of those who are taught or figure out the symbol-sound correspondences on

their own are adept at sound spelling. Skill in sound spelling is lower today than it was 100 years ago when thousands had to learn it in order to master shorthand.

8. Summary

THE TWO STAGE PROPOSAL.

1. Invent a PG spelling that looks good in print and can be rapidly typed.
2. Use it as the PG [pronunciation guide] in a dictionary.
3. Use it as an i.t.a. to teach children how to read and write.
4. Do not try to replace the traditional writing system until the public is ready: They can be said to be ready when [a] they are almost as familiar with the PG spelling as with the traditional spelling and [b] when a majority can fully grasp the superiority of the less complex alphabetical writing system.

In Minnesota, it has already been proposed that by the 6th grade, children should be able to use a dictionary. This implies that they would be familiar with at least one PG spelling as well as the spelling that matches tradition. Learning two writing systems is not that much of a stretch.

For most common words, they will have two images. In addition there will be 1000's of words they will be able to spell phonemically that they will not be able to spell traditionally without checking the dictionary.

When over half the population finds the traditional spelling to be stranger than PG spelling, the time will be ripe for moving from one parallel writing system to the other. Attempts at reforming before the public is familiar with the alternative and before the majority finds that they can spell it much easier than they can spell traditionally are not likely to be any more successful than in the past.

With a level playing field with respect to familiarity, implementing reform will be much easier.

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J32, 2003/1, pp9–11 in the printed version*]

[John Wells: see [Journals](#), [Newsletter](#) Letter in Item 1, [Media](#).]

3. English Accents and their Implications for Spelling Reform.

**John C Wells, Professor, Linguistics Dept., University College —
London.**

A recently edited version of a talk given to the Spelling Society on **25 January 1986**.

Spelling that is changed to accommodate one accent may disrupt another. Many seemingly odd spellings such as <any> are actually pronounced that way in some dialect of English. The heterographs <Mist/missed> are homophonic almost everywhere except Nigeria. What is a phonetic representation of a word for one person is not necessarily phonetic for another. Even with the awareness of the varying patterns of contrast in different English accents, you can't satisfy all of the speakers all of the time; the best that can be hoped is that a reform will satisfy most of the speakers most of the time. This is the first installment of a two part article.

1. Some Basic Problems.

1.1. The alphabet.

An ideal spelling system, we all know, will have one symbol for one sound, one grapheme for one phoneme. But this principle throws up certain difficulties in practice. If we confine ourselves to consideration of the Latin alphabet, one major difficulty is that it is an arbitrary list of 26 letters which do not necessarily correspond to the sound systems of the languages which have to use it. In particular, they do not correspond to the sound system of English. On the one hand, the Latin alphabet provides us with no unambiguous way of spelling English sounds that Latin lacked (e.g. the sound we often spell **sh**, the two sounds we spell **th**, and many of our vowels and diphthongs); on the other, it contains at least two letters, **q** and **x**, that were unnecessary even from the point of view of Latin. In this article, however, I am concerned not so much with the deficiencies of the alphabet and how we might remedy them (the 'grapheme' part) as with the problems arising from the fact that we English speakers do not all pronounce our language in the same way (the 'phoneme' part). As my eminent predecessor Daniel Jones pointed out in his article about phonetics and spelling reform (1944),

people in different parts of the country speak differently [...] what is a phonetic representation of a word for one person is not necessarily phonetic for another.

In raising these problems I do not want to detract from the fact that there are large numbers of words in our language where they do not arise. All speakers of English, no matter where they come from, pronounce *friend* so that it rhymes with *bend*, *send*, *tend*. So a reformed spelling **frend** ought to be uncontroversial. Everyone pronounces *sight*, *site* and *cite* identically, so it is absurd (except for advocates of etymological spelling) that we have to learn to spell them all differently. Everyone distinguishes the verb **to advise** from the noun the **advice**, so we can see the justification for distinguishing them in spelling — yet we all make the same pronunciation difference between to **use**, to **house**, to **excuse** and the nouns **the use**, **the house**, **the excuse** where we make no spelling distinction. /Uz houz exkUz — Us hous exkUs/

1.2 Danger of parochialism.

The sounds of any language can be viewed as a system of contrasting phonemes. The pronunciation of any word can be specified in terms of the string of phonemes that represent it, together perhaps with information about relevant prosodic features (in the case of English, about stress placement). In designing a scheme of spelling reform, we face a certain danger of insularity or parochialism, of assuming that everybody has the same set of phonemes, and uses the same phonemes in particular words as we do ourselves. Unfortunately this is not the case. What seems obvious and normal to one speaker may be exotic, unusual, subtle and strange to another. There are all sorts of little facts about how English is pronounced round the world by native speakers which may give us pause in our reforming zeal. Here is a simple example. The traditional spelling of the words *any* and *many* conflicts with the way most of us say them. It may seem obvious to most of us that they rhyme with penny and so ought to be spelt in the same way, perhaps as *enny* and *menny*. In making such an assumption, however, we are ignoring the awkward fact that many southern Irish people pronounce them to rhyme with *nanny*, so that they would see nothing strange about writing them with the letter a. Maybe they would want to write *anny* and *manny* rather than *any* and *many*, but that is not my point. I concede that in English as a whole the preferences of the southern Irish may have to give way before those of the vast majority of other English speakers — but we should be aware of what our proposals imply.

2. Consonant Variations.

2.1 Spelling the past tense.

Ought *mist* and *missed* to be spelt identically because they are pronounced identically? Or should we give the past tense a consistent spelling shape with d, even when, as in *missed*, it is pronounced /t/? In deciding this issue, we should perhaps consider the Nigerians, who do not usually pronounce *missed* like *mist*. This is because — under the influence of traditional orthography — they typically use a /d/ sound in *missed*, and in fact usually assimilate the /s/ sound to a /z/, so saying /mizd/, with voicing throughout. For them *kicked*, likewise, tends to rhyme with *rigged* rather than with *strict*. I am not necessarily saying that we have to let our reform proposals be determined by how Nigerians pronounce English, even though they do constitute a substantial body of users of English. But I am saying that we should at least be aware that a reform that makes spelling more logical for one group of speakers may make it less logical for another.

2.2 Spell or omit r?

From *New Spelling* onwards the importance of catering for accents other than Received Pronunciation has been clear from the treatment of historical r (Ripman and Archer, 1948). Like most English people, in my speech I don't distinguish stork and stalk. If spelling reform proposals do make a distinction, as they usually do, then the reason is (a) historical and (b) because they are pronounced differently from one another in other accents. Historically, stork had /r/, and stalk did not. In many varieties of English (Scottish, Irish, west of England, most American, Canadian — the rhotic accents) the distinction is still made in speech. Similarly pairs such as *larva* — *lava*, *rotor* — *rota*, homophonous for English people like me, are distinct in the rhotic accents. This justifies our keeping the distinction in spelling, even though the task of learning which words to write with r and which without will impose some burden on those of us whose English is non-rhotic. And those of us who pronounce intrusive /r/, saying perhaps rotar of duties, will have to remember not to write r in some positions where we pronounce it, as well as sometimes writing it where we do not pronounce it. Faced with this problem, spelling reform has little alternative to accommodating the rhotic

speakers, even if the consequence is that we non-rhotic speakers must learn by rote when to write r and when not.

Singer and finger.

A similar problem arises with ng. Consider the pair singer:finger. For most speakers these words do not rhyme exactly, because finger has a /g/ sound after the nasal. It seems logical to write singer but finger (Ripman 1941). The trouble here is that people in the trapezium linking Birmingham-Manchester-Liverpool make these words rhyme, with /g/ in both. So if we show a difference in spelling, some Midlanders and Northerners will have to learn an extra arbitrary distinction. Alternatively, I suggest, it is a distinction we might well decide to ignore — so incidentally also simplifying the spelling of the comparative and superlative of long, strong, young, whose irregular pronunciation in most accents would otherwise be reflected in reformed spelling as longger, longgest etc.

3. Vowel Variations.

3.1 Greater problems with vowels.

Such variations in pronunciation mean we may have to violate the principle of one sound per letter and one letter per sound in quite obvious ways, ways that probably everyone can accept. Greater difficulties perhaps arise with vowel-sounds and sets of vowel-contrasts, where I think the danger is particularly strong of wrongly assuming that everybody makes the same contrasts.

In what follows I make use of the concept of standard lexical sets, as proposed in Wells 1982: 2.2. Each keyword, shown in capitals, stands for perhaps hundreds or thousands of words containing the vowel sound in question. The keywords are chosen so as to maximize clarity: whatever accent of English we use, they can hardly be mistaken for any other word.

3.2 The Sam — psalm contrast.

New Spelling makes special provision for the words I shall refer to as the lexical set BATH — words such as pass, path, chance — by allowing either a or aa. There is an assumption behind this permissive solution, namely that everyone distinguishes the vowel sound in gather from that in father. However, this is not the case. In parts of the west of England and certainly in Scotland and Northern Ireland some people have no such contrast in their phoneme system. They use the same vowel in Sam as in psalm, so that these two words are homophones for them. It would actually have been consistent with this fact for New Spelling to ignore the difference between these two vowel sounds. It has very low functional load, which is to say that there are very few word-pairs that are distinguished as Sam and psalm are. So we might prefer, in a reformed spelling scheme, to ignore the contrast that RP makes between the vowel sounds of mass and pass, and abandon the New Spelling aa entirely. On the other hand RP speakers and others who make pass rhyme with farce must still remember the spelling difference reflecting the historical r in farce (fars) but not in pass (pas). By taking accent variability into account one lays oneself open to the objection that one has abandoned the principle of one letter per sound. The southern English will protest that mass and pass differ in sound, while pass and farce do not — yet we would be proposing the same spelling for the first pair and different spellings for the second. I do not think we can avoid this difficulty.

3.3 CLOTH, LOT, THOUGHT.

Less well known is the very similar situation affecting the lexical set CLOTH, namely words such as cross, cough, lost, where even within RP in this century we had a rival pronunciation which might be respelt as clawth, crawss, cawf, lawst. This situation has now resolved: the clawth variant is now very much a minority form, if it indeed still exists. But the problem here is that American pronunciation really corresponds to crawss, cawf, clawth, lawst rather than to cross, cof, cloth, lost (to the extent that Americans distinguish the two vowel sounds at all, which many do not). If we follow New Spelling and keep lot as lot while changing thought to thawt, my point is that most people in England would logically not change the spelling of cloth and other words like it. But Americans generally speaking identify the CLOTH set with the THOUGHT set, not the LOT set, and might therefore logically want to write clawth, etc. This would also apply to words such as long (lawng), since for them it too belongs with THOUGHT, not with LOT.

3.4 Ignore such contrasts?

If pressed, I would propose the same radical solution here as with TRAP, BATH and PALM, namely to ignore the whole set of contrasts and write LOT and THOUGHT identically, probably as o. This would also suit Scottish and Northern Irish pronunciation, many Scots having the same vowel for LOT and THOUGHT, as do also most Canadians and many Americans. We would then have to forget the distinction we English (and Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans) make between cot and caught, don and dawn. In fact those of us who make a sharp difference between these two vowels are perhaps a minority; if we were to insist on distinguishing them in reformed spelling we would be imposing a real burden on the many people who make no such distinction and who would have to learn what for them would be an arbitrary difference in spelling.

3.5 Misconceptions about r.

In this area RP speakers, and many others, would again face the same problem of r, as in stalk (stok) but stork (stork). In reformed spelling we should have to write kot for cot, caught, but kort for court. Inevitably, some people would have to accept that they should write certain words identically that they pronounce differently, and other words differently that they pronounce the same. This could lead to difficulties. Wherever the spelling depends on what happens in other people's accents rather than in one's own, one is liable to be misled because of mistaken ideas of what happens in other accents. We can see this in the difficulty we English people have if we try to imitate American or Scottish accents — even talented English actors or impressionists attempting American or Scottish speech quite often make mistakes. Peter Sellers, in his spoof travelogue *Balham, Gateway to the South*, talking lyrically in his pseudo-American accent about morning coming, says "and now at last we see the [dorn] approach". But Americans don't say an r-sound in dawn. Its reformed spelling will have to be don, not dorn. Clearly even for highly literate people sound in a sense dominates spelling in their mental picture of words; so when imitating another accent they set up correspondences between sounds in their own accent and what they imagine are the equivalents in the other accent, rather than be guided to the spelling. (After all, the presence/absence of r in traditional spelling is a pretty reliable indicator of whether rhotic speakers pronounce /r/ in a particular word.) English actors playing Scottish parts likewise make many errors with /r/, pronouncing words such as comma and China with final /r/. This is because in many words English final schwa does correspond to Scottish final /r/, as in father; but in many other words there is no such correspondence.

4. Further problems with a and o.

4.1 Bother and father.

A difficulty with the simplification that I have just been advocating is that while I propose the reformed spelling a for PALM and o for LOT, most Americans pronounce these two lexical sets with the same vowel-sound. Thus in a typical American pronunciation father and bother rhyme perfectly. Americans make puns that don't work for the British: a Saab car sounds like sob for them, and they put up posters for the painter Salvador Dali saying "Hello Dali", punning on Hello Dolly, with which it is for them homophonous. This means that the Americans, the most numerous and influential part of the English-speaking community, will be confronted with the uncertainty of how to spell words in which they use this vowel sound. They are going to have to write it o as in lot in most words, but presumably — unless we allow both possibilities in reformed spelling — as a in a minority of cases such as father and palm. Words like pasta will also come under this heading: Americans will have to remember to write pasta rather than the posta that might seem to them more logical. Hey, we all have to make compromises.

4.2 NORTH and FORCE.

Most of us nowadays use the same vowel sound in NORTH as in FORCE. New Spelling, however, was inclined to allow for two distinct sounds here. Ripman 1941 marks FORCE words, but not NORTH words, with an asterisk: A considerable number of words written here with or are pronounced by many speakers with oer, and may be written so if desired. (p.6)

This distinction is a historical one which is now mostly lost in England, North America and the southern hemisphere, though still made in Scotland and Ireland and to some extent in Wales, the West Indies, and the United States. Speakers who have it make a difference, for example, between horse and hoarse, and do not rhyme short and sport, fork and pork. Common sense may tell us to ignore the distinction, since only a minority now make it. But this does mean that the Scots, etc., would risk misspelling FORCE words, in which they use their GOAT vowel, not their THOUGHT vowel.

4.3 NORTH-FORCE and CURE.

Not only have NORTH and FORCE sets merged for the English: the CURE words (e.g. sure, poor, tour) have joined them too for many speakers. Many English people now pronounce Shaw, shore, sure as homophones, and likewise paw, pore-pour, poor. I would suggest all the forms with r could be spelt in the same way, and that we ignore the Scottish or Irish distinction between war, shore, sure, writing them all perhaps with or.

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The final installment of this article will appear in the next issue of the Journal.

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Ripman and Archer, [New Spelling \[1948\]](#)

John Wells, *Longman's Pronunciation Dictionary* [2000],

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[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society*, J32, 2003, pp12–14 in the printed version.]

[Godfrey Dewey: see Essay in [Pamphlet](#), [Anthology](#), [Bulletins](#).]

[Melville Dewey: see [Media](#). Item 18]

4. How phonemic is English spelling?

Godfrey Dewey, author of Relative Frequency of English Spellings.

Reprinted from: [Spelling Reform](#), ed. Newell Tune, Item 4
& *Spelling Progress Bulletin*. [Spring, 1969](#) Item 3.

Forward by S. Bett: In English Today, Don Hook [2002] said, "English spelling is very regular and not particularly hard to learn." Similar claims are repeated by those who write on the topics of phonics and English spelling. The figure of 85% regular is often quoted as if it were based on solid research [Crystal, 1999]. The original research was done by Dewey in the 1940's and repeated by Paul Hanna in the 1960's. Hanna noted that you can guess with 75% accuracy the dictionary spelling for each phoneme with 4 guesses. Predicting phoneme spelling is not the same as predicting syllable spelling [see chart]. When people, such as Flesch [1956, 1983], say that English has a highly regular orthography or is 97% phonemic, they have something else in mind other than predictability. Spaulding (1964) uses 70+ phonograms and 26 exception rules to arrive at her high estimate for English regularity. With around 200 sequentially applied exception rules and two spellings per sound, traditionally spelled words can be shown to have a high degree of predictability. Memorizing 200 rules, however, might prove to be more difficult for humans than memorizing the dictionary. I know of no spelling champion that relies on this strategy. It might be interesting to survey spelling champions to determine the extent to which they rely on rules. One could ask a question such as: Given a sound, what are the possible spellings that you consider in sequential order?

How Phonemic depends on the unit of analysis

| Phonemes | Syllables | Words |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 75% regular | 50% regular | 40% regular |

These statistics are based on the regularity found in the traditional spelling of the Gettysburg Address. It may overstate dictionary regularity but is indicative of the regularity one generally encounters. If the avg. syllable has 2 phonemes which are 75% regular, the syllable would be $.75 \times .75$ or 50% regular.

How phonemic is English spelling? For a variety of reasons, no simple direct answer to our question is possible, and statements which failed to define their terms clearly, are meaningless or misleading — usually both. First, therefore let us define our terms.

A completely phonemic spelling of English would have a 1 to 1 phoneme — grapheme correspondence; that is, only one grapheme for each phoneme and only one phoneme for each grapheme. Several symbols for one sound are an obstruction to *writing* (that is, spelling); several sounds for one syllable are an obstruction to *reading*. Both factors are present in our traditional orthography (T.O.) to a high degree. Thus, the current edition of **How we spell**, [1] formally *English Heterography*, identifies in a single [72,000 word], abridged dictionary 530 spellings of 41 sounds, employing 273 different symbols, that is 12.9 graphemes per phoneme, 1.9 phonemes per grapheme.

Consider the principal factors involved in determining the degree to which English spelling is phonemic.

Measurement may be based on running words (connected matter, or weighted word frequency lists); on unweighted lists of frequent words; or on a dictionary. The first is the more important for the teaching of reading, especially where a phonemic initial teaching medium such as i.t.a. is involved; the second is more useful for the teaching of writing (more particularly, spelling); the third is least valuable except as a matter of linguistic research. The basis of any pronouncement should be clearly stated, always.

Whatever the corpus of the study, results may be stated in terms of the spelling of phonemes, of syllables, or of words. Again, the basis should be clearly stated. A measurement in terms of words will be more immediately intelligible to the average layman.

In addition to the foregoing, the number of phonemes distinguished will quite obviously affect any measurement. For the untrained ear of the general public, the most practical number is somewhere between 39 and 44, probably 41: the traditional 40 sounds of Pitman shorthand, commonly classed as 24 consonants, 12 vowels, and 4 diphthongs, plus schwa, as in the Simpler Spelling Association Phonemic Alphabet. The treatment of the weak, unstressed vowels, in particular, will markedly affect the statistical outcome.

As an example of the influence of the number of phonemes distinguished, **Hanna** [5] analysed an unweighted list of some 17,000 frequent words on a 52-phoneme basis reduced from the 62 phonemes distinguished by Merriam-Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (6th edition 1956) on which he relied. On that 52-phoneme basis, he found 334 different spellings, employing 170-odd different graphemes, or about 63% of the 530 spellings employing 273 different graphemes reported by *How we spell!*, as above. If, however, Hanna's results be restated on a 41-phoneme basis, his findings become only about 281 different spellings, employing substantially the same 170-odd graphemes, or only 53% of the dictionary basis total. **My own study** [21] of speech sounds (not spelling) analysed its corpus of 100,000 words of diversified connected reading matter on the 48-phoneme basis of the Revised Scientific Alphabet (Key 1 of the Funk & Wagnall's Unabridged New Standard Dictionary), but reported most of its results on the 41-phoneme basis noted above.

Answers by others to our question, how phonemic (phonetic, regular) is English spelling, range all the way from **Hotson**, [71] "At present we use 500 symbols for 40 sounds, so that English is 8% phonetic," to **Spaulding**, [101] "if properly studied and taught, our language is, in fact, almost completely phonetic or regular," based on her statement that 94% of the most used 1,000 words may be spelled correctly by 70 phonograms, manipulated according to 26 rules! In between, **Hanna**, [6] in the most comprehensive and thoroly researched study to date, arbitrarily assumes 80% (that is, that a particular phoneme will correspond to a particular grapheme in 80% of the different words in which it occurs) as a *criterion* of consistent correspondence to the alphabetic principal; and his findings, in terms of phonemes, approximate that figure, *provided* that further factors such as the position of the phoneme in its syllable are taken into account. When, however, a computer was programmed with an algorithm or rule of procedure, based on the findings of that study, which manipulated 77 graphemes according to 203 rules, it was able to spell just under 50% of the investigated words correctly, and an additional 36% with only one error!

Most statements regarding the phonemic or non-phonemic character of English spelling are based, implicitly at least, on whole words (whether on a running word, word list, or dictionary basis), and usually evaded the phonemic issue by substituting the terms regular or irregular; words which, like charity, can be stretched to cover a multitude of sins. Thus, **Laubach**, [81] whose extraordinary

achievements, "Each one teach one," in promoting literacy in over 300 languages thruout the world are well-known, employs for English a notation of 96 symbols [9] — actually, counting 4 recent additions and 18 doubled consonants, 118 symbols — several of them involving a diacritic, the macron; and describes as "regular" all spellings within the compass of that notation. Parenthetically, this method, which retains the precise T.O. forms of less than 50% of running words, has just achieved highly impressive results in teaching English to Chinese students in Hong Kong.

The farthest out example of such "regularity" is **Wijk**, [11] who, on the basis of an exhaustive and erudite examination of present-day English orthography, admits to his *Regularized English* 172 graphemes for 50 phonemes (actually 43 phonemes, since 7 are consonant clusters, not single sounds). Some of the graphemes are used for two or three different phonemes; many are supplemented by considerable lists of exceptions; and the problem of unstressed vowels and diphthongs is treated separately. The result is a notation, easy to read, of course, because it preserves so many of the familiar irregularities of T.O., but so complex to apply that it would take a linguistic Ph.D. with an encyclopedic memory to write it according to specifications. Nevertheless, on the basis that this notation preserves the TO. forms of just over 70% of running words, Wijk implicitly finds T.O. to be 70% "regular."

So far as I am aware, there exist no dependable data on the relative frequency of occurrence of the different *spellings* of the phonemes of English *on a running words basis*. With this data, the question, how phonemic is English spelling, may be answered *in terms of the occurrence of particular spellings of sounds in running words*, with some assurance. This, however, is an answer to only one facet of the problem.

Since TO. provides a maximum of 26 letters (three of which — c, q, x — are redundant and contribute nothing to the problem) for a minimum of 39 phonemes, a phonemic standard by which to measure T.O. must obviously, in addition to assigning one explicit phonemic value to each letter, supplement them by a sufficient number of equally explicit letter combinations. Substantially this is done by the spelling reformed version of **WES [World English Spelling]**, which, for the basic 40 sounds, assigns a single phonemic value (the same values as in i.t.a.) to each of the 23 useful single letters, and assigns equally explicit phonemic values to 16 digraphs and one trigraph (the majority closely resembling the corresponding i.t.a. characters). To these WES adds 4 vowel-plus-r digraphs, to make the notation equally acceptable to r-keepers and r-droppers; and 2 consonant digraphs (wh for /hw/ and nk for /ngk/) for the sake of compatibility. The WES treatment of the weak unstressed vowels, usually schwa, by retaining in general, any single vowel of T.O., is one of its strongest features; for a specific character for schwa, if it could be made available, would change, unnecessarily, what might otherwise be the exact T.O. forms of perhaps 1 word in 6 on the printed page.

Ed. Note: Not having a single symbol for schwa often obscures stress and spelling. Misspelling the mid lax vowel is one of the most common spelling errors. TO generally spells the terminal r-combination er [her] and the initial @ as a [ago] One exception rule can thus preserve systematic regularity, easy spelling, and a high correspondence with TO.

This notation is serves as an adequate standard of measurement for approximating an answer to our question, how phonemic is English spelling, by determining what proportion of the words, syllables, or phonemes of T.O. remain the same when transliterated into WES. For such a qualified answer to our question, let us apply this standard to a significant word list, both unweighted and weighted, and to a representative selection of connected matter.

Table 3 of my **study of speech sounds** [3] lists 1027 particular words (as distinct from root words,

Table 4) which occurred over 10 times in 100,000 words of well-diversified connected matter, representative of English as written and spoken today, and which made up 73,633 of the 100,000 words. Of these, the TO. forms which are fully phonemic by our standard are:

Unweighted: 229 different words out of 1027 different words, or **22.3% phonemic**.

Weighted: 36,436 total words out of 78,633 total words, or **46.3% phonemic**.

Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*, a masterpiece of English literature, which includes most of 41 phonemes in fairly typical proportions, contains (excluding the title) 267 words, 364 syllables, 958 phonemes (1,149 letters). By our standard, the words, syllables, or phonemes which are fully phonemic are:

106 total words out of 267, or **39.7% phonemic** — roughly 40%

173 syllables out of 364, or **47.5% phonemic** — roughly 50%

712 phonemes out of 958, or **74.3% phonemic** — roughly 75%.

[see [the chart](#) at the beginning of this article]

That is, 106 of the complete words, 173 of the syllables, or 712 of the phonemes were spelt uniformly, according to the WES symbols, exactly as if they would be if the whole selection were translated into WES.

The last figure, which will vary only slightly for longer specimens of connected matter, is probably the most significant single answer presently available, out of the various possible answers, to our original question: How phonemic is English spelling?

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Notes: Godfrey Dewey [1890–1976], the son of **Melville Dewey**, the inventor of the Dewey Decimal System for library organization, was Vice-president, Lake Placid Club Education Foundation. He was the founder of the SSA [Simper Spelling Association], and the author of two important statistical studies: *English spelling: Roadblock to reading*. and *The Relative Frequency of English Spelling*.

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

5. Could English spelling be made regular without drastic change?

Valerie Yule.

'The savage world of orthographic irregularities...' Brown & Besner.

The argument — *Greater regularity in English spelling would help learners and spellers to decode new words and work out how to spell them. Visual and logical consistencies would promote faster reading for meaning. Present spelling could be 'cleaned up' to be rule-based, maximizing its advantages and removing its disadvantages. A few principles only are required for a 'best fit' to meet the needs and abilities of all its users, including present readers, with continuing access to our heritage of print. Reserch issues are set out in Yule (1994).*

How regular is English spelling?

'It all depends.' [see Dewey, *Item 4*,] English spelling has been estimated and guesstimated to be from 7% up to 97% 'regular'. [1](#) Imperial and metric measure illustrate the issue of regularity. For example, drams, ounces, pounds, stones, quarters, hundredweights and tons measure weight except for goods measured by dry. troy, wool, hay and straw, or apothecaries' weights. All reliable measures, but complicated tables to learn and use. These Imperial Measures, like spelling, grew like Topsy. Metric measurement, in contrast, was an intellectual brain-child, born into France following the Revolution not long after French spelling also had its greatest reform. The regular gradations of milligrams, grams and kilograms, mean that no tables need learning. But a theoretical ideal can still have awkwardnesses in practice — feet and yards can be handier for tradesmen. and babies' weights in four figures of grams are hard to remember.

What do we mean by 'regular' spelling?

There are three different meanings — systematic, customary, and statistical:

1. According to rules; systematic. 'Following or exhibiting a principle, consistent, not capricious or casual, orderly.' (*Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1935*)
2. 'In accordance with the ordinary form or course of things; instituted according to established forms' (*Chambers Dictionary, 1901*) Regularity as customary can be useful enough for the initiated, but is harder to learn or set out definitively.
3. The definition used most by spelling experimenters, because it is the most objective definition and can be found out by using statistics, is 'governed by the number of instances of a particular feature; the most common spelling pattern that makes up a sublexical unit'. The Swedish filologist Wijk tried to 'regularise' English spelling by applying the most frequent rules in this sense, but to keep his aim of remaining close to the appearance of present spelling, he needed far too many

rules. The question of regularity in orthographic structure can become 'regularity for which experimenters'. Some flawed findings have resulted from muddled terminology.

Definitions 2 and 3 define regularity by the status-quo. What is already most frequent, that is the most regular. Taylor & Taylor (1983: 218) comment that in that sense all English words are orthographically regular, simply by definition of being legal English words, and all nonwords are irregular by the same definition. Indeed, it can be hard to distinguish between what are spelling rules and what are just exceptions to other rules.

Hanna et al (1966) claimed that it was possible to use rules to predict English spelling 85% of the time without lexical cues, but **Bett (2003 Item 2)** comments that such rules can be more appropriate for the Stanford computers than for humans, since around two hundred rules have to be applied in a fixed order.

The rules taught in fonics methods of teaching number about 70 to 100. However, competent reading and spelling require knowledge of the letter sound correspondences of the language, the orthographic cifer, which are implicit and not the same as the explicit rules of fonics, which the child can state in words. Text-to-speech computer programs show that the rules of the cifer in English number over 500 (Perfetti et al, 1997.) Hence, problems.

Additionally, sound-spelling correspondences in English are less regular than spelling-sound correspondences.

Larger units are more regular, but can only be learnt later, and there are still great numbers of them.

A user-friendly spelling requires the first definition of regularity — 'organized according to a system that is logical or practical'. Are there any principles in English spelling that could be applied more consistently to bring the exceptional spellings into line?

Regular for whom?

For the absolute beginner, 100% regularity must mean that only one rule needs to be known. For an alphabetic writing system, that one rule is to represent speech sounds by letters. [\[2\]](#) English has only 16 Latin letters to represent over 40 English fonemes, so perfect letter-sound correspondence is impossible. So learners must learn a second rule, that two letters such as 'th' can 'make one sound'. Then they must learn more rules, such as 'magic e', and more rules, and learn which words follow which rules, and there remain still the spellings of thousands of exception words to learn, Very few humans become as good at English spelling as a dictionary.

It is no wonder that most people do not learn spelling by rules, after the first basics. They rote learn the words. This can be so painful and ineffective that some theories of literacy cannot be bothered with the tedium of 'fonics rules', even to the point of discarding the alphabetic principle. The 'Whole Language' ideal and hope has been that learners could learn to read by guessing what word with that sort of shape and possibly that initial letter would fit the meaning of a particular context, and in the process absorb the spelling.

But too many learners cannot rote-learn, whether by Phonics or Whole Language.

Hundreds of appalled reformers have designed regular spelling systems for English. Some invent a different alphabet or add more characters to achieve the alphabetic ideal of one-sound/one spelling. Other reformers keep the Roman alphabet unchanged by retaining the present convention of digraphs, so that two or three letters can represent one sound.

Keeping strictly to those two alphabetic principles [31] for a purely phonemic orthography would require change of around 60–100% of present English spelling. Such a radical change is possible but unlikely without attitude revolution, unless introduced as a parallel spelling system that might eventually replace the present. Text messaging for mobile phones is a current example of 'parallel spelling', although hardly a formalised system.

Regularising present spelling as an alternative.

Present English spelling could be made at least 95% regular. In the ghastly Table 2, for example, the florid variety of vowel spellings could be reduced by nearly half just by cleansing — deleting surplus letters that serve no purpose to represent either meaning or pronunciation, and instead, often confuse, as in *friend* and *sword*.

Next, rationalise the spelling patterns. There are only a few dominant spelling patterns for all these vowels; the remainder, that apply to only a small proportion of vocabulary, cause spelling and reading problems out of all proportion to their number. The hassle is that because of this lack of regularity, learners and spellers cannot predict which spelling pattern will apply when, without a great deal of experience and rote learning. The garden may have only a few land-mines, but they render the whole area dangerous.

Next, there are some presumed advantages in present spelling for readers in representation of grammar and morphemes, to aid faster comprehension of meaning and assist new readers in learning vocabulary. If proven, these also could be made consistent. And the greatest advantage of regularising present spelling would be 'backward compatibility', minimum change to the appearance of print, and continued access to our heritage, giving present readers a fair go, and yet meeting modern needs. Using the accepted strategy of accepting alternative spellings, the modified spelling could emerge into the old, as well as being an initial learning spelling and dictionary pronunciation guide.

Why bother?

Cross-national research is now piling up evidence that English spelling is a major handicap for literacy (Bett & Yule, 2003) — as if more evidence is needed, looking at the obvious difficulties and costs that burden schooling in all Anglo countries, despite relatively huge financial investments in teaching literacy. Literacy is achieved faster and more fail-safe in languages with more 'regular' spellings and comparable educational resources, and the incidence of dyslexia is lower than for English.

Learners. Spelling reformers usually focus on helping learners and spellers, and they usually consider phonemic principles the sole and sufficient solution. However for the sake of efficient reading strategies, and to read present spelling, learners could be asked to acquire a few more rules that are shown to be easily within their capacity. They can handle consistency. It is confusion

that baffles them, as has been established since Vernon, 1957. The English language itself has regularities that children have a natural linguistic gift to pick up, to generalise grammar, and use units of meaning (morphemes) in building up other words, and understanding new words. (At home and school it is the irregularities and exceptions they must be taught — such as *bring/brought* rather than '*bring/bringed*'.) To apply linguistic regularities in spelling therefore comes easily to them in reading, and only slightly more slowly in spelling. As long as rules are few and consistent, learners are not barred from literacy if alphabetic spelling rule is modified by other principles.

Readers. Successful learners apply rules to decode words when reading, but only until the words become familiar. Then fast automatic recognition takes over, with decoding only as a backup when needed. As words become familiar, recurring units of meaning and spelling patterns become recognised, and these also are used to help decode words faster and comprehend their meaning — e.g for words like *deconstruction*. Readers who have a set of simple principles beyond plain phonemics to read the modified spelling would also be facilitated in reading the old.

Spelling. Writing is inevitably more difficult than reading, as it makes more demands on reasoning, memory and executive skills. Writers could if they wanted use only the phonemic principles to be readable, although public print would follow the complete system to enable and promote fast automatised reading. It is time to abandon social disgrace for individual spellers who are not 'perfect'.

Six principles to improve present English spelling Aims:

- i. To resolve problems that face attempts to improve English spelling. The principles can be useful points of reference for all spelling reformers' investigations. Each one can be tested for validity, modification by experiment, discussion, and application. The claims made for the advantages of present spelling by linguists and cognitive psychologists can be tested, and proven advantages then made consistent, and disadvantages removed.

- ii. To be the best possible fit to the often complementary but sometimes conflicting needs and abilities of all categories of readers, writers and learners, present and future, bright, average and disabled or handicapped, fluent or learning the English language, human and electronic, at home and abroad. (See **Yule, 1986.**) The needs of beginning learners have paramount importance, but they have more needs further down the track. There is a well-known block when children who have acquired initial decoding skills fail to acquire the strategies to master more complex texts, and a better spelling system could help them.

Summary of six principles (Yule, 2003) set out in a possible sequence for learners.

- The first principle of sound-symbol correspondence, including digraphs, can be applied immediately for -
 - i. An initial learning spelling for understanding how to read and write that quickly then extends to the further principles.
 - ii. A pronunciation guide for dictionaries and learners of English. Only 30% of present spellings of words in the dictionary currently match a pronunciation guide (Bett, 2003).
 - iii. A writing system for learners and optional for personal use.

But a purely fonemic spelling for English is arguably not the best solution, nor is it practicable at present. It does not take into account sufficiently all needs and abilities of users and special features of the English language. Taking these other issues into account need not handicap learners, and they matter more for real improvements in English spelling than the theoretical ideal of one single logical principle.

1. Applying the alphabetic principle. Since accents differ, and spoken Englishes (sic) require stability in print to prevent too rapid change, spelling represents fonemes, or broadband speech sounds, as in formal unslurred speech, saying all the word. Spelling is a convention, more like a diagrammatic stick-man, that everyone can recognise as being a man, rather than a fotograf of any individual man. DOG can be read by anyone as saying DOG, regardless of how you say DOG. 'BANANA' can have three 'a' sounds in it, but it is an easy spelling to read and write.

One table can set out all sound/symbol spelling relationships, What should these relationships be? Hundreds of spelling reformers have designed such tables and you too can make one in an afternoon. But just any one will not do when the aims are to find the most useful representations for all purposes, and to keep present spelling accessible. Existing reserch in cognitive psychology needs collation and completion.

The distinctive spelling patterns for terminal vowels in present spelling can also be made consistent, since they clarify word structure visually for readers.

Which vowel system?

a) Continental vowel spelling patterns as in *pasta ballet police depot debut* for the primary vowel letters *a e i o u* may become world-wide eventually, but at present the English language should retain the conventional English spelling-sound relationships for three reasons.

i. Backward compatibility with present spelling.

ii. English pronunciations for the letters *a e i o u* are used in around 76% of English words, while Continental primary vowel sounds occur in only around 23% (Yule, 2003).

iii. There are no simple ways to spell these ubiquitous English vowel sounds in a Continental spelling system.

iv. Visual comparability of the enormous vocabulary that is now shared internationally is promoted by English spelling for English vowels.

b) The 'long vowels' spoken like letter-names A E I O U are a Gordian knot for spelling reform. A Gordian-knot solution is unobtrusive grav accents àèìòù when needed — mostly for learners These spellings toggle neatly with short vowels *a e i o u*, within word families, as in *provid/provision*, solving the 'Chomsky' objection to reform. Diacritics are increasingly technically feasible, and familiar internationally. [4]

Learners' introduction to literacy by consistent fonemic spelling can then take advantage of improved teaching strategies for immediate text reading, impracticable with present spelling, and not available for earlier initial learning spellings such as i.t.a. The great and critical initial hurdle of knowing how to read now passed, learners can then take on board quickly the remaining principles

to be able to read anything. (Note how Japanese children get the idea of reading from first, simple semi-syllabic hiragana characters, before moving on to acquire the more difficult kanji.)

2. A transitional principle prior to full regularisation. Thirty-one irregular spellings for very common words make up about 10% of everything you read. Retaining them temporarily maintains the appearance of text, for backward access and to avoid visual disruption for present readers. Beginners are able to sight-learn these few 'special cases' and also to recognise vowel patterns *ai, ea, ee, igh, oa, ew, ir*, when each is given only one pronunciation. Nobody has to spell them.

all almost always among com som could should would half kno of off one only once other pull push put as was what want who why, plus 'international suffixes -ion/-tion/-sion plus -zion as in question, pasion, vizion.

3. Principles for grammar and units of meaning promote strategies for fast reading for meaning that also help learners. Children know these principles implicitly in spoken language, can use them in reading, and by age eight all readers can apply them effectively in spelling. Spelling shows grammar consistently in word endings: *-s, -es, -d, -ed*, even if the sound is like /z/ or /t/ as in *The cats, dogs and foxes barkd, snarld and shouted.*

Verb endings are *-s* as in *is was has jumps sings* even if the sound is like /z/.

Spellings of words do not change with additions, eg *family/familys cowboy copyd.*

4. More clues for learning spoken English, which are not required for adult texts. Doubled letters can show where stress is not what you might expect, as in *umbrella, mellancoly*. Adults' texts can also omit many diacritics, as in *educasion* not *edùcàsion*, *gold* not *gold*.

5. Homonyms. English is full of words both spelling and sounding the same. We read them correctly without hesitation, not consciously aware of alternative meanings, because context automatically sorts out the intended meaning. For an example, in recent paragraphs above, totalling 289 words, 12.8% were homophones that were spelled the same, whereas only 6.5% were homophones that were differentiated in spelling . [\[5\]](#)

Reserch can identify the few homofones that require differentiated spellings to avoid confusion in reading, such as, possibly, *too/to/two, for/fore/four/ kno/no.*

6. Nine guidelines for minor points and tricky issues, set by the nature of the English language and its spelling, require resolution by reserch into 'what works'.

1. Spelling unstressed unclear vowels, according to how vague the vowel.
2. Spelling imported words particularly French.
3. Retaining internationally recognisable spellings for classical stems and affixes.
4. Punctuation — Apostrofes only when needed.
5. Spelling pronunciation may sometimes be simpler than changing the spelling, e.g. the mother/brother/another set already suiting one north British pronunciation.
6. Proper names — spellings decided by the owners.
7. Silent initial letters in present spelling temporarily retained to enable dictionary sourcing
8. Interim regulated use of C, K and Q, before K takes over.

9. Minor tricky issues include spelling final /s/ in singular words, and how to represent the vowel in PUT, WOOL, SHOULD, which currently has no specific representative.

Comments on salient features and rationale.

- 'Needs-Driven'. Each principle is designed in response to needs and abilities. Anyone can take up features immediately, as it suits them. They can be understood without training by those presently literate, and quickly grasped by learners and international users.
- The modifications of the alphabetic principle can be taken up at readers' and writers' own pace, making a practical form of testing prior to an International Spelling Commission.
- Taking account of how people would like to spell, including current fast-moving trends.
- The only training required for present readers is to know that diacritics [aeiou] represent the 'long' vowels A E I O U.
- The teaching of reading can now be vastly improved and more foolproof. It will now be possible to 'teach yourself to read and spell' at home with a half-hour video, a method also useful for beginners' 'advance organizers'.
- Improved reading, faster and more efficiently, with better comprehension.
- Taking account of multi-disciplinary research in cognitive psychology, communications, linguistics and education, and urging funded action research to test, and develop, validating this model and alternatives as they can be tested out in everyday practice, in print and on the Internet.
- The model answers criticisms of reform by authorities such as Carol Chomsky, Venezky, Frith and Frank Smith.

The degree of change.

a. This 100-word excerpt from Mark Twain illustrates around 20% change in spellings of words, apart from deleting surplus letters and adding grave diacritics.

Uncl Cadmus sat doun and the Opozision ròz and combated his reasonings in the usual way that thày did. Thèz pèpl sayd (or sed) that thay had aulways been usd to the hiroglifics, that the hiroglifics had dear and sàcred asòsiàtions for them, that thày lovd to sit on a barrel under an umbrella in the brilliant sun of Ejipt and spel out the ouls and ègls and aligàters and saw-teeth and then weep with romantic emèsion at the thaut that thay had at mòst but àt or ten years between themselvs and the gràv for the enjoyment of this ecstasy.

b. Applying principl 1 only, as for use as a dictionary pronunciation guide or initial learning spelling.

A challenge. [6] Could fewer or other rules produce as regular a spelling that could be quickly comprehended by all categories of users and learners internationally, and that swerved so little from present English spelling, while redeeming it from its accumulation of historical accidents and expedients?

NOTES.

1. Spelling. 'Ph' has been replaced by 'f', and some surplus letters have been omitted — how many omissions have readers noticed? Hotson estimated the regularity of English at 7%. Flesch estimated it at 97%.

2. The popular understanding of a speech sound is used here, as more familiar from schooling; a linguist's definition of foneme is about underlying fonology.

3. A note on 'principles'. These proposals are principles but merge into rules. A principle is a 'a general law as a guide to action'. A rule applies a principle at the level of specific action.

4. A recent electoral notice for my local council elections in Melbourne, Australia, was written in 20 languages; of the eight in the roman alfabet, only two, English and Somali, did not have diacritics. French, German and Scandinavian languages were not included, because immigrants speaking these languages usually speak English too.

5. Homofones in these paragraphs:

a) Homografic: *prior full irregular common make up Their transitional retention text for backward present cases' spell passion vision fast, use can age shows, even sound like in dogs barked, shouted. change adult texts, doubled letters stress sorts unit*

b) Heterografic: *principle one very you read for to sight all sum would know we by eight in not more might*

6. It may wel be askd why I hav not ritn this articl in the regùlr speling that I advocàt. The ansr is that I hav lernd from experiens that few pèpl can bàir with both nù ideas and nù speling at once. Inovàtions here hav been limited to som surplus letrs omitd and consistent consonants. It is in the arts, entertanment and everyday that fasions can mor esily be chànjed.

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6. Orthographic Goals.

Steve Bett.

How should alternate schemes and orthographic proposals be evaluated?

*There is widespread agreement on what makes for a good orthography but they are expressed in a variety of different ways. Blain suggests **consistent, phonemic, compact, familiar, and email friendly**. Bett suggested speed and efficiency of reading, writing, and teaching. Hasselquist suggests **phonemicity, similarity, learning ease, and usability**. While performance indexes have been developed for the listed dimensions, they are not refined to the point where two people could come up with identical relative ratings. It should be possible to first choose the goals and then select the scheme that best achieved those goal. While we can conduct polls and pick winners on subjective grounds, it would be better if we could make a more objective selection.*

A fairly recent strategy of the apologists for the current morpholexical writing system, mentioned in the [JSSS31 editorial](#), is to argue that the traditional writing system should not be judged in terms of criteria more appropriate for other types of writing systems. It is not fair, they argue, to demand greater phonemicity and consistency from a logographic or lexical based writing system.

A focus on speed and efficiency of teaching, and learning, however, is not writing system specific. Only those who do not want a system designed for universal literacy, can reject this as a goal.

Consistency without radical change.

Can a writing system that will be phonemic enough to help the slow learners and make a higher level literacy easier to achieve for all avoid annoying the already literate? Is it possible to achieve a high degree of regularity and consistency without drastic changes? This elusive goal has been sought by hundreds of orthographers over the past 200 years.

If it were easy to achieve consistency without drastic change, we would have long since arrived at a spelling system that everyone could support. [see **Yule, JSSS32 Item 5**].

At the very least, the new orthography should be readable in context without a key. This is a variation of Bullokar's [1580] conclusion that a successful spelling reform required an "easy conference" between the new spelling and the old.

Almost any writing system can be made systematic or consistent with enough exception rules but when the number goes much beyond 10 they become difficult to teach and use.

Readable but annoying.

It is possible to be readable and yet be annoying to readers. When [a 1917 article](#) written in New Spelling was posted to the ssslist, most members considered it to be too tiring to read. In other words. New Spelling is probably too radical for a house style. If it manages to annoy those who favor reform, it will certainly not be embraced by those who see no need for reform.

Rondthaler and Lais [1987?] have made efforts to reduce the annoyance level and I need to rewrite the article in ALC Soundspel to see if they have achieved their goal.

RITE adds a few more rules to achieve a closer approximation of the traditional letter strings. This makes a RITE transcription a little easier to read but more difficult to spell. Both ALC and RITE do not respell unstressed vowels. This increases word familiarity at the expense of consistency. [See links to **ALC** and **RITEspel** webs.]

Tradspel adepts often read by word-signs so *any change in the shape of the word slows down their reading and may require them to resort to sound spelling.*

Similarity to the old code and consistency are often at odds. Attempts to optimize on one dimension will conflict with attempts to optimize on the other.

Consistency and phonemicity are assumed to be the qualities that will help the unlettered. Similarity to the old code is the quality that will make the reform palatable to those who have already learned one code and don't want to change their reading habits.

No matter how easy the New Spelling, most people do not want to go to the trouble of learning it unless there is a pressing need to be conversant in the new code.

I have suggested that we have a new Shaw alphabet competition not because we need more schemes for representing English but because we need to have a clearer set of agreed on goals for evaluating the schemes we have.

One reason that the society has endorsed so few new writing systems is because there is no agreement among members as to how to rank the alternative proposals. As a society, we have not tested our ability to recognize a better orthography.

Selecting the best reform orthography is not the same as selecting a house style. The house style has to be more than just readable. It has to be inviting. It should not discourage readership.

1. Goals.

The goals of the simplifiers are stated in the principles of 1876 and in the six axioms. These are usually repeated on the inside front cover of every issue of the Journal. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for people to argue that the simplifiers have no clear goals.

The axioms are more like assumptions: In an alphabetic system the letters are supposed to represent speech sounds. When there is a correspondence between phonemes and phonograms. literacy can be achieved in less than 3 months. Writing becomes child's play.

Critics note that all real writing systems are mixes, e.g. contain both logographic and phonographic elements. A system with more logographic elements can be just as good as one with more phonographic elements. [see the arguments of Bradley and more recently by D.S. Taylor from Leeds, [JSSS31](#), Editorial

It is probably true that adepts can read a logographic system faster than a novice can sound out words in sound writing system. However, it is also true that mastering a logographic system may take ten times longer and relegate the less gifted and less-schooled members of society to semi-literacy.

2. Hasselquist's Dimensions, 2001.

Similarity to TS [traditional spelling] is the ability of the proposed orthography to resemble the writing native speakers are most familiar. Visual similarity is a key element in backward compatibility which enables readers to access the vast store of knowledge and information from the past. The minimalist reformers also see visual similarity as a key factor in the salability of a new orthography. If the new orthography does not look like English, it would not be acceptable to the powers that be — those who have the power to advance or retard its dissemination and use. The minimum level of similarity could be defined as the point at which 5% or more of the spellings cannot be recognized. The minimum level of similarity is reached messages written in the new orthography can be read in context without recourse to a key. Shavian cannot be read without a key. Most other reform proposals can. However, some of them such as new spelling can be tiring to read until one adjusts to the new configurations.

In 1917, the house style for the spelling society publications was **New Spelling**. For all its virtues, most find new spelling tiring to read. Too many words have to be sounded out and associated with their spoken form in order to be interpreted. Sound reading requires more effort than logographic or word-sign reading.

Phonemicity is the ability of a proposal to reflect the sounds spoken in a systematic form of writing, such as to enable the decoding of it accurately as to meaning and sound, by all who wish to use the language, with one symbol per sound, and vice versa, considered ideal. The closer this ability approaches that ideal, the better it contributes to easier reading and comprehension, as well as to its writing, especially when compared with the horrendous difficulties encountered using the multiplicity of TS's symbolisms of English's sounds.

Learning ease is the ability of a proposal to enable a potential user of it to learn and remember the complexities of its rules, format and symbolism with the least possible effort, time and memorization required. This is especially necessary for the proper encoding of its writing as well as for knowledgeable reading, and should be in sharp contrast to that encountered with TS, where there essentially are no rules, or a near infinite number if there are, and where spelling depends almost entirely on rote memory to be even generally accurate.

Usability or ease of use is the ability of a proposal to enable easier writing and reading as compared with that considered possible with TS. This could be enhanced by the proposal's simplicity in symbolization and thus reduction in space/time required. This ability would have the additional benefits mentioned just before the first proposal, namely that of saving resources, faster typing speed, as well as being beneficial to reading by increased eye span capabilities, both of the latter saving time and having monetary value.

3. Roy Blain's list of dimensions for his scorecard for notations.

Consistency. A 'same sound same spelling' relationship is the most important factor in any new spelling scheme. It shortens the learning process and simplifies English writing for the existing and future generations. Maximum points 3.

Familiarity. Since we prefer that older people can read new writings, and young people can read old writings it is desirable that the two styles of spelling are similar enough to be readable by all people. Maximum points 2.

Phonemic Makeup. The selection of 2 single letters to be joined to produce a specific sound (digraph), should be influenced by the sounds of the individual letters. Maximum points 2.

Brevity. Where a spelling is shortened without jeopardising the correct pronunciation or meaning of the word, time and space is saved, writing becomes more efficient and spelling mistakes fewer.

<http://groups.yahoo.co.in/group/saundspel/files/eval/phonemicity.html>

Gus Hasselquist, a retired Lockheed engineer is one of the orthographers active on the Saundspel discussion group.

Archived at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/saundspel>.

4. Steve Bett's list of dimensions.

The focus on speed and efficiency can be traced back to the writings of G. B. Shaw. Shaw himself used pitman shorthand. The basic shortcoming of Pitman's phonemic shorthand was that it was not linear enough to typeset.

Speed of reading [decoding speed] All things being equal. brevity and the lack of redundant characters will increase reading speed. All alphabetic writing systems are read as "word sign" or logographic systems by the most adept. For familiar high frequency words. there is no particular advantage for alphabetic or phonemic spelling. Where phonemic spelling helps is on unfamiliar low frequency, multi-syllable words. [high frequency words tend to be short and monosyllabic].

Speed of writing [encoding and typing speed] Writing speed can be increased by eliminating redundant letters. The fewer the number of letters. the faster the speed. The brevity of the code makes a difference. Cut Spelling had 10% fewer letters than standard written English. It used up 10% less space on the page and could be written 10% faster.

Shorthand is an example of a writing system that sacrifices reading speed for writing speed. Many shorthands are not phonemic. Most shorthands cannot be typed because they are not linear. What Pitman and Twain wanted was a phonemic shorthand [brachytypy] that could be typeset. The Shaw alphabet achieved this objective. Shaw also stipulated that the proposed british alphabet [BPA] be different from the traditional Roman alphabet to insulate it from ridicule. It was spared ridicule but was also ignored because few wanted to take the time to learn it.

ENgliS is an example of a phonemic unigraphic [36 letters for 36 pure sounds] script that has been **optimized for speedy typing** without a drastic reduction in readability. When limited to the ASCII character set, there are only two diacritics available: double letters and capital letters. ENgliS rejects the digraph option. "**ENgliS iz cptomYzd for rqpud tuC tYping.**" [c=ox horns, q=ax, S=prow of a Viking ship, E=eel, Y=eye, C=chin]. ENgliS can be ridiculed but there is little chance that it will be mistaken for the traditional script. It would not be called ignorant spelling but Mark Twain could still call it "ugly"

To reduce the ugliness of caps in unfamiliar places, the caps could be converted into diacritics. Downsizing without marking would mean that the sound associated with vowel letters would be ambivalent. But, two sounds per letter is certainly better than 14. [Dewey, 1971 showed that the sounds associated with each letter ranged from 1 to 30 with an average of 14.7 sound associates per letter].

Speed of teaching/learning. There are two distinct groups that have to be learn the code. Illiterates who are unfamiliar with any code and those who are literate in at least one code. It is easier to teach someone a code for a language they are familiar with than a code for one they

cannot use conversationally. In all cases, it is easier to teach a consistent code than an inconsistent one.

It should be up to ten times easier to teach a writing system that spelled 40 sounds in 40 ways than one that spelled the same 40 sounds 400 ways. The traditional writing system spells the 41 sounds of spoken English 561 different ways in a 72,000 word dictionary. Over 85% of the spellings in English are spelled one of five different ways.

Theoretically, the traditional English writing system should take 5 times as long to learn as the ideal writing system. There are no ideal writing systems, but 95% of them, according to Laubach, are highly phonemic. If the ideal is 100% phonemic, then Finnish and Korean [Hangul] are in the high 90's. Italian and Spanish in the mid 80's. Using the same measure of phonemicity: phonemes/phonograms, English is 7% phonemic. Making adjustments for irregularities that exist in other writing systems such as Spanish and Italian, English is hypothetically over 4 times more difficult. This is about what is observed in several cross cultural comparisons where late 1st year students in Italy, for instance, perform at the level of 4th year students in England and America.

Resiliency: The ability to withstand the outrage of those who have learned the word-sign code. No matter how good the new code may be, it has to minimize the annoyance to tradspel adepts in order to soften the backlash. People become very attached to their codes. Hofstadter said most would rather change religions than orthographies. The attachment transcends the work involved in learning a new code. Those with an excessive attachment bordering on worship and reverence will rise up in organized opposition when they feel threatened. The first line of opposition is ridicule. The new code will be called "dumbed down" English, ignorant hillbilly spelling, or worse.

When the traditionalist mounted an editorial campaign against T.R.'s respellings, there was no effective response from the simplifiers. There was a government publication on simplified spelling that explained in detail the rationale for the 300 spellings that were to be the preferred spellings in government publications. The reaction was not so much to these respellings since they were already among the variant spellings in a dictionary as to what they might portend.

5. Summary.

Selecting the best compromise notation requires a focus on the scales to be employed. The dimensions of evaluation include:

Phonemic regularity: more alphabetic and consistent than the current system and a more reliable guide to pronunciation.

Economical: Greater space efficiency — no redundancies.

User Friendly — Easier to learn and use, keyboard friendly.

Convergent sign design: backward compatible to provide access to our heritage of print and to be readable by TO adepts without having to use a key or a code book.

7. Comparing Spelling Schemes.

Roy W. Blain.

Editor's Preface:

*Given the number of schemes for the phonemic representation of English, there needs to be a way to compare them objectively. Blain recommends five dimensions: The best notation is **phonemic, consistent, compact, familiar, and email friendly**. The objective of the comparisons would be to find the best all around solution. The usual challenge is to come up with a system that is consistent enough to help slow learners and familiar enough to limit the annoyance to tradspel adepts — the already literate. **Easy word recognition** marks the minimum level of familiarity. For a description of Blain's comparison strategies read the article in this issue on goals or visit his web.*

*In a related article in **JSSS32**, John Wells recommends using IPA for the phonemic representation of English. Blain considers the IPA to be deficient in familiarity and email friendliness. Instead of **ei ii ai ou ju**, for the long vowels, Blain recommends **ai ee ii ou yuu**. IPA does fine with the other dimensions as it is consistent, phonemic, and compact. A 100% phoenemic scheme is 100% consistent. However, with enough exception rules, it is possible to have a consistent predictable representation that is only 60% phonemic. Some claim that with 200 rules, tradspel is 97% predictable. To be easily teamed, the number of exception rules should be under 25. Saispel and Spanglish have about 10.*

The great majority who need spelling to be simpler, do not have the means to devise or select such, because they can not read or write. Those who can read and write and have the power to effect a change, do not do so because it would require of them hours of bothersome adaptation.

Th grait majoriti hu need speling to b simplr, du not hav th meenz to diviiz or silekt suc, bikoz thai kan not reed or riit. Thouz hu kan reed nd nit nd hav th pawr to efekt a cainj, du not du so bikoz it wud reqiir ov them awrz ov bothrsum adaption.

To add to the difficulties of implementing reform, active spelling reformers have not yet agreed upon which proposals to promote.

To ad to th difikultiz ov implimenting riform, aktiv speling riformrz hav not yet agreed upon wic propouzlz to promot.

Over centuries, a fair number of good schemes have been laid out but sooner or later have run aground due mostly to failing support or gathering opposition. Remembering that it also needed a few hundred years for man to master the art of flying, the cause for simpler spelling should not yet be given up.

Ouvr sencuriz, a fer numbr ov gud skeemz hav been laid awt but suunr or laitr hav run agrawnd dyu moustli to failing suport orgathering opozishn. Rimembring that it aulsou needd a fyu hundrd yeez f man to mastr th art ov fliiing, th kauz f simplr speling shud not yet b givn up.

Among the many reform schemes developed over the last 50 years, several have shown an increasing likeness to each other such that one may assume a complete convergence is imminent. Communication through internet presents us with an advantage our predecessors did not have. As the world's populations intermingle, the need for a simple, expressive, common language was never so urgent. A method of selecting, or at least leading us quickly towards the best of reform proposals should be our immediate priority.

The writer, who, for the record sympathises more with the needs of the learners in the world, rather than those who can already read, lays out what he believes nevertheless to be an objective numerical system of evaluation based on the priorities of reformed spelling as seen by respected authors and statesmen.

Other spelling reform members should, through the editor, suggest improvements to the 'Spelling Scorecard' or lay out an alternative evaluation system, perhaps to be included in a future journal.

Once a simple but revealing numerical evaluation system can be applied, the path to selecting a popular spelling scheme through a 'convinced' majority, could be short. Any scheme to be compared should include a complete, one page 'sound to symbol' table, together with explanatory notes where necessary, similar in layout to the spelling scheme (Saispel) shown on the next column.

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8. Reform of Chemical Language as a Model for Spelling Reform.

Hans-Richard Sliwka.

Dr. Sliwka studied at the French-German bilingual University of Fribourg in Switzerland. His Ph.D. thesis in organic chemistry was written in simplified German, without pseudo-etymological ph, th, rh. The English summary. was calligraphed in Shavian. The thesis was initially refused on the grounds that it used non-standard spelling. Since this transgressed the elementary rules of academic freedom, Hans appealed. He won his appeal and received his Ph.D. degree by a judicial decision. [1]

Abstract: In 1787, four scientists replaced the traditional alchemical language with a new, systematic nomenclature for inorganic chemistry. The new idiom was accepted in a relatively short time against massive resistance. The nomenclature of organic chemistry was slowly and collectively developed by many chemists and implemented over a long time. Once the naming systems were established, the reforming clan ceased. Chemical nomenclature exemplifies the conditions necessary for a successful language change and illustrates the reluctance for subsequent reforms.

1. introduction.

Orthograpy reformers ignore chemistry. Chemists ignore orthograpy reforms. Both groups do not know that chemists fought in the forefront of spelling reforms: Pauli in Germany, [2] Arndt in Turkey, [3] or have actively promoted Esperanto and Ido: Ostwald in Germany, [4] Berthelot in France, Ramsay in England. [5].

Chemists communicate in a highly elaborated alfabetic and symbolic language. The chemical nomenclature is a predominant literary language. Only short names are spoken, the official, sometimes very long terms are replaced by trivial names or are uncanonically abbreviated for oral communication. The chemical nomenclature works with a distinct syntax and semantic, but is not suited for textual sentences. Structures are drawn according to specific rules.

Kant defined "natural science" by the amount of mathematics encountered in a discipline. [6] Concerning chemistry Kant is wrong. Modern chemistry did not emerge because it was linked to mathematics but to linguistics. [7] Chemistry has a distinct filological base. This is witnessed by Buffon, a contemporary during the embryonic days of chemistry: "Cette science va donc naître puis qu'on commence à la parler". [8]

2. naturally language grown to a dead end.

From the very beginning chemistry has played a dual role. [9] Chemical methods were used in daily and industrial preoccupations such as baking, preserving, metallurgy, military. At the same time, the transformation of ores into metals or of an inoffensive fruit juice into a delirium creating drink was associated with divine power: Thot, Hermes or Merkur helped to melt metals, [10] Dyonisos was responsible for wine processing. Chemistry, therefore, has been a merger of practical and theosophical science. This duality developed a rich terminology. The oldest known chemical documents originate from Egypt and China. [11] Greek scientists developed a chemical language with abundant picto- and logograms, Figure. [11] [12] The applied chemist

used this lingua franca to protocol the state of the art in his work. On the other hand, the adept, aspiring the magical philosopher's stone, was not interested in the propagation of his findings. Transmutation experiments were therefore written in cryptograms. [13] The mnemonic shorthand writing of the iatrochemists, the old farmaceutists, were then added to the vocabulary of the esoterically or pragmatically oriented chemists. Accumulated over time a multitude of names and signs resulted for a single object. [11] [14]

In the 18th century the chemical idiom had become complicated to such a degree that even highly instructed chemists had communication difficulties. The old language of chemistry was no longer adequate to describe the results of a new arising scientific theory.

3. reform.

Some chemists tried to revitalize the traditional chemical language. The French Macquer classified in 1766 the existing compounds, related them to the known symbols and coined some new names. [15] The Belgian chemist van Bochaute proposed in 1787 a cautious revision. [16] A more foregoing reformer was the Swedish chemist Bergman who, in 1775, gave many old names a systematic denomination. [17] However, Bergman was too entrenched in the old conceptions. Afraid to break with long-standing traditions he did not apply his own proposals in his late articles. No such scruples had the French chief district attorney and amateur-chemist Luis Bernard Guyton de Morveau. In 1782 he developed a new naming system and resolutely promulgated it in scientific and popular lectures and articles. [18] Guyton submitted his proposals to the Academie des Sciences in Paris. There, Guyton's ideas were much welcomed by the ambitious and multitalented Antoine Laurent Lavoisier. Lavoisier had just experimentally proven that the theoretical base of chemistry at these days, the flogiston theory, was a blunder. [19]

4. revolution.

Lavoisier was fully aware that facts alone were not sufficient to establish a new theory. Lavoisier had studied the works of the philosopher Condillac, who had declared: "L'art de raisonner se reduit à une langue bien faite." [19] [20] For Lavoisier it was impossible to isolate nomenclature from chemistry and chemistry from nomenclature. Guyton's naming scheme came therefore just in time. The practical approach of Guyton were coupled with the scientific and linguistic knowledge of Lavoisier. Both constructed within few months a new nomenclature system, which was critically discussed with two other chemists, Berthollet and Fourcroy. In 1787, the joined efforts of the 4 chemists were presented in the book: Méthode de la nomenclature chimique. [21] This œuvre marks the transition from alchemy to modern chemistry. The new nomenclature is an example of language construction in a similar manner Zamenhof 100 years later assembled Esperanto. [22] Lavoisier was aware that the new nomenclature was less a reform but rather a revolution, a brusque and painful rupture with the past. [23] Another language revolution with high impact for chemists, though linguistically localized, happened in 1929, when Atatürk changed script and vocabulary.

5. resistance.

The "Méthode de la nomenclature chimique" deeply shocked the chemical community. The new proposals were either discarded outright or heavily criticized:

- the traditional chemical language could have been accommodated by a judicious reform without the need of a linguistic revolution [24]

- the current names, known to every chemist, should have been retained and only the real absurd ones should have been sacrificed [25]
- a name change should be realized step by step and by deviating as less as possible from old designations [26]
- the new nomenclature were doomed a linguistic charlatanerie, the names being barbare, insignificant, disgusting, without etymology [27] [28]

Fundamental critics came from anglophone chemists: James Keir objected that language is a common property of all and no authority, only universal consent, can alter the idiom. [29] Priestley, Cavendish, Black, Davy, Kirwan wanted neutral names, unrelated to any theoretical consideration. [30] [31] Kirwan also remarked that the classical authors of chemistry. would become unintelligible by adopting the new nomenclature. [32] Cavendish, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin profetized that the new nomenclature will be rejected. [33] Guyton retorted that the objectors obviously want to sacrifice the new names for habitude: "Le retourk à d'anciennes denomination nous paroît faire reculer la science". [24]

6. implementation.

Criticized worldwide by th most reputed chemists th futur of th new nomenclatur did not look very promisng in 1787. Nevrthless, aftr less than 20 years of strugl, th new nomenclatur was worldwide acceptd. Wat made th new nomenclatur succeed?

A. Th traditionl ordr of society with ranks, classes and old valus was seriously questiond in France in th 70s and 80s of th 18th century. Creating new names wer part of the instigation in these days. [34]

B. A jenrl espri of chanje was also detectbl in many proposals to improve french orthografy. Voltaire in 1771 rote: "L'écriture est la peinture de la voix, plus elle est ressemblante, mieux est elle". [35] Domergue fot at the same time for a fonetic rith french. [35]

C. Ther was a leadng case in creating a new nomenclatur. Biolojy sufrd from uncountable difrnt plant names. Th swedish biolojist Linné had introduced in 1753 a binomial latn naming system for intrnatioln comunication. [36]

D. Th old chemicl doctrin had acumulated too many anomlis at th end of th 18th century. Th proposed timid reforms of Macquer and Bergman wer not user-frendly enuf. [15] [17] Ther was an urjnt need for a distinct languaj wen Morveau and Lavoisier presentd ther proposals.

E. Lavoisier and his coleags linkd ther nomenclatur to a new scientific theory. Those ho turnd to th new theory wer obliged to accept th adjoined nomenclatur.

F. A main avantaj of th new nomenclatur was th esy lernng by untraiind students. Teachng th novel system drastically reduced th time-consuming introductory courses to chemicl nomenclatur. Even convinced oponents to th new languaj admitd its pedagogical merits. [37]

7. weakness.

Guyton and Lavoisier probbly new about th spelng proposals of Domergue and Voltaire. With i for y (hidrogène, oxigène) they folod th proposed reduction of etymological riting. But exopt for this unike case, Guyton and Lavoisier rote ther new nomenclatur in french traditionl orthografy. Th zeal in creating betr names was not mirrd in betr spelng. Biolojy replaced a nationl with an intrnatioln

naming scheme, whereas chemistry changed from an international to a national system. [38] This had far going consequences for the chemists. They cannot recognize many old element and compound names when reading articles in different languages. Sulphur is rikki (Finnish), qe...on (Greek), hen (Hungarian), enxôfre (Portuguese), kukurt (Turkish). [39] By retaining Latin or Greek names chemists must have avoided recognition problems. Indeed, pharmacists rely on Latin in naming chemical compounds. But different countries have divergent Latin names for a given compound and homeopaths do not converse in the same Latin as do classical doctors, e.g. argentum nitricum — argentii nitras, ammonium muriaticum — ammonium chloridum. [40]

Name Changes

by Lavoisier and Guyton [21]

before 1787

air phlogistique
 air déphlogistique
 gaz inflammable
 gaz hépatique
 alkali fixe végétale
 alkali minéral
 alkali volatil
 fleurs de zinc
 précipité per se
 terre des os
 foies de soude alkalin
 tartre vitriolé
 acide marin

after 1787

gaz azotique
 oxigène
 hydrogène
 gaz hydrogène sulfuré
 potasse
 soude
 ammoniacque
 oxide de zinc
 oxide de mercure
 phosphate calcaire
 sulfure de potasse
 sulfate de potasse
 acide muriatique

later changes

nitrogen
 oxygen
 hydrogen
 hydrogen sulfide

 zinc oxide

 calcium phosphate

 potassium sulfate
 hydrogen chloride

8. evolution.

The anticlerical hobby chemist Guyton did not succeed in changing his colleagues to fervent agnostics. Chemists continued to believe in divine operations. The synthesis of compounds from living organisms was considered impossible without the "vital force". Only in 1828, when Wöhler synthesized urea with educts from the mind world, "vital force" was abandoned. [41]

The urea synthesis marks the beginning of organic chemistry, defined as the chemistry of carbon compounds, in contrast to inorganic chemistry, which deals with all other elements. [42]

Whereas the nomenclature of inorganic chemistry was constructed by 4 chemists, numerous chemists participated in the development of the more complicated naming system of organic chemistry. The proposals were openly disputed in scientific journals during many years. [43] Nonetheless, the renowned chemist Kolbe considered any effort to develop a nomenclature for organic chemistry a waste of time, he predicted that such a system would not survive more than 10 years. [44] After all, the international nomenclature congresses in Karlsruhe (1860) and Geneva (1892) agreed on the principles of a systematic naming system. At a 3rd conference (Liège 1930) the nomenclature standards of organic chemistry were established. [45] Since then, amelioration, and development of nomenclature is the mandate of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC). A private American company, Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS), has since 1969 the monopoly for registering new compounds, with its own naming system. The CAS-nomenclature can be considered a literary language, while the IUPAC dialect represents the popular vocabulary.

The implementation of the organic nomenclature was much easier than that of inorganic chemistry:

- there was no naming scheme in organic chemistry, the new terminology had not to supersede an existing lingua
- the new language was the agreed result of extensive scientific discussions
- The organic nomenclature at the end found an algorithmic base. Computer programs are now able to generate names from a given structure and can draw structures from a given name. [46]

9. constructed languages.

For scientific communication on an international level a language has to satisfy important quality criteria. A true lingua franca should be user-friendly, precise, unequivocal and easy to learn, the language should operate with short, euphonic pronounceable words and should be written in a phonetic manner. [47] Ramsay, Cotton, Becquerel, Thomson [48], Diesel [49] assumed that none of the contextual languages customary in science (English, French, German, Latin, Greek) would meet these quality criteria. [50] Consequently, many scientists enthusiastically welcomed constructed world languages. [48] Nobel award winner Wilhelm Ostwald almost gave up chemistry in favor of propagating ido. [4] [51] In 1952 appeared Spectroscopia Molecular, a journal entirely written in interlingua. [52]

The "discoveries" of Flatland and Astria documented a high degree of fantasy, but, astonishingly, the Flatland creators were unable to imagine that written communication in a 2D-world could be different from traditional orthographies. Even Flatland scientists have to do with pseudo-etymological phenomena: element 9 in the planiverse was named aluphoros (Ap), element 11 chlorophorus (Cp). [53] A similar lack of imagination is also observed on the island Utopia. Thomas More gave the utopians an own language and alphabet, but he did not replace the utopian symbols for ph with $\varphi = f$ in gymnosophon (philosophy). [54]

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Editor's Afterward:

The representation of scientific words is a major problem for spelling reformers because while most scientific names are based on Latin and Greek roots, they are not pronounced as in Italian. Respelling these words to reflect how they are pronounced in English would obscure their roots and their international clarity. [There is an illustration of how chemical names change over time].

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J32, 2003/1, pp4–8 in the printed version*]

[Isobel Raven: see [Newsletters](#), [Book](#), [Media](#).]

This article includes a section for which there was no room in the printed copy.

9. The End of the Reading Wars?

Isobel Raven.

The history of reading education in Ontario shows that fonics has never been abandoned as an instructional strategy in that province throughout the 20th century. There have been, however, marked swings in emphasis on fonics. It is being reintroduced forcefully in Balanced Literacy programs and again the hope for better reading results hinges on more and better fonics. This movement will improve results, but because of the recalcitrant complexity of English spelling, there will be negligible gain for the "struggling average" [\[1\]](#) and the slower learner. Spelling change is still necessary.

1. The Reading Wars.

"Balanced Literacy" is the new big thing in reading education in Ontario, and judging by the distribution of websites containing that phrase over the Canadian provinces and American states, it is making strong headway in North America. It is a reaction to the deficiencies of the "Whole Language" approach to reading instruction, which dominated instruction in primary classrooms in the late eighties and the nineties. Whole Language had its genesis in the work of Ken Goodman at the University of Arizona, Frank Smith of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (influential through his books and as an instructor of teachers), and Brian Cambourne, who after studies with Goodman, became established in Wollongong University, Australia. It arose in England as the "Real Books" movement.

Since its inception, proponents of Whole Language have been at loggerheads with educators who hold that fonics is the linchpin of early reading success for school beginners. The result has been the so-called "Reading Wars".

2. Whole Language vs Fonics.

Whole Language (WL) was based on three premises: one, that learning to read is as natural as learning to speak, and essentially involves the same mental processes; that reading is best learned in the context of reading natural pieces of literature, e.g.; poems, chants, and stories with refrains; the corollary, that reading is best learned "from the top down" with only the degree of analysis necessary to derive the meaning (hence as little letter-level analysis as possible).

The proponents of Fonics as the key to reading success fought a feisty but losing battle against this movement because of the wide appeal to teachers and administrators of exposing children to good literature, and a hoped-for pleasant road into reading devoid of dreary work-sheets and fonics drills.

Fonics promoters insisted that research was on their side, but WL opponents found fault with the methodology of the research and claimed that the motivation of researchers was politically tainted.

WL became identified with a liberal stance, while Phonics was the bailiwick of educational and political conservatives. Phonics was backed by politicians who knew nothing about reading except that they had learned phonics in their childhood. But in the mid nineties, the opposition was beginning to pile up. In Ontario, parents whose children were failing to read, or reading poorly, joined to form The Organization for Quality Education. They were unanimous in their call for systematic phonics in the reading program. Fourth Grade teachers were finding a disproportionate number of non-readers in their classes. Some remedial teachers were seeing from 20 to 30 percent of the children in the primary grades (One to Three) in their schools.

3. Whole Language Discredited.

There is now greater readiness to listen to the researchers. [Keith Stanovich](#) of the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, in a monumental synthesis of the last 25 years of research, (*Progress in Understanding Reading*, New York: The Guilford Press, 2000) marshals evidence that undermines the WL premises.

First, no reputable linguist or cognitive theorist holds that learning to read and learning to speak are essentially alike. Speaking personally, this was the first wart I noticed on WL theory. Language is characteristic of absolutely all human groups. The social groups that do not have language, e.g. chimpanzees, we do not consider human. Speaking is a biologically determined human activity. But writing, hence reading, was not developed spontaneously in the majority of human societies. Writing systems capable of expressing a complete language were invented in about three places in the world, and spread, mostly thru trade, to other parts of the world. There are still human groups who have no writing system to represent their language. Therefore, the reading of words cannot be considered a natural human accomplishment, any more than the reading of music, or choreography, or mathematical notation.

The "top-down" nature of reading has been disconfirmed. The research shows that mature readers sample the print rather thoroughly, and do not predict words from context. Prediction, in fact, does not turn out to be very useful. It takes four guesses on the average, to come up with the right word, when you know the preceding word in naturalistic text. (Stanovich, p. 235) Skilled reading is phonologically based. Comparisons of good and poor readers show that it is the poor readers who guess from context, i.e., read from the top down; good readers have instantaneous phonological processing of individual words. Good readers show superior ability over poor readers in reading regularly spelled pseudowords, evidence of their use of phonological skills in their reading.

Finally, "... some children do not discover the alphabetic principle on their own, and need systematic direct instruction in the alphabet principle, phonological analysis, and alphabet coding. That direct instruction in alphabetic coding facilitates early reading acquisition is one of the most well-established conclusions in all of behavioural science." (Stanovich, p. 415). In other words, teachers need to **teach** phonics.

4. A New Approach? WL+Phonics.

Balanced Literacy (BL) is a response then to parental pressure, teacher dissatisfaction, and the persuasiveness of the research. The approach is, I think, fairly described as WL+phonics. The reading of good literature to the children is retained. The writing program in which children do creative writing using invented spelling is much the same. Independent reading by the pupils is

retained. Teacher-guided reading using graded ("leveled") booklets is a reversion to methods of the days of basal readers, before WL. And the introduction of explicit, systematic phonics teaching is a "new" element in the balanced reading and writing program, though in some ways, it is a reversion also.

The Four Blocks is one commonly used organisation of a BL program. Descriptions can be found on the Internet, one at <http://www.wfu.edu/~cunningh/fourblocks/index.html>.

An alternative to WL+fonics that is gaining some popularity is a program called *Open Court Reading* which combines explicit fonics with reading texts using regularly spelled words (decodable text) almost exclusively. The text is paced to jibe with the fonics instruction.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record has reported on two schools where the results of the 2002 provincial Grade 3 Literacy Tests have been dramatically improved since the *Open Court Reading* program was instituted .

In the [Drayton Heights School](#) of the Upper Grand District School Board in Ontario, 94% of the Grade Three students met or exceeded the provincial standard in reading in 2002. The provincial average was 50% meeting or exceeding the benchmark. Their writing was excellent too. Eighty-seven per cent of the pupils were at or above standard.

When I telephoned principal James Morgan, he emphasized that the use of *Open Court* materials was only one of several factors that contributed to the children's success on the Grade Three tests. *Open Court* is being used only in Kindergarten and Grade One. In later grades the Four Block Balanced Literacy plan is the basis of their literacy program. But the element he considered most effective was the dedication of the teachers and their collegial approach to their work. The fact that Mr. Morgan returned my phone call at 4.40 on a Friday afternoon says something about his dedication also.

He confirmed the following information which appeared in the newspaper: Drayton is a small, rural village, to some extent a bedroom community for people who work 45 minutes away in Kitchener. It has a stable middle-class population. In the school of three hundred students, there are only three members of a visible minority. None are immigrant children. There is strong parental support for the school, with a parents' council working hard to raise money for books and computers. (Telephone conversation with writer, 21 March 2003)

Dramatic improvement in test scores also resulted in part from the institution of *Open Court Reading* at [Centennial Public School](#) in Hespeler, in the Waterloo Region Board. Here, where only 13 percent of Grade Three students met the provincial standard in 2000, 65 per cent succeeded in reaching that bench-mark in 2002, a more than 400 per cent improvement.

The principal, Gerry Young, was proud to tell me about his school, a small school in a working-class area of Cambridge. Here the average income is lower than the average for the Waterloo Region. The educational level of the parents is lower than the average, and the number of single parent families is higher.

It is a stable population. Some of the students are the children of graduates of the school. Numbers of immigrants and children speaking dialects is negligible.

Young, too, is careful to emphasize that the improvement in test results resulted not just from the institution of *Open Court Reading*, but from time devoted to school-wide literacy classes (one hour, 52 minutes daily), and the use of Brain Gym exercises. But more than anything, it was the determination of the staff to do a good job for their kids. (Telephone conversation with writer, 20 March 2003.)

In both schools, all Grade Threes took the tests, even though some exceptional (learning disabled) children could have been exempted at the principal's discretion.

I shall return to the consideration of these schools' results later.

Well, Maybe.

So phonics is something new? The history of reading education in Ontario throughout the twentieth century belies that proposition. I have in my possession **Morang's Modern Phonic Primer**, dated 1903, authorized by the Ministry of Education for use in the schools of Ontario. Books similar to this one remained in use for many years, supplemented by a great deal of phonics teaching from the blackboard, also prescribed in the Teachers' Manuals used in the teacher training institutions. (**Tilley, 1899**, pp. 146–169)

The advent in the forties of basal readers, the famous "Dick and Jane" books (of the same type as the "John and Janet" readers in England) brought a dip in the saliency of phonics in the reading programs. For a time, the main emphasis was placed on learning whole words and accumulating a large reading vocabulary in that way, with phonics considered a secondary strategy. This approach was called the Look-Say method.

I was a student and later a teacher in this era. I know of no primary teacher who did only the phonics prescribed by the guidebook that accompanied the reader. Everyone used a supplementary phonics program, with daily lessons and worksheets to be completed by the pupils.

Look-Say had its failures. Particularly children who learned quite a few words and then stopped. They couldn't seem to learn any more, and forgot and mixed up those they had once seemed to know. The word "dyslexia" was coined to label their disability.

Phonics was called upon to right the situation. As new series of readers were published, the phonics material was stepped up considerably and supplemented by exercises in the pupil workbooks geared to the readers.

The Look-Say method gave way in part to rather brief and isolated forays into something called Language Experience, where material (news, letters, reports, stories) dictated by the class became their reading material. Phonics lessons were derived by the serendipitous occurrences of like phonetic elements in these materials. But, as always, teachers did not neglect their supplementary phonics programs.

Language Experience programs were consistent with the philosophy that backed the child-centred classroom, the "new thing" of the 1970's. There children's choices comprised a good deal of what they did. Teachers were now to be facilitators in helping the child direct his own education. The

stage was set for Whole Language, where children read trade books mostly of their own choosing, where they write daily, spelling as they see fit, where they choose from a variety of activities ways to respond to the literature read to them.

Was fonics abandoned? Perhaps by novice teachers. But experienced teachers, and ones with common sense, could at least see that a child was up the creek without a paddle if you asked her to write without giving her the alphabet. Some form of letter knowledge had to be given and fonics snuck in by that route. Incidental fonics lessons were also a legitimate part of WL. If a child needed some help of that kind in his independent reading, the teacher was to provide the fonics lesson off the cuff.

Fonics has been taught with more or less systematicity for over a century in the primary grades of Ontario schools. I daresay this picture has virtual mirror images in the schools of many jurisdictions in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and the British Isles. (Though I am prepared to be corrected on this.)

5. Will Balanced Literacy Work?

Will an injection of systematic fonics into primary reading programs bring about the level of literacy we want and that our children need if they are to cope with knowledge-based societies? If we can bring the level of success up to 94% as they did in Drayton, the picture looks very bright indeed.

There is one genuinely new element in the fonics programs of the present. That is, the introduction of lessons designed to promote "fonemic awareness" in pupils in junior and senior kindergarten (four and five years of age). To my knowledge, nothing like this has been done in recent years. Yet I have also in my possession an article by one [J. Dearness](#) writing on Reading in the book *Methods in Teaching*, an 1899 manual for the education of prospective teachers. On page 157 he provides a sample lesson in fonemic awareness, asking the children to synthesize the fonemes in easy words "...such as cow, shoe, chalk, sheep, knife, mouth, nose, sky." He calls this work "oral phonics" and recommends a minute or two be spent on such training in every lesson for beginners. How many teachers followed Dearness's advice, and how widespread the teaching of fonemic awareness became at the turn of the 19th century, I have no way of knowing. The practice was apparently lost over the century, although Seigfried Engelmann introduced something like it in his Distar program, a scripted, explicit, and highly systematic program of reading thru fonics that I sampled in the 1960's.

Teachers today use games and other activities that involve separating words into their fonemes and blending together fonemes to form words. Sounds deadly, but kindergarten teachers can make this sort of thing fun. Knowledge of all the letter names and their associated sounds are also being prescribed for kindergartners.

It is this kind of knowledge that has been shown to be linked with early success in reading. Its presentation engenders more hope than I would hold for any of the fonics programs I have taught or seen taught.

In Drayton, with a stable, middle-class population, few exceptional children, no public housing, a negligible crime rate, a cohesive school staff, and a principal with high leadership qualities, the success rate shows what a reading program that includes explicit, systematic fonics can do. The

move to Balanced Literacy or the *Open Court* program should bring a large degree of success to children with similar advantages, and eliminate the deficiency of Whole Language, which allowed a great many perfectly capable children to fall through the cracks. WL was too prone to sloppy practice on the part of both teachers and pupils. Most of all, its expectation of "natural" reading blinded teachers to the needs of failing readers.

6. Code Complexity Remains.

While one mustn't lay too much emphasis on the results of only two schools in what is not a controlled study of their programs, it tweaks the mind to realize that of the two schools, comparable in enrolment, student background (Canadian-born) staff leadership and dedication, one had a 94 per cent success rate, the other 65 per cent. That's 35 per cent still reaching for the provincial standard. Even with good instructional materials embodying what we now know about phonemic awareness, and with conscientious teaching, in the urban school serving culturally disadvantaged children one third of the class is still struggling.

Although early fonemic awareness and systematic presentation of fonic elements will enable most children to learn the basic forty-odd fonemes, I predict that a significant group will be unable to master the intricacies of the advanced code. Lying in wait for them are the demonic code overlaps, for example, the five sounds that can be represented by the letters *ou* as in *soup, out, soul, touch, andcough*.

In *Why Our Children Can't Read*, author **Diane McGuinness [1997, p.97–98]** has analyzed the advanced code into:

21 code overlaps

26 consonant spelling alternative

32 vowel spelling alternatives

Counting the 42 basic elements, this sets the total complexity of the code at 79 elements. (New York: The Free Press, 1997, p.97–98) A daunting enough prospect for the learner.

But McGuinness complains that traditional fonics programs greatly magnify the complexity of the code by teaching that letters and letter groups "make" sounds. Approaching from this angle, 176 letters and letter groups represent 233 "sounds" to be learned.

McGuinness is a scholarly teacher and researcher working in a clinical setting where difficulty can be spotted and cleared up immediately. She claims to be able to teach reading to any person of any age with whom you can carry on a conversation. The classroom situation, even when children are taught in small groups, cannot be compared with one-on-one teaching.

But I think it's safe to say that the fonics programs that are in use as part of the BL thrust are of the traditional type. In the hands of ordinary teachers, "struggling average" pupils and slower learners (who learn what they are taught, but seldom generalize much beyond that) will be overwhelmed by the complexity of the advanced code.

Instead of developing the automatic fonological process that supports fluent reading and integral comprehension, these children will have to rely on a conscious "sounding-out" procedure, searching their memory banks for the right sound to go with the letters they see, with little surplus

mental capacity for comprehension as they go. Comprehension takes place after they have sounded out the words and collected them in a sentence with much regression and hesitation. Such reading is laborious and not much fun. Children do as little of it as possible. While their classmates who have mastered the code go from strength to strength, enjoying ever wider reading and learning experiences, they plod joylessly through their reading tasks, falling further and further behind their classmates, becoming candidates for early school leaving and all its accompanying social disadvantages.

7. Challenge to SSS.

Proponents of spelling change will see immediately that saving the struggling average and slower learner from this fate is simple enough in principle. Teach the basic code or an adjusted fonemic code. One that provides for the representation of all the phonemes in the English language. Everything can be written in it; everything can be read with it. It has 42 simple relationships that can be learned by all but the intellectually handicapped, and even by some of those. Do not require transition to traditional spelling. Let the basic code be the code for all purposes everywhere except high school and university classes devoted to the study of the "classics". The study of traditionally spelled literature can become the bailiwick of those who have a particular interest in studying it, (same as Old Saxon) and it will be their responsibility to preserve and teach the subtleties that are inevitably lost in transliteration.

We know, of course, that there is nothing simple about bringing such a plan into being. But I think the need is pressing, and we should not slacken our efforts to bring sanity to the English spelling system.

Whole Language has lost a major battle in the Reading Wars. But the wars will continue. Educators will continue to hope that there is an easy route to reading without the drudgery of fonics, and any program that promises that will be tried. Fonics teaching will never die, because good teachers know that though it fails some children, it is an essential method.

A phonemic code might not make reading easy. But it would make reading possible for many who are now excluded from literacy by the complexity of traditional spelling.

[1] "Struggling average" is my name for children of average ability in my classes who worked hard, but somehow failed to develop fluency in their reading. They contrast with the "happy average", who needed systematic teaching and had to work hard too, yet were rewarded with steady progress toward fluency.

Those who want to understand more about the American experience with fonics and WL, can read Balmuth's *Roots of Phonics*.

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Editor notes:

In all my 14 years experience as a remedial reading teacher, I cannot recall one child that knew the sounds represented by vowel digraphs, apart possibly from e e.

Their teachers insisted that they taught phonics. It was many years before I solved the mystery. It turns out that the teachers themselves did not consciously know the sounds represented by digraphs. Their teaching of phonics consisted of exposing the children to a handful of phonics aids.

Children had to figure out digraphs for themselves and the ones that were sent to remedial reading never did.

It is next to impossible to teach an unsystematic spelling system systematically.

To successfully memorize 10,000 sight words does not simply depend on visual memory, but on having the interest, the opportunity and the time to read and read and read. Since learning the idiosyncrasies of the English orthography has little educational value, it does not take place, and spelling has become permissive.

Retarded readers [with IQ's over 80] can rapidly learn to decode English words, but because our English spelling is so irregular, there can rarely be an entirely happy ending for anyone who is late in learning to read.

A boy came to our Remedial Centre at the age of about $10\frac{1}{2}$. He was in his last year in Primary School but unable to read a single word. The school had thought him to be unintelligent until an IQ test showed that he was of normal intelligence. After a year attending the center two times a week, he had learned phonics and completely mastered the reading of any word which could be read phonetically. He still could not remember many common, irregularly spelt words. These would eventually be learnt as he met them, over and over again, in his reading.

Because such a high proportion of words [about 60%] could not be read phonetically, a limit was set on the attainment that could be reached within ten months. On the other hand, if our spelling were reformed so that all words were spelt according to a regular system, reasonably phonetic in character, anyone, child or adult, could become completely literate, able to spell correctly as well as to read, within a few months. Compare this with the years it now takes.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J32, 2003, p33 in the printed version*

[John Gledhill: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Media](#)]

10. Review of Jean Meron's Orthotypographie.

John M. Gledhill.

Language was made for man not man for the language.

Méron Jean (ed), 2002, Orthotypographie / Recherches Bibliographique, Convention typographique.

The "Convention Typographique" is a French association founded in 1901, whose current "Statutes" state their third Article as to "defend, illustrate and promote quality in the field of graphical culture and of communication in all its forms: typography (rules of composition and representation on the page); orthography (visual, graphical and grammatical realisation)" etc. (note: this and all other quotations are the reviewer's own translations of the French original).

A closer reading of the "Manifesto" produced by the Secretary of the association, and the editor of this book, makes it clear that there is more of relevance to the Simplified Spelling Society here than might at first appear from what sounds like an association concerned with aesthetics, graphical typefaces, and printing techniques. The very first sentence of the "Manifesto" reads "French spelling only stabilised itself slowly", and it goes on to give a fascinating 2-page summary of some aspects of the development of French spelling.

The Simplified Spelling Society has often monitored what is happening in other languages as they update their spelling, but the parallels with French become starkly prominent in this "manifesto". There is, of course, an essential difference between the problems of French spelling and those of English: by and large if you know the conventions of French spelling you can read any text as there are very few ambiguities but you have problems writing down a word you haven't seen before — it is, in mathematical terms, a "many to one" mapping as one sound may have several spellings, but no spelling represents more than one sound — it is a "read-only" language; English has no fail-safe way of reading a word's pronunciation from its spelling, nor its spelling from its pronunciation.

But we find, on reading the Manifesto that many of the idiosyncratic features of English are echoed in French. For a start we read that "until the 19th century, apart from some grammarians, authors worried little about the problem, leaving to their printers the task of making uniform the spelling of their writings. Montaigne, for example, wrote the verb connaître in eight different ways: congnoistre, cognoistre, conoître, conètre etc". We can easily compare this to the manifold spellings of Shakespeare and his printers. And in current dictionaries one researcher (Nina Catach) has found no less than 3,500 words with variant spellings or inflections; even the famous "Académie Française" is not always authoritative.

One of the most amusing influences on English spelling is also present in French (and German, and Dutch, and other languages too....): "In 1608, Jérôme Hornschurch, one of our foremost publishing house correctors, wrote on this subject: 'according to [the normal copiers], in order to write in the most elegant manner it was necessary to extend each word which ended in *n* by doubling that letter, to write *und* with a double *nn* and also to burden the letter *d* here and there

with a *t* and insert an *h* wherever possible. In the same way they wrote *ff* ... with such a large space between the two letters that one could say they presented an opening wide enough to let a camel through. And all this to earn more money. For each completely filled page could be sold for one denier."

And above all false and "popular" etymologies play their part in French, as in English; for example "poids" [weight]: the "d" is used in modern French because people assumed it came from the Latin "pondus", even though medieval French spelt it "pois", and even though it actually derives from the Latin noun "pensum". Yet this sits alongside (as in English) the etymologically more correct form "avoirdupois" as a measurement mode. The effect of national pride (and prejudice) can be seen in the French attachment to their accents, no matter how difficult they may be on modern IT equipment — alongside claims that the accents are an integral part of the "semiotics" of the word, the editor hears complaints that in dropping them "does this not yet further yield to the pre-eminence of English?".

For those interested in further parallels with French spelling experience, there is a discussion of "smileys" (or, as the more straightlaced would call them, "emoticons" — émoticônes or binetres); it is a shame that this section was written before the spread of text messaging and any developments and influence of this in French spelling.

The closing sentence, a cry from the heart that all SSS members would echo, is "As far as I am aware, language was made for man not man for the language".

The bulk of the book — some 266 pages of it — comprises a massively impressive bibliography of what appears to be every significant book on French language, punctuation, printing and typography since about 1400. It is a high quality bibliography with meticulous detail and has been well received in professional circles. But what would make excellent reading for those interested in English simplified spelling is the 20-page "Introduction". This includes extensive quotations and comments on a variety of works on French language and the reform of French spelling, starting with a work from 1760 which includes comments on previous attempts since 1531, and continuing a debate "on the change of *ph* into *f*", with which French (like English) is still struggling — unlike all other languages.

The "Convention Typographique" does not campaign for spelling simplification, nor for spelling reform as such, but for increase conformity and regularity. In this it diverges from the Simplified Spelling Society; but in this book is much which will be of interest to the scholarly researcher of English spelling reform. For those with a more pragmatic interest it should be reassuring that the mistakes and problems with which English spelling has overburdened itself are just as great in French; reassuring? Or depressing?

I heartily recommend this book to those with an interest in spelling reform issues in other languages.

[*Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J32, 2003, pp34–36 in the printed version*]

11. 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.

Lies My Teacher Told Me,

by James Lowen, chronicles the textbooks on history get it wrong. Loewen spent two years at the Smithsonian Institute surveying twelve leading high school textbooks of American History. What he found was an embarrassing amalgam of bland optimism, blind patriotism, and misinformation pure and simple, weighing in at an average of four-and-a-half pounds and 888 pages.

Similar lies exist in all textbooks if you look close enough. I am not too concerned about the half truths as long as they provide a way to get beyond them. You have to have a rough sketch of the terrain before you get interested in filling in the details. Myth plays an important role. It is what we organize our lives around. Debunkers are fine, but they are motivated by myths of their own.

Language Arts teachers have their own set of lies which deserve as much attention as historical lies. Kate Gladstone says:

I have seen a reading-tutor ask a child: "How many sounds do we hear in the word THROUGH?" — then tell the child "No, dear — think again and listen closer!" because the child said "three sounds" instead of "seven sounds" (according to the tutor: "if you'd listened properly, you would have heard that we have the T-sound, the H-sound, the R-sound, the O-sound, the U-sound, the G-sound, and the H-sound again — seven sounds.")

Another teacher (this one taught college-students in a school of education) taught her students (and expected them to teach *their* students) that "We have twenty-six letters in the English alphabet because there are only twenty-six sounds that the human mouth can say."

And ... at least three of my friends had college-English teachers (at differing colleges) who — in all seriousness — tried to instill "proper speech" by (e.g.) telling their classes: "When we say TH, we say first a T-sound and then an H-sound — repeat with me: FATHER, FAITHFUL,..."

... although the teachers themselves did not do this in their own speech in the classroom or anywhere else (not even when giving the examples for the students to repeat). Unlike the teacher I suffered under, they pronounced things normally while believing that they (along with everyone else) pronounced things "properly, according to the spelling."

[Albert Mazurkewicz: see [Bulletins](#), [Anthology](#)]

Phonics for teachers.

Mazurkewicz, A.J. 1976. Teaching about Phonics. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Back in the 1970's, Dr. Albert Mazurkewicz attempted to test first and second grade teachers on their knowledge of linguistics, Most of the teachers failed the test. What is worse, however, is that they thought they knew what they were talking about. They had no qualms about relaying their misconceptions to answer questions from their students.

L.C. Moats [Speech to Print, 2001] re-studied this in 2000 with similar results. Few schools of education provide much linguistics training for teachers. Even those who teach phonics may be quite deficient in their understanding.

The relationship between speech sounds and the alphabet is a continual cause of misunderstanding. This is nothing new, the concept of a letter was separated from the concept of a speech sound quite recently. ... *meny neytiv spiekerz probably think dhey shvd pranauns mor laik dhe speling* ... Worse yet — many native speakers actually think that they *do* pronounce like the spelling: I know quite a few people who feel sure (beyond my power to convince them otherwise) that "know" has twice as many sounds as "no" and that "rich" doesn't have as many sounds as "pitch."

[Allan Campbell: see [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Spell4Literacy](#)]

Letters to politicians.

Allan Campbell continues to be active in writing members of parliament and educational officials. This one is a classic:

Dear Mr Hyde: I can sympathize with you in your '*cacophony*' incident. [the official had pronounced it "cacko-phoney"] English spelling does not provide much of a guide to pronunciation. I remember thinking, until I was about 20, that *Penelope* was pronounced 'penny-loap' [as if it rhymed with *envelope*]. English-speaking foreigners tell me that they cannot be sure of the pronunciation of any English word until they've heard a native English speaker say it; nor can they be sure of a spelling of any English word that they've heard but not read. Our Society maintains that if English clarified and followed its spelling rules — it does have them! — these problems would not arise, or would occur much less frequently. For instance, if the spelling was 'cacoffony', where a doubled consonant showed an accented short vowel, would you have stumbled over it?

For more invented spellings and invented pronunciations, go to the Unifon web.

We made a submission to the Select Committee on Education and Science in its recent inquiry into reading. We asked that, to make literacy learning easier for children, it begin the slow process of updating English spelling by asking the Government to call an international conference of English-speaking nations and organizations to look at the idea.

How much would such a conference cost? It could probably be pulled off with a \$50,000 grant. It is worth looking into. -sb

Benefits of reform.

Other European nations keep their spelling up to date. This allows their children to master the code in less than 4 months and for the average student to jump ahead of his English speaking peer by two years by age 12. They spend less time on learning a simpler code and still attain a higher level of literacy.

While this lead has been documented in cross cultural studies of orthography and learning, it is not consistent with the PICO studies which shows that the attainment of Spanish and Italian 15 year olds are slightly lower than their peers in some English speaking countries. This discrepancy needs to be explained.

The code for Spanish and Italian is simpler by design. These countries have had spelling reforms about every 60 years or so to align spelling with changing pronunciation.

English has delayed reform so long that now less than half the words are pronounced as they are written and half of the words contain one or more irregularities.

News from New Zealand:

There's an item at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/education/newsid_1496000/1496692.stm. In an associated article (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1122038.stm>) which is dated 2001 January 17, there is the following paragraph:

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), which oversees the tests sat by some 600,000 pupils in their final year at primary school, says most problems were caused by words "where the letter patterns have to be remembered". The children did better where the spelling more closely followed the sound of the word.

Skipping the middle man.

I like the idea of "skipping the middle man" and using a pronunciation guide spelling. Webster also thought that the need for a pronunciation guide was unique to the English writing system. -sb

The problem with diacritics.

Pípl di'ryd dýrœ'kritiks az œpózd to nyu letœrz for gud rízn: ðats not hau ðœ rómœbet wûz di'zaind tœ wœrk. hwen ðœ rómnz in'kauntœrd œ nyu saund lýk SAMPA [y], ðe méd œ nyu letœr. in ðis kés it wûz <y>. ai þink dýœ'kritiks är kwýt œ gud ai'dioœ kæmperd tu stiking wið ðœ wé tu limitœd QWERTY rénj. it mé not bi fízœbl tœ hav daiœ'kritiks ðo riceli as ði ðœ kibordz wud hav tœ bi cénjd. [one of many diacritic proposals]

Why? It takes 5 minutes to add an Icelandic keyboard and then diacritics are a keystroke away. There are three problems with using diacritics:

1. They are not email friendly: the spl. characters do not always come thru,
2. They are more difficult for touch typists to produce, and
3. There is no standard code so those who use them run the chance that they may not communicate and will probably annoy their readers.

A diacritic is a marker. There are two markers available in ASCII: double letters and capital letters.

ENgliS is an example of a script that uses the cap diacritic to augment the number of phonograms so it matches the number of phonemes. -sb

Proposals

by Doug Everingham, Australia.

1. SSS advocates alternative spellings, including some now widely recognized since they became preferred forms in Noah Webster's dictionaries, which have advantages over other traditional spellings such as:

- (a) better conformity with phonemes, especially in accents favored by common US and UK pronouncing dictionaries (and rhyming dictionaries)
- (b) avoidance of ambiguity, especially for persons literate in TS
- (c) economy of letters consistent with the simplest widely recognized clear pronunciations.

2. SSS encourages dictionary publishers to recognize, though not necessarily preferring, minority spellings that follow such simplifying principles.

3. SSS recognizes the need for different standards of spelling including:

- (a) standards for possible initial teaching in the tradition of Pitman's i.t.a., while noting that the i.t.a. trials were not accompanied by good transitional teaching for those transferring subsequently to use of TS;
- (b) informal abbreviated 'texting' as developing in cell phone/ mobile phone messaging, perhaps with some indication of more preferred and less preferred alternatives;
- (c) formal spelling including TS alternative forms, with preferred forms tending toward above mentioned simplifications;
- (d) some or all of the above spelling systems to be taught to teachers of English literacy so that students will have options to adopt any or all of the alternatives as desired or approved by education or publishing authorities.

Representing vowels In Semitic Writing systems.

Debbie K. McIntyre wrote:

I want to find out what the Egyptian language and Symbol is for the names Chad & Debbie? A Hieroglyphics to English phonogram chart is available at www.unifon.org/alfabet-abbr.html

CHAD = TShAD

Tack [loaf shape], **S**hallow Pool [rectangle], **A**vian [bird], **D**igits [hand].

DEBBIE = DBI

Digits [hand], **B**oot [foot], **IEA**f [flowering papyrus].

The Egyptian writing system had no true vowels. They used semi-vowels in the vowel position, particularly in the initial and final position.

There are two "write your name in hieroglyphics" websites but they probably would not help much with these two names.

The indifference to vowels is characteristic of all Semitic writing systems including Arabic that, unlike Hebrew, has a few vowel phonograms. What this means is that Semitic place names have a wide range of possible and acceptable pronunciations. QATAR for instance, can be stressed on the first or second syllable (or neither) and the A can be interpreted as A, A:, or @. The most common pronunciation on CNN and NBC is "cutter".

Televised French Dictation:

Dictation TV holds French spellbound, from a report by Adam Sage, Paris, in the London Times. 1/27/2003.

IT is one of the longest-running television game shows in France, attracting millions of viewers and pages of coverage in the press. It has spawned a best-selling book and turned the presenter into a Gallic icon.

What is it? Televised dictation. Yesterday France 3 television channel threw out its usual Sunday afternoon sports programmes to screen Les Dicos d'Or, the final of the national dictation competition.

A less glitzy game show is hard to imagine. The presenter Bernard Pivot read a text containing grammatical traps and complex spellings to 176 finalists. The winners were those who made the fewest mistakes writing it down

"This is a French passion," said Le Monde. A total of 500,000 candidates entered the heats across France last year. The high sales of his book, Les Dictées de Bernard Pivot, reflect a deep-seated attachment to a dictation exercise that remains a central element of the French school curriculum.

Most six-year-olds undertake several such tests every week. In a country that has been largely impervious to the liberal educational ideas that swept through Britain and America, spelling and grammar continue to be seen as essential.

Claude Hagège, a linguist, said: "Spelling is a veritable institution in France and the dictation is a vehicle for this attachment to tradition for many French people. It is in fact truly a national political and social issue." If you cannot spell, you are almost a traitor.

He said that it was not just the middle classes who were interested in dictations. So, too, were working-class people, and particularly immigrants, because they saw it as a measure of social ascension. "Dictation is seen as a way of discriminating between the poor wretches who are no good at it, and the cultivated middle classes who are," he said. "That's why French people of modest origin are among the greatest purchasers of dictionaries. To them, being able to spell means that they have obtained the most elitist aspect of French culture.

The Times invites letters to the editor at debate@thetimes.co.uk.

Elizabeth K. wrote: Omigod, thair nutsier than english speakers! How aful.

The Times asked, "Could a spelling game catch on in an English speaking country?" A spelling game can and has caught on in the U.S. It is a variation of guess the hidden word or phrase with letter cues. It is a variation of "Hangman" called "Wheel of Fortune" on TV. It has held its own for over 10 years. However, compared to French dictation it is simplistic.

The spelling bee is not as popular as it once was but continues on under the sponsorship of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper chain. The spelling performance of the average student has declined over the years, but the gifted few are as good as ever at memorizing the dictionary.

Phonics is not phonetics.

In English, the vowels are generalized place holders that restrict pronunciation but do not specify it. The writing system is a guide to the pronunciation that will be understood across dialect boundaries, it is not a guide to a particular dialect. Phonics is not phonetics. It is not a precise description of a pronunciation.

A as in want [wa:nt, w@nt, wont, waunt, waent?] W seems to take only long vowels and their sound alike. [A/A:, Q/O/O: @]

O as in pot [pa:t, pAt, pawt, pQt, p@t] despot = desp@t

Meet the staff of the SSS.

Webmaster: John Maude.

John Maude started in computing in 1967, when he was employed as a programmer/analyst for Brooke Bond Liebig and then ICI. In 1981 he became a lecturer for Digital Equipment Corporation. Since 1991 he has supported himself by accepting contracts to teach advanced computer topics for local colleges, universities and industries.

From 1997–2002 he worked with Jean Hutchins to maintain and improve the British Dyslexia Association's website. For SSS web, John will work on 3–5 new files a week created by Jean, checking links and structural integrity of the pages, checking Jean's updated pages, uploading new and updated pages to the website and checking integrity of the website.

Secretary: David Stockton

David Stockton's career has covered laboratory and quality control management in many industrial and retail applications. He was the head of quality control at Littlewoods before becoming a consultant.

He became a project manager at the British Standards Institution just after the EU single market started, and has experience as secretary of several European (CEN) and International (ISO) committees and was involved in putting European standards together. He currently serves as support secretary for ISO committees based in Norway, Netherlands, New York and London and as business secretary and treasurer of the Simplified Spelling Society.

[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J32, 2003/1, p36 in the printed version]

[John Wells: see [Journals](#), [Newsletter](#) Letter in Item 1, [Media](#).]

12. A message from the new President, Professor John Wells.

I'd like to thank the Simplified Spelling Society for the honour it has shown me in electing me President — all the more so in that I have never been active as a member of the Society, although I have from time to time been able to speak out in favour of spelling reform as the occasion arose in radio broadcasts and elsewhere.

I particularly remember devoting an entire programme on the BBC World Service, in a series about research in phonetics for which I was the presenter, to an interview with the late Chris Upward, deviser of Cut Spelling.

As you know, I am the Professor of Phonetics in the University of London at University College London. The first occupant of this Chair was Professor Daniel Jones, who was President of the Simplified Spelling Society for many years during the first half of the twentieth century. His successor was Professor A.C. Gimson, who was a Vice-President of the Society. It was Gimson who suggested to me that it was almost a hereditary obligation of holders of the chair of Phonetics to support the Society, so when I in turn was promoted to the chair as his successor I was happy to accept the post of Vice President.

Noam Chomsky and Morris Halle, in their seminal 1968 book 'The Sound Pattern of English', drew attention to the importance of morphological relationships in English that may be relatively opaque in pronunciation but are overt in traditional orthography — I am thinking of the derivational relationships in pairs such as 'divine-divinity, phonetics-phonetician, sign-signature'. This led Chomsky to suggest that our traditional spelling comes close to being an ideal orthography for the language. This is an idea whose absurdity will be evident to members of the Society, although it has frequently since been repeated by other linguists when asked their opinion of spelling reform.

As I had my breakfast this morning, I was thinking about the spelling of the word 'juice'. Why does it have a letter 'i' in its spelling? There is no justification in etymology (French 'jus'). There is no justification in morphological relationships, since the only related word is 'juicy'. There is certainly no justification in pronunciation, since 'juice' rhymes with 'truce' and 'spruce'.

Let's get rid of that superfluous letter 'i' in 'juice'. I wish the Society all the best.

John Wells, 2003 04 26.

[Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, J32, 2003/1, p22 in the printed version]

[Don Scragg: see [Journals](#), [Bulletins](#).]

13. Tribute to Don Scragg on his retirement at the Society's President.

We have been very privileged to have had Professor Don Scragg as our President and mentor over the last 15 years. It is a period which covered almost all my time as Chairman.

Some 24 years ago I read a book called "A History of English Spelling" by DG Scragg, and I still have the copy here. It sparked my interest in the Simplified Spelling Society. However, as I could not find out how to contact the society I phoned Manchester University and was put through to Dr Scragg. "Why don't you go to their conference in Northampton" he said, which started my involvement with the society.

Many years later, in 1988, I was to contact Dr Scragg again, this time to invite him to be our President. He has been a steadfast support to the society, and to me as Chairman, and was always there when needed.

Don Scragg followed in a distinguished line. His immediate predecessor, also for 15 years, was John Downing, who did the definitive research on the initial teaching alphabet. Before him was Sir James Pitman, who developed the i.t.a., Daniel Jones and Gilbert Murray. As it happens Gilbert Murray was my great uncle by marriage. My great grandmother was an eccentric and somewhat aristocratic lady who went to Oxford to find two of the best scholars to, as she said "tutor my sons and I hope they will marry my daughters" (which indeed they both did!). I cannot say how much this did for my grandfather's education, but I have many Murray cousins.

Don Scragg's academic work has been in Anglo-Saxon studies at Manchester University, where he was elevated to Professor. He had research projects there which have given us some insights. His research and lecturing has also extended to the US.

After discussions with my colleagues on the society committee, I am pleased to be able to offer a Vice-Presidency of the society to Professor Scragg, which is honorary in the fullest sense, and which includes life membership.

Let me conclude by thanking Dr Scragg again for all his valued support and influence, to the society and to me personally.

Chris Jolly, formerly SSS Chairman.

[Chris Jolly: see [Bulletins](#), [Journals](#), [Newsletters](#), [Media](#), [Books](#).]

14. We Spell a Spoken Sound in as Many as 20 Different Ways.

PREPOSTEROUS!

English spelling is sheer memory. A 2-year study at Stanford University determined that over 300 rules would be required to spell correctly, by rule, half of our 17,000 most frequently used words.

"Learning to read (English) is perhaps the greatest effort the human undertakes, and he must do it as a child." John Steinbeck.

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|---------|----------------|--------|
| SHORT-A | | AR | | SHORT-E | | SHORT-I | |
| had | [a] | car | [ar] | met | [e] | pin | [i] |
| have | [a-e] | are | [are] | ledge | [e-e] | lynch | [y] |
| guarantee | [ua] | heart | [ear] | head | [ea] | pretty | [e] |
| laugh | [au] | guard | [uar] | many | [a] | give | [i-e] |
| plaid | [ai] | sergeant | [er] | said | [ai] | been | [ee] |
| ingenue | [i] | bazaar | [aar] | says | [ay] | mischief | [ie] |
| | | starve | [ar-e] | friend | [ie] | busy | [u] |
| LONG-A | | catarrh | [arrh] | guest | [ue] | guild | [ui] |
| make | [a-e] | bizarre | [arre] | cheque | [e-ue] | women | [o] |
| making | [a] | | | burial | [u] | minute | [u-e] |
| playing | [ay] | AIR | | aesthetic | [ae] | counterfeit | [ei] |
| rain | [ai] | chair | [air] | heifer | [ei] | sieve | [ie-e] |
| they | [ey] | vary | [ar] | jeopardy | [eo] | bisque | [i-ue] |
| veil | [ei] | dare | [are] | foetid | [oe] | apocalypse | [y-e] |
| great | [ea] | aerial | [aer] | cleanse | [ea-e] | | |
| maelstrom | [ae] | scarce | [ar-e] | | | LONG-I | |
| weigh | [eigh] | millionaire | [aire] | LONG-EE | | ties | [ie] |
| raise | [ai-e] | prayer | [ayer] | keep | [ee] | like | [i-e] |
| straight | [aigh] | square | [uare] | these | [e-e] | find | [i] |
| re | [e] | where | [ere] | me | [e] | trying | [y] |
| plague | [a-ue] | their | [eir] | people | [eo] | highly | [igh] |
| applique | [ue] | bear | [ear] | leave | [ea-e] | height | [eigh] |
| gauge | [au-e] | | | field | [ie] | eye | [eye] |
| aye | [aye] | BROAD-A | | believe | [ie-e] | buy | [uy] |
| matinee | [ee] | father | [a] | deceit | [ei] | type | [y-e] |
| seine | [ei-e] | hurrah | [ah] | deceive | [ei-e] | guile | [ui-e] |
| gaol | [ao] | calm | [al] | ravine | [i-e] | aisle | [ai-e] |
| ballet | [et] | barrage | [a-e] | ski | [i] | dye | [ye] |
| dossier | [er] | ensemble | [e] | cheese | [ee-e] | guiding | [ui] |
| bouquet | [uet] | detente | [e-e] | league | [ea-ue] | stein | [ie] |
| | | pas | [as] | antique | [i-ue] | eying | [ey] |
| | | lingerie | [i] | key | [ey] | island | [is] |
| | | eclat | [at] | aeon | [ae] | diamond | [ia] |
| | | | | amoeba | [oe] | maestro | [ae] |
| | | | | mosquito | [ui] | bayou | [ay] |
| | | | | | | aye | [aye] |
| | | | | | | coyote | [oy] |

SHORT-O

| | |
|-------------|--------|
| hot | [o] |
| swap | [a] |
| laurel | [au] |
| honor | [ho] |
| knowledge | [ow] |
| catalogue | [o-ue] |
| yacht | [ach] |
| bureaucracy | [eau] |

LONG-O

| | |
|------------|--------|
| goes | [oe] |
| bone | [o-e] |
| roll | [o] |
| glowing | [ow] |
| boat | [oa] |
| soul | [ou] |
| dough | [ough] |
| cantaloupe | [ou-e] |
| brooch | [oo] |
| chauffeur | [au] |
| sewing | [ew] |
| beaus | [eau] |
| depots | [ot] |
| owe | [owe] |
| mauve | [au-e] |
| yeoman | [eo] |
| rogue | [o-ue] |
| yolk | [ol] |
| cologne | [og-e] |
| auto | [au] |

SHORT-U

| | |
|---------|--------|
| cut | [u] |
| love | [o-e] |
| other | [o] |
| young | [ou] |
| does | [oe] |
| judge | [u-e] |
| blood | [oo] |
| tongue | [o-ue] |
| brusque | [u-ue] |
| humble | [hu] |

LONG-U

| | |
|----------|--------|
| hue | [ue] |
| use | [u-e] |
| unit | [u] |
| few | [ew] |
| view | [iew] |
| beauty | [eau] |
| nuisance | [ui] |
| feud | [eu] |
| adieu | [ieü] |
| deuce | [eu-e] |
| vacuum | [uu] |
| queue | [ueue] |
| ewe | [ewe] |
| debut | [ut] |
| you | [you] |
| yule | [yu-e] |
| fugue | [u-ue] |

LONG-OO

| | |
|------------|--------|
| moon | [oo] |
| whom | [o] |
| soup | [ou] |
| truly | [u] |
| two | [wo] |
| move | [o-e] |
| through | [ough] |
| rule | [u-e] |
| glue | [ue] |
| cartouche | [ou-e] |
| crew | [ew] |
| fruit | [ui] |
| shoe | [oe] |
| loose | [oo-e] |
| sleuth | [eu] |
| manoeuvre | [oeu] |
| bruise | [ui-e] |
| buoy | [uo] |
| deuce | [eu-e] |
| jiujitsu | [iu] |
| rendezvous | [ous] |
| silhouette | [hou] |
| coup | [oup] |
| pooh | [ooh] |

SHORT-OO

| | |
|----------|-------|
| pull | [u] |
| good | [oo] |
| wolf | [o] |
| should | [ou] |
| bouillon | [oui] |

UR

| | |
|-----------|-------|
| jury | [ur] |
| your | [our] |
| sure | [ure] |
| poor | [oor] |
| pleurisy | [eur] |
| fluoresce | [uor] |

OU

| | |
|-------|--------|
| cloud | [ou] |
| house | [ou-e] |
| hour | [hou] |

OW terminal

| | |
|--------|--------|
| now | [ow] |
| bowing | [ow] |
| bough | [ough] |
| landau | [au] |

AW terminal

| | |
|-----------|---------|
| saw | [aw] |
| clawing | [aw] |
| point | [oi] |
| boy | [oy] |
| noise | [oi-e] |
| gargoyle | [oy-e] |
| turquoise | [uoi-e] |

OI

| | |
|-------|-------|
| for | [or] |
| store | [ore] |
| court | [our] |
| war | [ar] |
| door | [oor] |
| board | [oar] |

OR

| | |
|----------|---------|
| terminal | [er] |
| err | [err] |
| erred | [erre] |
| serve | [er-e] |
| bird | [ir] |
| stirring | [irr] |
| stirred | [irre] |
| squirm | [uir] |
| furnish | [ur] |
| burr | [urr] |
| curve | [ur-e] |
| blurred | [urre] |
| yearn | [ear] |
| hearse | [ear-e] |
| world | [or] |
| worse | [or-e] |
| journey | [our] |

ER

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| about | [a] |
| nuisance | [a-e] |
| mountain | [ai] |
| parliament | [ia] |
| mitten | [e] |
| license | [e-e] |
| mischievous | [ie] |
| easily | [i] |
| engine | [i-e] |
| vehicle | [hi] |
| gallop | [o] |
| luncheon | [eo] |
| region | [io] |

Schwa-a

| | |
|---------|-----|
| Schwa-e | [e] |
| Schwa-i | [i] |
| Schwa-o | [o] |
| Schwa-u | [u] |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-------------|---------|-----------------------|--------|
| | | liquor | [uor] | scourge | [our-e] | circus | [u] |
| AU | | drawer | [awer] | connoisseur | [eur] | fashion | [io] |
| because | [au-e] | torque | [or-e] | myrtle | [yr] | welcome | [u-e] |
| thought | [ough] | reservoir | [oir] | myrrh | yrrh] | porpoise | [oi-e] |
| talk | [a] | dinosaur | [aur] | ogre | [re] | advantageous | [eou] |
| water | [a] | | | liar | [ar] | Schwee, 1/2 ee | |
| taught | [augh] | | | nature | [ure] | happy | [y] |
| cloth | [o] | | | lacquer | [uer] | belong | [e] |
| broad | [oa] | | | freer | [r] | champion | [i] |
| exhaust | [hau] | | | restaurant | [au] | | |
| | | | | hemorrhage | [orrh] | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|-------|------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------|-------|
| B | | H | | L | | R | |
| bat | [b] | hat | [h] | lip | [l] | run | [r] |
| rubber | [bb] | who | [wh] | tall | [ll] | write | [wr] |
| cupboard | [pb] | J | | people | [le] | are | [re] |
| hautboy | [tb] | just | [j] | island | [sl] | colonel | [l] |
| C | | magic | [g] | kiln | [ln] | rhyme | [rh] |
| can | [c] | bridge | [dge] | muscle | [cle] | corps | [rps] |
| account | [cc] | soldier | [di] | M | | catarrh | [rrh] |
| lack | [ck] | education | [d] | met | [m] | mortgage | [rt] |
| D | | region | [gi] | summer | [mm] | velours | [rs] |
| did | [d] | adjust | [dj] | column | [mn] | S | |
| called | [ed] | gorgeous | [geo] | palm | [lm] | sets | [s] |
| would | [ld] | grandeur | [de] | lamb | [mb] | city | [c] |
| add | [dd] | exaggerate | [gg] | phlegm | [gm] | lesson | [ss] |
| F | | large | [ge] | N | | scene | [sc] |
| for | [f] | K | | net | [n] | listen | [st] |
| muffin | [ff] | kit | [k] | knock | [kn] | sword | [sw] |
| graphic | [ph] | back | [ck] | dinner | [nn] | waltz | [z] |
| half | [lf] | chemistry | [ch] | gnat | [pn] | psychic | [ps] |
| tough | [gh] | talk | [lk] | pneumatic | [gn] | worsted | [rs] |
| often | [ft] | lacquer | [cqu] | handsome | [nd] | isthmus | [sth] |
| sapphire | [pph] | biscuit | [cu] | P | | convalesce | [sce] |
| G | | khaki | [kh] | pat | [p] | fence | [ce] |
| get | [g] | chukka | [kk] | happy | [pp] | house | [se] |
| egg | [gg] | saccharine | [cch] | hiccough | [gh] | | |
| ghost | [gh] | liquor | [qu] | naphtha | [ph] | | |
| guard | [gu] | clique | [que] | | | | |
| vague | [gue] | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|-------|----------------------|------|-----------|------|--------------------|-------|
| T | | Y (consonant) | | NG | | TH voiced | |
| ten | [t] | yet | [y] | ring | [ng] | this | [th] |
| button | [tt] | beyond | [y] | NK | | bathe | [the] |
| asked | [ed] | Y (vowel) | | sink | [nk] | TH unvoiced | |
| two | [tw] | happy | [y] | SH | | thing | [th] |
| debt | [bt] | Z | | shop | [sh] | WH | |
| receipt | [pt] | zebra | [z] | motion | [ti] | when | [wh] |
| indict | [ct] | scissor | [ss] | pension | [si] | ZH | |
| yacht | [cht] | puzzle | [zz] | special | [ci] | azure | [z] |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|------------|-------|
| thyme | [th] | raise | [se] | mission | [ssi] | vision | [s] |
| bought | [ght] | business | [si] | issue | [ss] | pleasure | [s] |
| veldt | [dt] | busy | [s] | sure | [s] | regime | [g] |
| V | | raspberry | [sp] | machine | [ch] | garage | [ge] |
| voice | [v] | xylophone | [x] | appreciate | [c] | loggia | [gg] |
| of | [f] | asthma | [sth] | conscience | [sci] | rescission | [ssi] |
| give | [ve] | CH | | ocean | [ce] | brazier | [si] |
| halve | [lve] | church | [ch] | negotiate | [t] | equation | [ti] |
| savvy | [vv] | structure | [t] | crescendo | [sc] | jabot | [j] |
| W | | match | [tch] | fuchsia | [chsi] | | |
| wet | [w] | question | [ti] | schist | [schh] | | |
| bivouac | [ou] | righteous | [teo] | nauseous | [seo] | | |
| X voiced | (gz) | niche | [che] | mustache | [che] | | |
| exam | [x] | cello | [c] | luxury | [x] | | |
| X unvoiced | (ks) | | | anxious | [xio] | | |
| tax | [x] | | | | | | |

Enuf is enuf. We don't need to invent 14 spellings per sound.

We don't spell fish
ghoti