

Spelcon 2005 Conference Report

International English for Global Literacy

University of Mannheim – First International Conference,
29th–31st July 2005

Report compiled by Bernadette Hughes, SSS Business Secretary

This report was intended to be Journal 33, but was not published at the time.

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1. List of Attendees

Those present at the conference travelled from 11 countries (UK, USA, Australia, Czech Republic, Switzerland, India, France, Canada, Germany, Japan and Ukraine)

Name	Country	Background / Interest
Jack Bovill	UK	Chairman
John Dalby	UK	Committee member and trustee
John Gledhill	UK	Hon. Treasurer & Membership Secretary
Masha Bell	UK	Committee member
Isobel Raven	Canada	Society member
Niall Waldman	Canada	Society member
Ze Do Rock	Germany	Committee member
Robert McGhee	Czech Republic	Society member
Christopher Rollason	France	Speaker
Gerhard Augst	Germany	Speaker
Adrian Alphohziel	Germany	Committee member
Chris Jolly	UK	Committee member and trustee
Gilbert Jolly	UK	General interest
Roy Blain	Germany	Society member
Jenny Bayer	India	Speaker
Ursula Nicklas	Germany	Conference Organiser
Nicholas Cole	Australia	General interest /Speaks several languages
Jason Embley	USA	Student /Thesis on English language
Parag Mehta	Germany	Conference helper /Saispel
Bernadette Hughes	UK	SSS Business Secretary
Gabbie Blain	Switzerland	General interest
Esther Blain	Switzerland	General interest
Edward Marchant	UK	Society member
Ishi Yasuko	Japan	Student / Studying English writing reform
Skye Hendrix	USA	Business Student
Ruth Ann Hendrix	USA	Society member
Terje Hetland		
Nigel Hilton	UK	Society member
Jeanette Richeer	Germany	Student
Regina Baitnik		General interest
Anna	Germany	Student
Mrs Haberling	Germany	Graphic Designer for Spelcon

Age Analysis

Below 20 years	1%
20–29 years	2%
30–49 years	40%
50 +	57%

2. Speaker Abstracts

Mrs. Masha Bell, Keynote speaker

Writer and researcher, author of 'Understanding English Spelling' (2004), is a European who had to learn English as a third language.

Dr. Christopher Rollason, European Parliament official –Works in the Translation Service of the European Parliament. Published a considerable number of articles

Mr. Niall McLeod Waldman, author of '[Spelling Dearest](#)', spelling reformist

Prof. Gerhard Augst, Chairman of the German spelling commission and writer on psycholinguistics-language and languages-orthography and spelling – German language, orthography and spelling and graphemics. Editor of new trends in graphemics and orthography, 1986.

Mr. Adrian Alphohziel, Translator, Englishman teaching in Germany

Dr. Jenny Bayer, Research officer of sociolinguistics language and educational institutional development department in Mysore, India. Writer and author of 26 books. Presented seminars and given papers in international linguistic conferences in over 15 countries.

Mr. Christopher Jolly, Former SSS Chairman, Publisher of the Jolly Phonics programme

Mrs. Isobel Raven, Teacher, writer, author of The Future of Fonics (2005)

3. Opening of the conference. Saturday 30 July 2005. 10:20 hrs

The Chairman of 'The Simplified Spelling Society', Mr. Jack Bovill, welcomed everyone to the conference and thanked Ursula Nicklas for all her efforts in organising this three-day event. He commenced with an overhead entitled 'Reform – The fight for the 1832 Reform Act' (Edward Pearce). He briefly spoke about the Reform Act before presenting a message from the President of the society, Prof. John Wells.

"I am sorry not to be able to attend the conference on International English for Global Literacy in Mannheim.

I am convinced that all users of English, whether as a first language, a second language, or a foreign language, would benefit from the rationalization of English spelling. Our traditional orthography enables us to infer neither the pronunciation of a written word nor the spelling of a spoken word. This imposes an unnecessary learning burden on everyone who uses English. We need to change our spelling."

John Wells. Professor of Phonetics, University College London.
President, Simplified Spelling Society

The Chairman then drew a parallel with the 'Rosetta stone', which was discovered during the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt. There are three levels of writing systems on the stone, at the top is Egyptian hieroglyphics, middle demotic script and at the bottom Greek. The undecipherable written system at the top based on a centuries-old unreformed format had to be accompanied by a demotic script so that less educated people could understand it.

The Chair asked the question, "Do you wish the language to be the master of you or do you want it to be your servant?" He noted that in Germany it is the latter. He then passed the floor to Masha Bell the keynote speaker.

4. PAPERS

Saturday 30 July 2005. 10:30 hrs

4.1 Masha Bell – Keynote Speaker

The Worst aspects of English spelling

I chose this title some time ago – but when I started to prepare for my talk today, I realised that I could not possibly say all that I would like to say about the worst aspects of English spelling. There is just too much wrong with it. So even explaining just the worst parts would take hours.

So, I decided to concentrate on two related issues:

1) Why has English Spelling not been reformed since 1700?

2) Changes which are needed to give spelling reform a better chance of success.

But before I start on those two themes, I want to explain briefly **how I became interested** in English spelling and spelling reform.

I first began to think that English spelling needed reforming 46 years ago — when I was 14 and when I first started to learn E. in Lithuania. In our 1st English lesson, our teacher explained that English letters were not like Lithuanian and Russian ones which made just one sound per letter. She explained that the English letter A, for example, was called AY and that it sometimes made the AY-sound, but was mostly pronounced as in ‘a cat and a hat’, and sometimes also as in ‘ask’ and ‘answer’.

This made me worry right away. I could immediately see that such alphabetic unreliability was going to make *learning to read* English very difficult. — It meant **the teacher would have to tell us how to pronounce every new word we met**. — And I did find learning to read English very difficult. And while trying to do so, I was constantly puzzled why English speakers put up with such a system, and especially, HOW THEY COULD BEAR TO PUT THEIR OWN CHILDREN THROUGH SUCH TORTURE?

The **second time** I thought that there was **something seriously wrong with English spelling** was when I was 20 and I became an au-pair in London in 1964. The family had 3 boys: aged 6, 10 and 14 – and at least one of them was always preparing for a spelling test. Before coming to England I had lived with my uncle and his wife **in Germany** for a while. They also had 3 young boys, but spelling had been no big deal. It was just something they learned at school. — The English boys and their parents, by contrast, seemed to be obsessed and dominated by spelling.

Twelve years later I became a **teacher of English and German** in an English secondary school (the equivalent of a Gymnasium für Mädchen), and I found out again that English spelling was a very big problem. — The younger pupils, aged 11 and 12, all still made lots of spelling mistakes. Quite a few of the older still did too. But what really surprised me was that quite a few of the teachers regularly made spelling mistakes as well. I am letting you into a well-kept secret here: it is not a well-known fact that school **reports** in England are checked several times for spelling errors before they are sent home. — In that grammar school they were checked at least 3 times: by the form tutor, the deputy head and the head teacher. Each checking picked up a few errors, and some reports had to be completely rewritten. — So even for teachers spelling is a problem, and is recognised as such.

In all English schools, teachers have regular **discussions about improving pupils’ spelling**. At such meetings I began to suggest that this was perhaps because ES was rather illogical and that reforming it might help. — This idea was treated with complete disbelief — as something utterly

outlandish and inconceivable. — I was even told that it **can't really be all that bad**, because even a foreigner like me had managed to cope.

Leading a busy life as a teacher and mother of two young children I was **not able to give all that much thought to English spelling** or spelling reform for many years. But I did often get cross about having to correct the same spelling mistakes over and over (like the wrong **there, two, its, sea** and **hear**). I also disliked the fact, that at **parents' evenings**, as far as English was concerned, parents seemed to be more interested in their daughters' spelling than anything else.

I remained convinced that English spelling could be much easier — particularly when my own daughter started to learn to read and asked me one day 'Mummy, why is there a H in John?'

Twelve years ago, after teaching for 18 years, I became ill with various throat and nose problems and had to stop teaching. This gave me the time to look at English spelling more closely.

The question which I tried to answer first was '**How much is there really wrong with English spelling?**' The remark that **there can't be that much wrong with it**, because even I had managed to learn it, had left a lasting impression.

I looked at many other books first, but I could not find good enough information about how bad English spelling really was. So I undertook the research myself. I looked at **7000** common English words and sorted them into those with regular spellings and the rest. — The rest amounted to **3695** words. — English has far more than 7000 words, but I wanted to get a fairly accurate idea of how many irregular spellings children were likely to come across by end of their main schooling, at the age of 16.

I wrote the book '**Understanding English Spelling**' to explain what I had found, what's wrong with English spelling, the harm it does and why reform was needed.

I also produced the **leaflet** which you found on your chairs. Let us **please look at this** briefly now.

(Masha took the audience through the main points on the first page of the 2-page leaflet.)

e.g.

- **A quarter of English-speaking children cannot read properly by age 11**
- **Around 7 million adults in the UK and 40 million in the US are functionally illiterate**
- **Nearly half of all English speakers have spelling problems**

Nearly all Italian children learn to read in couple of months and can write well after just 2 years at school

Learning to read English is difficult because it has too many contradictory spellings

<u>go</u> - <u>do</u>	<u>here</u> - <u>there</u> - <u>were</u>	<u>came</u> - <u>camera</u>
<u>home</u> - <u>come</u>	<u>hero</u> - <u>heron</u>	<u>cater</u> - <u>caterpillar</u>
<u>stone</u> - <u>gone</u>	<u>combine</u> - <u>engine</u>	<u>later</u> - <u>lateral</u>
<u>count</u> - <u>country</u>	<u>five</u> - <u>give</u>	<u>plane</u> - <u>planet</u>
<u>mouth</u> - <u>youth</u>	<u>earth</u> - <u>hearth</u>	<u>cloth</u> - <u>both</u>
<u>condone</u> - <u>anemone</u>	<u>heave</u> - <u>heaven</u>	<u>donkey</u> - <u>monkey</u>
<u>bison</u> - <u>prison</u>	<u>treat</u> - <u>great</u>	<u>bomb</u> - <u>tomb</u> , <u>comb</u>

Learning to write English is even harder because almost all English spelling patterns have some exceptions

<u>pet</u> - <u>threat</u>	<u>oil</u> - <u>oyster</u>	<u>gap</u> - <u>ghastly</u>	<u>sum</u> - <u>bomb</u>
<u>sit</u> - <u>system</u>	<u>cart</u> - <u>heart</u>	<u>get</u> - <u>guess</u>	<u>need</u> - <u>knee</u>
<u>pot</u> - <u>what</u>	<u>care</u> - <u>air</u>	<u>bag</u> - <u>league</u>	<u>ten</u> - <u>gone</u>
<u>mum</u> - <u>some</u>	<u>her</u> - <u>fur</u>	<u>jet</u> - <u>gem</u>	<u>ripe</u> - <u>write</u>
<u>put</u> - <u>foot</u>	<u>for</u> - <u>more</u>	<u>agent</u> - <u>subject</u>	<u>car</u> - <u>are</u>
<u>mate</u> - <u>wait</u>	<u>play</u> - <u>they</u>	<u>hand</u> - <u>whole</u>	<u>send</u> - <u>centre</u>
<u>bite</u> - <u>bright</u>	<u>dinky</u> - <u>monkey</u>	<u>carrot</u> - <u>karate</u>	<u>face</u> - <u>base</u>

Some English spelling rules have hundreds of exceptions

1. The **-er** ending pattern of *mother*, *father*, *brother*, *sister* has 140 exceptions: *actor*, *grammar*, *sculptor*...
2. The **ee** pattern of *need* *seed* is not used in at least 323 words: *bead*, *beak*, *beam*, *chief*, *police*, *tedious*, *weird*..
3. Around 1000 ordinary words obey the basic rule of **doubling a consonant** after a short and stressed vowel:

cabbage, gallery, stammer, dilemma, sorry ; while another 1000 common words disobey this rule: cabin, galaxy, camera, lemon, forest, or use doubled consonants for reasons which are unrelated to keeping a stressed vowel short: abbbreviate, allege, ammunition, arrive, correct.

There are at least 3500 commonly used English words which are spelt unpredictably

German has only about 800 irregularly spelt words, Spanish 600 and Italian fewer than 400.

That's why Italian spelling can be learnt quickly while learning to spell English takes a long time and is never completely mastered by millions of learners.

CONCLUSION:

There is no doubt in my mind that ENGLISH SPELLING VERY BAD INDEED. As far as I am concerned, the NEED FOR REFORM is NOT IN DOUBT.

The evidence which I set out on the leaflet shows the reasons why English spelling needs reforming.

I will now turn to the two questions which I promised to consider at the beginning.

Why has English spelling not been reformed? and

What should be done to make a reform of English spelling more likely?

English spelling has really not been reformed since Chaucer's time, since 1400. For the next 300 years it changed a great deal, but not logically. It stopped changing around 1700. Johnson's dictionary of 1755 merely put the full stop on it. Nobody has taken a critical look at English spelling for the past 300 years or tried to make it more systematic, like the **Grimm** brothers in 19th C with German.

I believe there are **3 main reasons why English Spelling has not been reformed since 1700**

1. The attitude of native English speakers,
2. misinformation about English spelling,
3. the approach to the problem by many reformers.

i. The attitude of native English speakers is a major reason.

Learners of English as a second language may find this difficult to understand — but most native English speakers are simply **not aware of the shortcomings of their spelling system**.

This is mainly because those who manage to cope with the system and become well-educated nearly all **start to learn to read and write at a very young age**, before they can understand what they must learn.

They also **take a very long time to become literate** (reading ca. 6 yrs, spelling ca. 15 years) and so they never come to appreciate how much learning it all takes.

Middle class parents have always known that an early start with reading makes success more likely and that it helps with spelling too. — The Government has now recognised this too. Last weekend it was widely reported that all babies will now receive free books: two at 8 months, then some more at 2 years and 3 years. (Show headline **FREE BOOKS FOR BABIES.**)

An **early start certainly helps** children to cope better with learning to read and to spell English. **But** the early start and the slow and long method of learning prevent English speakers understanding how much there is to learn — or that there is anything wrong with English spelling. They never get an overview.

ii. Misinformation about English spelling has also helped to prevent reform.

Teachers are led to believe that **English spelling is good**. — **And they, in turn, make their pupils believe the same.** For example, a **teacher's handbook** which I had when I started teaching English claimed:

a) ...the writing system is in general **regular**. *.The regularities may be very complicated,but they are there.* ... English spelling is **not the confusion** it is widely thought to be.

This is simply wrong: the 3695 words with unpredictable spellings which I found prove that English spelling is **more confused** than is widely thought to be. People underestimate the problem.

b) There have been too many eminent linguists and educationalists **justifying English spelling.**

Regarding the errors which teachers have to correct over and over, like *there / their, its / it's, two / to / too*, my book admits that these give no trouble in speech, but it claims that in a written text we need the help of spelling to be certain." — Again — totally untrue. I have a list of just over 2000 words that have two or more meanings but just one spelling (cf. **bar, capital - row, desert -**) Nobody has ever asked for those to be given additional spellings. — There is no need for them.

c) "The English system of spelling is complicated because it has a **complicated job to do** — servicing,an immense variety of regional and dialectal forms of speech." — It services all accents badly.

The overall message to teachers, and from teachers to pupils, is that English spelling is good, and can remain as it is.*'children will learn to spell well if their teachers make clear that good spelling is one of the things they expect.'*

This message — that English spelling is good — affects people's attitude to spelling.

Poor spellers end up believing that it's their fault that they can't spell. So they hide their problems. They are ashamed of them and reluctant to discuss them with others. — Teachers too.

Branson, Shakespeare, Steinbeck, Scott Fitzgerald.

iii. The approach to the problem by most reformers has not helped.

I believe that reformers have not improved the chances of reform by

1. **Being too preoccupied with spellings systems.** — There have been nearly as many re-spelling schemes as there have been reformers — but they have attracted mainly just ridicule.
2. Too many of them have also rushed into advocating spelling reform **without thoroughly**

informing themselves about English spelling and its problems first.

This brings me to my second question:

What needs to change — if spelling reform is to have a better chance of success ?

I have already answered this question to some extent.

a) In my opinion, the main obstacle to spelling reformer is that — not enough people are aware of the shortcomings of English spelling and the costs which they incur. — As per leaflet.

I believe that reform will not happen until more English speakers become aware that English spelling is a problem. — So this is what has to change. **Reformers must learn to explain more effectively than they have done so far — why reform is needed.**

HOW CAN THEY DO THIS?

a) Reformers can learn from mistakes of the past

Producing dozens of alternative spelling schemes has not won people over to spelling reform — so they should stop looking for the perfect spelling scheme. — English has a spelling system. The problem is only that too many words are allowed to disobey it.

SO WHAT SHOULD REFORMERS DO INSTEAD?

b) Reformers could become much better informed about English spelling.

Getting well informed about a problem enables you to explain it more clearly. — (I think I have become better at explaining English Spelling problems since my research into English Spelling and writing the book *Understanding English Spelling*.) — But you can judge this for yourselves. — I believe that all reformers will become better able to explain the need for spelling reform more effectively if they spend more time on preparation, if they do their homework better.

I believe **we are making progress**. I believe that the leaflet which I first produced in 2001, is a step in the right direction. I hope and believe that my book '*Understanding English Spelling*' which was published last year is beginning to make a difference.

I think the SSS is getting better at explaining why a reform of English spelling is needed.

Two other SSS members, **Niall Waldman** and **Valerie Yule**, have recently also brought out books which explain why English is problematic and what made it so.

This conference will hopefully also help. **You** may be here because you have often thought that English spelling is crazy. — You are right. Hold on to that thought and share it with others.

English spelling has wasted much of your time, as it has for all learners of English. You can play a part in getting it made better.

English speakers need educating. They need to be helped to understand that **English spelling makes learning to read and write too slow and difficult** — that it needs modernising. — **Try and help to educate every English speaker that you meet about the badness of their spelling.**

Discussion and Question time

Masha Bell: Reading English should be concentrated on first before spelling. Students of EFL and E2L want to speak English well, but struggle with the overall learning.

The Chairman thanked Masha Bell for her paper and suggested a coffee break before the next speaker.

Saturday 30 July 2005. 11:45 hrs

4.2 Dr. Christopher Rollason

Why the Internet age will not accept simplified English spelling

This paper represents the author's personal opinion.

ABSTRACT

I argue that any attempt to alter English spelling internationally is doomed to failure for three reasons: 1) the multiplicity of native and non-native English pronunciations; 2) resistance from fear of censorship through transcription; 3) impossibility of enforcement, a factor now intensified by the inherently plural nature of the Internet.

1. INTRODUCTION: FROM SHAW TO McLUHAN

The question before us is whether the rules of English spelling, which no-one could claim are particularly logical, should be simplified through reform. This notion has had a certain popularity, one of its most famous exponents being Bernard Shaw, who declared provocatively in his preface to *Pygmalion* (1914): 'The English have no respect for their language ... They cannot spell it because they have nothing to spell it with but an old foreign alphabet of which only the consonants — and not all of them — have any agreed speech value ...

The reformer we need most today is an energetic phonetic enthusiast'. [1] The idea gained currency, though not success, in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of the influential orthodoxy of that period claiming the inherent primacy of speech over writing. The high priest of this tendency was of course Marshall McLuhan, whose *Understanding Media*, published in 1964 — somewhat paradoxically devaluing the written word through the medium of print — denounced 'the typographic trance of the West' and affirmed the presumed spontaneity of 'the vocal, auditory and mimetic world that had been repressed by the printed word'. [2] In such a proaudiovisual, anti-writing climate, a reputed linguistic scholar such as David Crystal could write, in *Linguistics*, his manual of 1971: 'Speech is the primary medium of linguistic expression ... all natural languages were spoken before they were written ... To base our statements about language on writing rather than on speech is therefore a reversal of linguistic priorities'. [3] Crystal here comes quite close to reducing writing to a mere derivative of speech.

To seek to approximate the written word to speech through spelling reform would thus, in such a period, seem both theoretically and pragmatically justified. Whether such a position, seemingly appropriate to the audiovisual age, is quite so suited to its successor the Internet age is, however, as I shall argue below, another matter altogether. It is well enough known that the English language has two generally accepted sets of spelling conventions, British and American, and that the differences between the two are in fact not great. Today in the English native-speaker world, Ireland, Australia and the Indian subcontinent follow the UK, while Canadian spelling is somewhere between British and American; non-native learners will typically follow the spelling of whoever their teacher was.

The orthographic reforms successfully introduced into US English from 1828 by Noah Webster, the compiler of *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, who 'changed the spelling of many words in his dictionaries in an attempt to make them more phonetic' [4] (replacing -our by -or, -lled by -led, etc), are of course significant and defining of written American English, but at the same time remain fairly limited in scope Webster in fact had earlier proposed, in his manifesto of 1789 'An Essay on the Necessity, Advantages, and Practicality of Reforming the Mode of Spelling and of Rendering the Orthography of Words Correspondent to Pronunciation', a far more deep-reaching spelling reform for American English, the objective being to 'reform ... abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the American tongue'. [5] His original reform would have, inter alia, abolished

silent letters, domesticated words of French origin and added extra accented characters to the alphabet, but this of course did not happen.

The idea of simplification may be superficially attractive, but it can be counter-argued that solid reasons exist for leaving English orthography as it is, and that the effect of the Internet is actually to strengthen those arguments. I shall divide my main observations into three parts.

First, I shall look at the circumstances of spelling in two other European languages with a global reach, Portuguese and Spanish, and consider what lessons may be learned there from for English; second, I shall examine the long-standing obstacles to any reform of English spelling; and finally, I shall consider the extent to which the situation has been modified by the advent of the Internet.

2. PORTUGUESE AND SPANISH

It is fair to say that the four European languages with a genuinely global reach today are English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Of the four, English and Portuguese operate a dual spelling system (UK/US; Portugal/Brazil), while the orthography of French and Spanish is unified worldwide. For reasons of space I shall here consider only Portuguese (today an official language in eight independent countries) [6] and Spanish (an official language in twenty). [7]. To take the former first, it is interesting to note that the Portuguese language underwent a considerable spelling reform in 1911 (known as the Gonçalves Viana reform, after Aniceto dos Reis Gonçalves Viana, the phonetician who was its architect, and who set out its principles as early as 1885 in his essay, written jointly with the orientalist Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu and available today on-line — 'Bases da Ortografia Portuguesa' [Bases of Portuguese Spelling]). This reform had two notable characteristics: it was consciously introduced in the wake of a political revolution, namely the introduction of the Portuguese republic following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1910; and it had international success, being later accepted, in an agreement of 1931, by the then only other independent state using the language, namely Brazil. Gonçalves Viana's conscious aim was to introduce an 'ortografia científica e uniforme' (a 'scientific and uniform spelling' [8]). The reform abolished the great majority of double consonants — thus, COMMÉRCIO (commerce) became COMÉRCIO, the main exception being the double s, which was and is pronounced differently (soft S) from the single S (hard S). In addition, it systematically removed the orthographic traces of ancient Greek: here its architect was ruthless, declaring: 'São banidos da escrita os símbolos gráficos sem valor de fonema próprio' ('Graphic symbols which have no value as a phoneme in themselves are banished from writing' [9]). The reform thus eliminated the letter Y in favour of I, while TH became T, PH became F and hard CH became QU. PHYSICA became FÍSICA, ELEPHANTE became ELEFANTE; THEOLOGIA became TEOLOGIA. Placenames too were not immune: for instance, the Portuguese fishing village NAZARETH became NAZARÉ, losing its unpronounced final TH.

However, these changes did not render Portuguese a completely phonetically spelled language: for instance, silent 'h' remains (as in 'homem' = man), while double s ('ss', as in 'massa' = pasta) and c with cedilla ('ç', as in 'maçã' = apple) are interchangeable. In Portugal, the old forms did not disappear altogether: they can still be seen on, say street name-plaques or university façades dating from before the reform, and, interestingly, some remain in people's surnames. The phonetician VIANA's own name is now thus spelt and not, as in 1885, VIANNA; but 'old' spellings remain to this day in some surnames, as in ATHAYDE or in the name of the TOTTA E AÇORES bank (where one would expect ATAÍDE and TOTA). The reasons for the unchanged surnames appear to be legal, relating to the principle of juridical continuity and such factors as inheritance and property ownership.

Today, Brazilian Portuguese exhibits a number of minor orthographic divergences from European Portuguese, reflecting differences in pronunciation, e.g. FATO (= fact) (Brazil) for FACTO (Portugal). 1990, however, saw the signing of an international spelling agreement or 'Acordo ortográfico' which was intended to standardise spelling in all Portuguese-speaking countries. This agreement, after numerous postponements, is theoretically being implemented as of 2004, but it

continues to encounter resistance, notably in Portugal — one reason being its preference for Brazilian forms which do not necessarily reflect European Portuguese pronunciation. It is true that the 1911 reforms have long since been accepted throughout the Lusophone world and that no-one would want to go back to the old spelling. It is, however, also the case that that reform was never so radical as to make texts in the old spelling incomprehensible: they simply look quaint. Portuguese is today certainly a global language, now spoken, in the wake of decolonisation, in no longer two (as at the time of the reform) but eight independent countries. It has second- as well as first-language speakers in five African countries and in East Timor, but it does not have many non-native speakers, and any temptation to extrapolate from the Portuguese reform of 1911 to English and its situation today should take account of the very different circumstances now surrounding English as a global language.

Spanish has even more considerable claims than Portuguese to be a global language, and unlike Portuguese is also widely taught as a foreign language, thus having a fair number of non-native speakers. It is often said to be a near-totally phonetic language in which sound corresponds all but perfectly to sense. This assertion, however, requires qualification. If we take the norms of standard peninsular Spanish as a starting-point we will find that, for instance: initial *h*, as in 'hombre' (man), is silent; 'b' and 'v' are not distinguished in pronunciation; and 'g' and 'j' in certain positions are pronounced identically ('jinete' = rider; 'girasol' = sunflower).

These factors create a degree of confusion among the less educated, who may, for instance, write the expression 'a ver' ('let's see') as if it were the auxiliary verb 'haber'. Besides, the 'near-phonetic' label is truer of peninsular than it is of Hispanoamerican Spanish. Standard European Spanish observes the phonetic distinction between the *seseo* (soft *s* sound) and *ceceo* (soft *th* sound), while Hispanoamerican Spanish (as well as, to complicate matters, peninsular pronunciations in Andalusia and Extremadura, and that of the Canary Islands) does not recognise the *ceceo* and uses only the *seseo*. The result is that while in the received peninsular pronunciation the letters *c* and *z* are in certain positions pronounced *th* (*ceceo*) while *s* is always pronounced *s* (*seseo*), in Hispanoamerica all three are pronounced *s* (*seseo*). Hence Hispanoamericans may hesitate as to whether to write a given word with a *c*, *z* or *s*, and even the very educated may stumble occasionally, by, say, writing the verb 'acechar' (to ambush) as 'asechar', or the adjective 'asertivo' (assertive) as 'acertivo'. In addition, the Argentinian pronunciation of certain sounds is notably different from, say, the Colombian, let alone the peninsular Spanish. Meanwhile, one of the advantages of Spanish as a world language is, precisely, the interoperability of the written form, at least as far as graphic conventions are concerned — a crucial feature of international Spanish that allows a text published in, say, Mexico City, to be understood in, say, Buenos Aires, Lima or Madrid. Any attempt to approximate the pronunciation of Spanish further to speech would have the effect of part-balkanising the written language.

In the Internet context, it is worth mentioning an interesting new development in the writing of (essentially so far) peninsular Spanish, which arrestingly combines the discourses of cyberutopia and equal opportunities. It is now quite frequent in academic, feminist and even some mainstream circles (e.g. bookshop websites) to use a new, gender-neutral graphic convention for certain nouns, adjectives and even articles (wherever the endings *-o/-a* and *-os/-as* apply). Where a gender-neutral or gender-indeterminate referent is implied, the terminations *-o* (masculine) and *-a* (feminine) are both replaced by the graphic neologism *@* (in other words, the 'at' sign familiar from email addresses), so that 'amigo y/o amiga' (male and/or female friend) becomes 'amig@'. Similarly, in the plural 'los/las amigos/amigas' ('the male friends and/or the female friends') becomes 'l@s amig@s', i.e. friends of either gender, both genders or non-specified gender. In at least some people's usage, then, a new letter has been added to the Spanish alphabet. In a further curious twist, this usage is not transferable to speech and remains confined to page and screen, thus serving in the cyber age to call in question the orthodox notion of the absolute primacy of speech over writing.

It may be concluded from the examination of Portuguese and Spanish that the orthographic

experience of other languages is not as simple or as straightforward as it might appear (in the Spanish case) or does not necessarily transfer unproblematically to the different circumstances of English (in the Portuguese case). Every language, let us not forget, has its own dynamic.

3. ENGLISH SPELLING REFORM: THE OBSTACLES

To return to English and the issue of spelling change, we may note in the first place a trenchant and carefully-argued rebuttal of the idea from a leading modern authority. The reputed grammarian R.W. Burchfield concludes in the 1996 edition of *Fowler's Modern English Usage* that spelling reform is a pipe-dream. Burchfield notes that 'modern English spelling falls well short of being a reliable guide to the pronunciation of a sizeable number of English words', and that, indeed, 'the notorious inconsistencies of English spelling' are such that 'it is tempting to think that they could be legislated away'. However, he points out that any phonetics-based reform of English spelling would at once run up against the question of *whose* phonetics: as he puts it, 'Whose standard English would qualify as the model for the respelling of the whole language?' [10]. Terminologically, it would be more accurate to say 'Whose received pronunciation?', but Burchfield's point is more than valid. Would the new rules be based on English, Scottish, Irish, American, Canadian, Australian, South African, Caribbean, Indian or Singaporean pronunciation? Would final 'r' be written — reflecting Scottish and American usage — or not — reflecting received English usage? The result could even be, paradoxically, to fragment the written language, with different countries adopting different spelling rules in line with their own pronunciation — whereas at present English in its written form, allowing for minor national spelling variations, can be pronounced in a huge variety of accents while remaining effectively the same.

In addition, a major reform, supposing it to be enforceable, would have the long-term consequence of rendering any texts printed prior to it unreadable to all but a few specialists. Burchfield makes this point too: 'Reform, if radical, would automatically place millions of books, newspapers, etc., out of the reach of the general public until they were reprinted in the new spelling system' [11]. Indeed, here Burchfield's 'until' seems over-optimistic: in view of the huge amounts of material involved, the operative word is surely 'unless'. In all likelihood the reform would thus usher in a new form of censorship. Works not chosen for 're-spelling' would disappear from view, and the new editions of other works might be not just *re-spelt*, but *re-written*. On this scenario, passages judged offensive, whether by the standards of today's political correctness or some other belief-system yet to be invented, would be not respelt but, rather, ideologically cleansed or deleted outright by zealously self-righteous transcribers. This is no empty threat: such transcription would be a form of interlingual translation, and in translation studies circles there does exist a school of thought which believes that translators are entitled to suppress elements of the original which they find ethically unsound. A recent writer on translation ethics, Gerard McAlester, refers to the view that 'a valid text should ... be ethically sound' and that where unacceptable material appears in the original 'it is the translator's job to correct or gloss the text' — indeed, that translators' 'ultimate responsibility for what they do is their own conscience' [12]. However, not everyone's conscience tells them the same things, and given the existence of such positions and the analogy between translation and transcription, there is no guarantee that texts of whatever kind would emerge unmodified from transcription into the new spelling. In addition, there would be the question of who would check the work of the transcribers, be it on ideological grounds or merely for technical accuracy (transcription software could no doubt be devised, but it would no doubt be about as reliable as the existing automatic translation software). It is difficult to see how living writers could be forcibly persuaded to have all their existing works transcribed into the new spelling — would they acquire the competence to do it themselves, or would they trust the transcribers? Would J.K. Rowling accept the idea of a respelt Harry Potter?

Another major obstacle to spelling reform is that, in view of the huge number of countries in the world that now use English as a first, second or foreign language, there is no guarantee that all would adopt a new standard.

Burchfield, again, refers to 'the absence of a single competent linguistic authority empowered to

make such fundamental changes' [13]. The concept of a language Academy is perceived as alien to English-speaking cultures; nor is there any organisation of Anglophone countries with pan-national powers in the language field. Nor would there be any way of enforcing the 'new' rules internationally on private or individual use, especially (a not unimportant point today) on the Internet. I shall return in greater detail later to the enforcement issue.

For the moment, I will stress that Burchfield concludes that 'the English spelling system is best left alone, except in minor particulars' [14]. Another grammarian, the generally traditionalist John Honey, comes, in his 1997 book on Standard English *Language is Power*, to a similar conclusion, while leaving more room for change than Burchfield: 'The arguments for radical reform are ... much less convincing than the case for piecemeal change in instances which give rise to constant confusion'. He proposes, for instance, changing 'read' (past tense and past participle) to 'redd' while keeping the infinitive 'read'; and changing 'live' to 'lyve' for the adjective while retaining 'live' for the verb [15]. However, even small individual changes as this would come up against the same insuperable enforcement obstacles as would a root-and-branch reform, and indeed Honey does not say how he would enforce his handful of 'new' spellings.

This does not mean, of course, that English spelling will not change over time. Bernard Shaw's practical efforts at spelling change, as far as the published editions of his works are concerned, seem to have been limited to throwing out the troublesome apostrophe – albeit only partially, as examination of the text of *Pygmalion* in today's Penguin edition brings up 'Ive' and 'youre' without the apostrophe, but 'I'll' and 'she'll' with it. Today, it is undoubtedly the case that large numbers of people do not know how to use the apostrophe correctly (as witness the endless confusion over 'its' and 'it's', or the notorious 'greengrocer's plural' as in 'cabbage's'), and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that it could eventually fall into disuse. Martin Cutts, author of the influential style manual *The Plain English Guide*, warns: 'The apostrophe is now so widely misused ... that its eventual death seems inevitable'. Should this happen, there would be an immediate loss of precision for the written language, for the distinction between possessive singular and possessive plural would be blurred: 'the boy's mother' (one boy's mother) is *not* the same as 'the boys' mother' (the mother of several boys), and it is therefore worth sounding a warning note on the matter. Indeed, as Cutts himself points out, 'the correct use of apostrophes conveys meaning and prevents ambiguity' [16].

4. GLOBAL ENGLISH SPELLING AND THE INTERNET

Of all the objections to recasting English spelling, however, the most telling one today is, I believe, that of unenforceability. This factor is now immensely compounded by the Internet, whose existence has effectively become the guarantee of the unreformability of International English spelling. One aspect of the Internet revolution which is perhaps not sufficiently remarked is the extent to which it undermines McLuhanite ideology and embodies a return in triumph of the written word. The prestige of written texts had in reality never fallen as low as the audiovisual pundits would have wished: for better or worse, the sacred books of the three great monotheisms have retained, and more than arguably increased, their power and influence over the last thirty years. The Internet, meanwhile, began with email and later developed the World Wide Web as its two killer applications, and both are text-based. Classic literary texts, both famous and obscure, are readily available on the Web, and one of the most successful e-retailers, Amazon, has books as its core business. Substantive and productive human relations are built around email, in other words around the exchange of written texts, by people who may never or rarely meet physically. In a striking reversal of the alleged primacy of spoken over written, the closest of email correspondents may never speak even on the telephone, or may try out that mode of communication only to conclude it is inappropriate, inconvenient and unnecessary. Email communication exhibits certain characteristics of the spoken word, such as informality and flexibility, but should nonetheless be defined as essentially a new and specific register of the written language. Indeed, David Crystal, in his important study *Language and the Internet* — published in 2001, three decades on from his *Linguistics* — betrays a rather more conciliatory stance on the value of writing than in that earlier book. Crystal states: 'What makes Netspeak so interesting, as a form of communication, is the way

it relies on characteristics belonging to both sides of the speech/writing divide', but goes on to specify: 'Netspeak has far more properties linking it to writing than to speech ... [it] is better seen as written language which has pulled some way in the direction of speech than as spoken language which has been written down' [17].

Crystal declares that with the Internet 'we are on the brink of the biggest language revolution ever' [18]. This is indeed a major probability, but it does not follow that such a language revolution will include the revolutionisation of English orthography. The Internet is, certainly, a crucial forum for the spread and development of Global English. It is of course not true that, as some glibly pronounce, English is 'the language of the Internet' — any such assertion is belied by the ever-growing proliferation of sites in, say, Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Spanish — but it is true that English operates as the network's main lingua franca — and it is, indeed, significant here that Crystal should have entitled his book *Language and the Internet* when its almost entirely English-oriented content would have warranted *English and the Internet*. English is used for electronic communication between native speakers of different origins, between native and non-native speakers, and among non-native speakers of multiple provenances. Numerous websites run by non-native speakers express their content wholly or partly through the medium of English. The Internet is the most visible manifestation of the situation described by Tom McArthur, in his book of 2002, the *Oxford Guide to World English*, in which he sees English, in the version variously known as 'world English', 'international English' or 'global English', as 'the universalising language of the human race', or 'the world's default mode' [19] — a language which he classifies as in a category of its own, 'a set with a membership of one', 'distributed more or less equally worldwide' [20]. This situation is of course disapproved by some linguists, as notably by Robert Phillipson in his *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy* (2003). Phillipson asks anxiously whether 'a single privileged language, along with the paradigms associated with it, represents a threat to other ways of thinking and their expression' [21]; yet his critique of English is itself written in English.

Another commentator hostile to the perceived hegemony of English, Stuart Campbell, writing in 2005, nonetheless stresses 'the problem of dealing with the fact that English is now used by more second-language users than mother tongue speakers' [22]. For the foreseeable future, and whatever advances Chinese or Spanish may make, the global dominance of English as planetary lingua franca, used by both native and non-native speakers, is not going to go away.

In these circumstances, there are those who believe that the efficacy of English as a means of electronic communication would be furthered by a root-and-branch spelling reform that would operate at global level, thus universalising an approximation of written English to the characteristics of speech. However, whether or not such a reform might theoretically be desirable, there are good reasons for affirming that the existence of the Internet renders it totally unenforceable.

The Internet is not the law-free zone that some claim it is, but it is by its nature the perfect redoubt for refuseniks and dissidents of all hues. English, meanwhile, is spoken and written as a first or second language in a very large number of countries and territories, and as a foreign language virtually everywhere. If we suppose a future in which every country in the world where English is a first or second official language — let us say, the entire Commonwealth plus the US and Ireland — not only adopted a new simplified spelling but made the production of new texts in the old spelling illegal, such is the nature of the Internet that there would be nothing to stop refuseniks publishing on-line in the old spelling from sites hosted in other countries. Even if all print publications in the English-speaking world had to be in the new spelling, emails and blogs are by definition private and personal forms of communication and not subject a priori to legislative fiat. To coax every single user of English worldwide into adopting a new spelling would appear as impossible a task as to transcribe the entire mass of English-language texts now existing on the Web.

5. CONCLUSION — DIGRAPHIA OR DYSTOPIA?

What would happen in practice would be the permanent creation of a situation of what linguists call digraphia (that is, the existence of two different sets of writing conventions for a single language). The new spelling would be used, on a maximum-case scenario, by governments, younger people who had learned it at school, and older converts; the old spelling would continue to be employed by a variety of refuseniks, some of them creative writers or non-fiction authors quite legitimately fearing distortion or censorship of their work through transcription. Such a coexistence of old and new spelling would, indeed, have a partial fictional analogy in the coexistence of Oldspeak and Newspeak in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. In Orwell's novel, as with spelling reform, the dynamic for language change is based on a notion of simplification, although in his imaginary totalitarian society the motivation is political and ideological: Oldspeak, or Standard English, is to be gradually replaced by Newspeak, a simplified form of English with a slimmed-down grammar and a deliberately reduced vocabulary. However, even in the satiric context of Orwell's fictional scenario, it is admitted that such a transition would take years and that for a long period diglossia would prevail. The official expectation is that 'with the passage of time the distinguishing characteristics of Newspeak would become more and more pronounced – its words growing fewer and fewer, their meanings more and more rigid' [23], while Oldspeak would gradually die out, and with it all comprehension of the past: 'It was impossible to translate any passage of Oldspeak into Newspeak unless it either referred to some technical process or some very simple everyday action ... In practice this meant that no book written before approximately 1960 could be translated as a whole. Pre-revolutionary literature could only be subjected to ideological translation'.

In practice, the difficulty of an absolute transformation of language was acknowledged insofar as 'it was chiefly in order to allow time for the preliminary work of translation that the final adoption of Newspeak had been fixed for so late a date as 2050' [24].

Orwell was imagining a totalitarian world, whereas the essence of the Internet is freedom. However, the problems of a total language transition that he envisaged may be applied mutatis mutandis to the spelling reform issue. The radical reform of English orthography would inevitably be an incomplete process, above all since it could not be forced on the individual users who are the creators of a large part of the ever-expanding library that is the Internet. All that reform would achieve would be a permanent situation of digraphia, with some material available in one spelling, some in the other, and the remaining material transcribed between the two to dubious standards of reliability. This digraphia would be in practice be a dystopia — no utopia at all, and no cyberutopia either. English spelling as we know it is certainly confusing, but I submit that spelling reform would lead only to confusion worse confounded, and that all those who write the English language, be they first-, second- or foreign-language speakers, will, for the foreseeable future, be better off expressing their ideas and their creativity within the graphic conventions of English as we now know them. In other words, Harry Potter has done more for global literacy than spelling reform ever could.

Notes

[1]. Shaw, 5.

[2] McLuhan, 15, 279.

[3] Crystal (1971), 60.

[4]. 'Noah Webster' (Internet reference).

[5] Webster (Internet reference).

[6] Portugal (including the Azores and Madeira in the Atlantic); Brazil; five African countries, i.e.: Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe; and East Timor in Asia. Portuguese is now only rarely used in the former colonial territories which are not independent countries, i.e. Macao in China and Goa, Daman and Diu in India. The status of Galician, in many ways similar to Portuguese but spoken within Spanish territory, remains problematic.

[7] Spain (including the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic and the two North African cities of Ceuta and Melilla); eighteen Latin American republics; and Equatorial Guinea in Africa. There is one non-independent Spanish-speaking territory, Puerto

Rico in the Caribbean, belonging to the US (on whose mainland there are of course large numbers of English-Spanish bilinguals of Hispanic origin).

[8] Gonçalves Viana and Vasconcelos Abreu (Internet reference).

[9] *ibid.*

[10] Burchfield, 731.

[11] Burchfield, 731–732.

[12] McAlester, 225, 227.

[13] Burchfield, 731.

[14] Burchfield, 732.

[15] Honey, 166.

[16] Cutts, 89.

[17] Crystal (2001), 28, 47.

[18] Crystal (2001), 241.

[19] McArthur, 2, 13, 434.

[20] McArthur, 415.

[21] Phillipson, 80.

[22] Campbell, 28.

[23] Orwell, 324.

[24] Orwell, 326.

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'Noah Webster', www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/noahwebster.html, site last updated 2003.

Discussion and Question time

Christopher Jolly: Talks about the way that language can differ geographically. Reform comes in three ways, Spelling, meaning and pronunciation. For example in Hong Kong all primary schools have two teachers, one native teacher and one non-native teacher.

Masha Bell: This presentation confirmed her view that a radical reform is the wrong way to go about it.

Christopher Rollason: The transcription issue is the biggest obstacle

Break for lunch

Saturday 30th July 2005. 14:00 hrs

4.3 Mr. Niall Waldman

How to Prepare for, Select, and Implement a Reformed Spelling Scheme for Global English

Niall McLeod Waldman, Author, Spelling Reformist.

Introduction

First, we should establish the need for a reformed spelling system for global English. We live in a tiny planet on the barren outskirts of a universe that is too colossal to imagine. Faster airlines, advanced telecommunications, and international treaties bring the inhabitants of this planet closer together every minute. We are interacting, “internetting,” and intermarrying with people on the other side of the world on a daily basis. It’s a small world that is brought even closer by an enormous language called English.

There has never been a tongue that has dominated the planet so completely. At least forty-four countries call it an official language and more than one and a half billion people speak it. [1] English is the language of the UK, the US, the UN, and U2 for that matter. It is the world communication tongue. All this despite the fact that we need brains like mainframes and the social life of a back-woods hermit to have the time and ability to master its spelling.

About 50% of English speakers are poor spellers, [2] approximately 45% are good spellers, and only about 5% can be said to have control of the orthography. [3] This means English speakers almost have to be members of Mensa to fully master the most fundamental part of their writing code.

Many people can accept that 50% of English speakers are poor spellers. They look upon this as a minor side effect of participating in a language that has a rich and varied history. There is some evidence, however, that children’s logic is adversely affected by our rich and varied *spelling system*, [4] and there is a clear indication that complex English spelling is a significant contributor to the high levels of functional illiteracy in all English-speaking countries. [5] These things *have* to be unacceptable to anyone who cares about anything.

Solution

That said, how do we solve this massive world problem. Do we develop a more regular spelling system for international use and ignore the English-speaking nations altogether? Some would say that without the participation of the UK and the US any new international spelling scheme would not survive its unveiling ceremony. Furthermore, foreign learners may be reluctant to learn a scheme that has not been blessed by one or other of the two English-speaking powerhouses. For these reasons and many others, this paper focuses on a two-directional approach to spelling reform. It addresses the need for reformed spelling for the global community as well as within the English-speaking countries themselves.

The first step to solving our problem is recognizing the enormity of the task. Trying to convince the world to use a new English-spelling system is not as hard as trying to crack the global drug problem; it is, however, right up there with the battles for civil rights and the struggles of the suffragette movement. Recognizing the immensity of the undertaking will help us drastically increase our response to the situation.

In the past, English spelling reformers have been fighting a battle when they should have been

waging a war. At one time, this war could have been a civil war within Britain but now because the problem was not solved early on, it has grown to a war of the world. Reformers have to convene their war council, summon their generals, and crank up their propaganda campaign. They must fight fire with fire and not with fire extinguishers. They must fight back against the anti reformists and turn *them* into the bad guys. This is a war; in fact, it's a revolution and no one says that fighting dirty is out of the question.

The first order of business when starting a revolution is the creation of a manifesto. A master plan that gives a clear vision of the desired goal and what steps to take to get there. Without a plan, people are fumbling about in the dark trying this and that to see if it might work, not knowing if what they are doing is part of the overall objective.

A timeline is also an important ingredient of a successful rebellion since people's focus and energy have shelf lives. Knowing there is an end in sight as well as a clear vision of how to get there will assist in the overall victory.

There are three phases for the successful reformation of English spelling globally (in my view):

Phase 1. Making people aware that there is a problem,

Phase 2. Choosing a spelling scheme to solve that problem, and

Phase 3. Selling and implementing that scheme worldwide.

Approximately four to five years will be needed for the first two phases running simultaneously, and about five to six years for the third one.

Phase 1: Awareness

Let's call the wonderful work that has been done in the past in the name of spelling reform, the *slow-but-steady* awareness phase. What is needed now is the *frantically paced, severely intensive* awareness phase. A phase that will ensure that every man, woman, and child in the English-speaking world and well beyond will know about the needless complication and underlying devastation caused by English spelling.

Undoubtedly many of the ideas listed in this paper have been proposed before. What reformers have to do now is compress the best ideas from the past five centuries into ten years, and hire the finest people to help them make things finally happen. If a person hears something once every few decades, it barely registers with them. If they hear it repeatedly within a concentrated period of time, they are much more liable to sit up and listen. They will listen with greater intensity if a hired mega star delivers that message; and it is presented in such a manner that it is the most irresistible cause since the outcry against the clubbing of baby seals for their fur.

Unlike the seals campaign, video pictures cannot be obtained of the devastation caused by complex English spelling; therefore, reformers have to paint that picture themselves with the help of public-relations experts, advertising gurus, and the most charismatic spokespeople in the business.

In order for reformers to mount a successful campaign, it is time for them to step aside and employ specialists to call the shots and come up with new and irresistibly appealing ideas to get the job done. Reformers can do much of the legwork and contribute in many ways but they have to retain advertising experts to spin a magical sticky web from which no one can escape. Image consultants are also needed, as well as polling advisors, marketing specialists, and spin-doctors. This campaign needs the best that the world has to offer to deliver its message.

These experts know what it takes to get the reform message branded in the minds of the people that matter. The ones that matter — apart from parents, teachers, and international organizations — are *this* generation of schoolchildren. They are the ones who will soon take over the world. We want to piggyback on their inevitable world domination and have them take the seeds that the

reform movement has sewn along with them. This cannot be done without hiring the same advertising agencies and spin-doctors that are promoting all the other pop-culture stuff that is vying for their attention.

Phase 2: Choosing a Scheme

Simultaneous to the media and public-relations blitz, a spelling scheme will have to be chosen — or developed — and proven effective in tests and opinion polls. The tests will determine how well the scheme performs; the polls will determine the scheme's appeal to the public. A perfect scheme is not required. All that is needed is a scheme that *works well* and is palatable to the public. A palatable scheme can be made irresistible with a little media spin. A perfect scheme that is hated by most will dwell in the annals of obscurity forever.

At first glance, it would seem that a scheme should be chosen before the awareness phase begins. Having a scheme already chosen, however, could be a massive drawback. Selling the idea of the *need* for a child-friendly, yet-to-be-determined scheme is much easier than attempting to sell the scheme itself. We should learn from politicians, they avoid revealing the details of their platforms during their election campaigns. It gives the public and the opposition less targets at which to take aim. The public must be won over first then the scheme implement immediately after.

At the very start of the awareness campaign, an international call should go out for schemes and ideas to reform English spelling. This should be a broadly dispersed request that will reach as many people as possible. The more individuals that submit schemes and ideas, the more of them will be buying into the need for spelling reform.

The submission of schemes could be part of a worldwide competition with the creator of the winning scheme receiving a trophy and a monetary award. These could be presented at a gala event designed to capture media attention. Many sub-prizes could be awarded for schemes and ideas submitted by schoolchildren. This ensures the involvement of an important target audience. Prizes for the best scheme or list of ideas from a classroom team could also be given. This ensures that teachers will be involved. Dozens of categories could be created to encourage people of every age group and way of life to get involved. This will have thousands thinking about the complexity of English spelling and how to fix it.

A documentary or even a reality series could be made from the highlights of the scheme-choosing process and award ceremony. So far, we have chosen the best apprentice, the best boxer, and the best singers in front of the camera; why not the best spelling scheme? Once again, the finest in the business should be hired to make this show irresistibly exciting. People love spelling bees on TV, they love all sorts of brain shows that are beyond their capabilities and understanding, so why not have a show that has people with schemes competing and debating with each other.

The key to the public embracing a new scheme is answering the question, “who is the institution that is in charge of choosing, developing, and implementing this scheme?” It is crucial that this body be of great authority, but they must not appear too overly controlling of people's lives *or* their national affairs. The public must be persuaded that once the scheme is implemented there will be very little intervention from this body since the rules will be simple to follow. It should be make clear that the people manning this governing body are not the language police, they are the spelling tutors; and in all non English-speaking countries that have simple spelling systems, the need for spelling tutoring is a rare and unusual thing.

Who *will* this governing body be? The easiest thing to do is to set up a new independent institution. The best minds can be recruited to run it, and that body and group of people can create their own authority. This way the new institution is a one-trick pony, unhindered by other agendas or the politics of a larger international organization.

That is the easiest solution, but would it be the most effective. Linking up with an already established organization such as the UN may be a better answer. The UN already has authority and a great measure of credibility. Furthermore, they have a well-established interest in world literacy and have conducted many literacy studies. Being connected to but not smothered by its massive bureaucracy would appear to be the most effective approach. The United Postal Workers and the World Tourism Organization have such relationships with the UN. We are at the start of the *United Nations Literacy Decade*, a UN campaign that calls for “literacy for all.” There is no better time to make a pitch to the UN than now.

Another important question to address is, “by whose authority is this governing body established?” The answer to that is simple: By our authority. We the English-speaking people of this world, who care about the suppression of others, give ourselves the authority — independent of our collective nations — to set up an institution to do what our individual nations have neglected to do.

Forming this international governing body is the first thing that has to be done even before the awareness phase begins. Reformers must be able to say to the public and the world, this is what we have done, and this is what *they*, the authoritative governing body, are going to do on *your* behalf.

Phase 3: Implementation

The last and hardest part of this campaign is the implementation phase. If given deity-like authority, most reformers would like to eliminate all other forms of English spelling and supplant them with the new scheme. This will come in time. At the moment, however, it would appear that the best chance for success is to propose an alternative spelling system that is non-compulsory. It would exist side by side with the systems we have now; to be used all the time, some of the time, only for international communications — whatever each person or organization prefers. The hope is, of course, that in time the new scheme will replace the existing systems entirely.

There are two major target audiences for this new scheme — international organizations and school kids. Lobbying international organizations and institutions to use this new scheme will be incredibly important. It is especially important to target organizations that will *benefit* from a more regular spelling system — for instance, the International Dyslexia Association.

Professional lobbyists should be sent to the major international organizations in an attempt to obtain *their* support. Getting a few key institutions using the new spelling will be a great boost to other areas of this campaign. It will show career-minded kids and adults that it is important to learn for international use.

As indicated, school kids should be a primary focus since they are the future. If they are won over while they’re young, they will be reform enthusiasts forever. How *will* they be won over? It is clear from history that the final spelling stabilization in the UK and the final stabilization and simplification in the US were both heavily influenced by spelling books. [\[6\]](#) The spelling books influenced the children and the children grew up to use the spelling that influenced them.

From this we learn that spelling books are an important key to winning over children. Getting the schools and school boards to use *reformed* spelling books, however, will be the tricky part. Schools and school boards are essentially part of governments, and governments are political entities. Most politicians will not join any *movement* until it has already *moved* significantly in the right direction.

In order to succeed the assumption has to be made that governments and school boards will *not* endorse the new scheme. Members of the reform team should work with the governments and school boards if asked. They should even target and lobby them. They can even roam the world giving them free spelling books; but they must also work independent of these institutions

assuming they will not join in until the tidal wave of reform eventually carries them along with it.

This independent work is where the reformers rejoin the campaign in force. They should set up volunteer groups or clubs similar to the boy scouts and the girl guides. The main focus of these new clubs, however, will be on spelling. The clubs' guidelines and curriculum will come as a package, expertly developed for teaching kids to spelling in reformed *and* traditional spelling.

Traditional spelling must be taught because that is the incentive for parents to allow their kids to come to the clubs. We know that millions of kids are having trouble with spelling, and parents are often powerless or too busy to do anything about it; that's the hook that brings them in. There are many spelling techniques already developed that help kids learn traditional spelling, these will be part of the clubs' program. Once the kids have joined the clubs, they will be exposed to the wonders of reformed spelling.

The clubs may start sporadically around the world, but as they grow in success, they should spread into a powerful network. It will be up to reformers to recruit volunteers to operate the clubs. It will be much easier for reformers to enlist volunteers when they have a master plan and a package to promote, rather than saying, "hey join our society and help us decide what to do." Above all, student mentors should be encouraged to volunteer. This will ensure that kids who *can* spell are involved in the clubs as well.

End

Where will the money come from to do all that has to be done to win this revolution? That problem is for others to figure out. When Jules Verne created a vision of the future, he did not create a spreadsheet to tabulate the costs. His job was to simply draw us a map of how to get there. With a map — or a master plan — the money will come as needed. Where there's a *vision*, there's a way.

No matter what the master plan looks like, however, reformers must always remember to fight the anti reformists at every turn. The anti reformists must be made to look like *they* are the ones who are clubbing the baby seals — because *metaphorically speaking* they are!

Notes

[1] Melvyn Bragg (2004) *The Adventure of English*, Hodder & Stoughton: London, page ix.

[2] Harry Shefter (1976) *6 Minutes a Day to Perfect Spelling*, Pocket Books: New York, page vii; Masha Bell (2004) *Understanding English Spelling*, Pegasus Educational: Cambridge, England, page 10.

[3] Journal of the Simplified Spelling Society, [No. 32-2003/1](#), Item 1; Vivian Cook (2004) *Accommodating Broccoli In The Cemetery*, Profile Books: London.

[4] Ben D. Wood, former Director of the Bureau of Collegiate Educational Research, Columbia University, foreword to *English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading* (1971) by Godfrey Dewey; John Downing (1967) *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet*, Cassell: London, page 233–34

[5] Diane McGuinness (2004) *Early Reading Instruction: What Science Really Tells Us about How to Teach Reading*, The MIT Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, page. 41; Stanley L. Sharp (1982) *The REAL Reason Why Johnny Still Can't Read*, Exposition Press: New York, page 13; Christopher Upward, Committee for Linguistics in Education, British Association for Applied Linguistics, [CLIE Working Papers Number 11](#), July 1988.

[6] Donald Scragg (1974) *A History of English Spelling*, pages 62, 63, 75–78; Tom McArthur (1992) *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, page 974; Melvyn Bragg (2004) *The Adventure of English*, Hodder & Stoughton: London, pages 168 & 169.

14.30 hrs

After Mr. Waldman's presentation, the Chairman reminded the audience of Dr. Johnson's anniversary and asked 'why did we decide to hold the conference in Germany?' The reason being that this is an international conference and English is a world language. Speakers of English from non-English speaking countries should adopt simpler spelling to make spelling easier.

E.g's: Snuff, Cuff, Puff, Rough - (Ruff), Tough - (Tuff)

Dr. Bayer added that children in India are already using the words 'ruff' and 'tuff'.

The Chairman also gave the example of Telefone, taking away the 'ph' letters and using the letter 'f' still provides the same sound. Telephone - Telefone

Isobel Raven asked Dr. Bayer if teachers in India would mark such a change in spelling as wrong. Dr. Bayer replied that spelling is overlooked so that the child can progress onto the next stage of their education. Children cannot be allowed to fail and only at the end do they have a final exam.

Coffee break

Saturday 30 July. 15:15 hrs

4.4 Prof. Gerhard Augst

The German spelling reform – An example for the Simplified Spelling Society

Ladies and Gentlemen

I was involved in the company for German spelling reform from 1979 until 2004. I therefore would like to give you a report on the course and the problems of the reform in German speaking states and hope that you can take some advice for your plan for the English spelling reform.

A 2 page memorandum was published in 1996 where the following adjectives and participles appeared: "confused, absurd, great, ugly, catastrophic, ridiculous, cheated, raped, restricted, tormented, forced". Some verbs in the same text conveyed: "to play a wrong note, to eliminate sth., to tempt sb., to disgrace sb., to do harm to sb.". And nouns that matches like: "impoverishment, confusion, to be uneducated, annoyance, compulsory measure, to take offence, ugliness. Orwellsche Vision (Orwell's vision). One could ask as to what the reason was for such expressions of emotion? On the 1st of July 1996, Germany, Liechtenstein, Austria and Switzerland signed a declaration of intent to carry out together a spelling reform in their countries. Seven countries in which German was the minority language or the second official language joined the treaty. A plan that had been cherished for over 100 years seemed to come true. But, on a book in Frankfurt, a senior secondary school teacher, by the name of Denck from Weinheim (Bavaria) came up with "10 thesis against the spelling reform" out of which came the above-mentioned adjectives, nouns and verbs. This resulted in many great German authors like G.Grass, M.Walser, C.Wolf signing his resolution immediately. Since 1996, furious debate raged in Germany, which is still unsettled (2005). However, before entering this subject, it is essential to know the history of the German spelling reform from 1700 to 1996 and present the contents of the reform in brief. My lecture is structured as follows:

1. History of the reform 1700–1996
2. Contents of the reform
3. Discussion 1996–2005
4. Advice for the SSS

1. History of the reform from 1700–1996

The conventions of German spelling became more and more stabilized during the 18th and 19th century. Reform attempts made in the 18th century e.g. by G.Klopstock failed. We can see that the plan for reform and standardization always occur together, in which the standardization gets itself through. During the second half of the 19th century, the state intervened. Teachers were dissatisfied with the various spelling possibilities. So they came to an agreement that in one school, one spelling convention was to be taught by all teachers (e.g. Berlin 1871)

Furthermore they made a petition that each government (f.i. Bavaria 1878, Austria 1879, Prussia 1880) should publish rules and a small dictionary which were binding for the schools of the kingdom concerned (Schlaefer 1980:200). In 1876, the first conference on spelling reform in Berlin tried to find a uniform spelling for all German-speaking countries and to simplify it. This conference failed, however: there were two opposing parties: the one – led by the famous German linguist Karl Weinhold – wanted to change the spelling according to the principle: write in accordance with the historical development; the other – led by the equally famous linguist Rudolf von Raumer – followed the principle: write in accordance with your pronunciation.

The failure of the conference was aggravated by Otto von Bismarck's opposition towards any alteration of German spelling while his was chancellor of the Second German Reich.

Consequently after his death, there

was a new conference at Berlin in 1901. The representatives of all German speaking countries decided not to change spelling in general, but they succeeded in finding one convention for spelling which was binding for all German states. They published their results in *Regeln für die deutsche Schreibung und Wörterbuch* "Rules for the German spelling and dictionary"; (reprinted in Nerius-Scharnhorst 1980:351). In 1902, the "Bundesrat" – a representative parliament of all German governments – carried a motion advising all German governments to introduce this uniform spelling in their books and administrative bodies.

In the following years, all the governments published rules for spelling and a dictionary with many subsequent editions – all according to the agreement of 1901. This order had to be followed by the schools and administrative bodies; other writers and printers – such as those with newspapers – were merely asked to observe it. After World War II, there were no new editions. As some lexicographers (like Mackensen) tacitly started to change the spelling in their dictionaries, the "Kultusministerkonferenz" of West Germany (this is a meeting of all ministers of education in the various states) put a stop to this development by deciding in 1955 that:

'the way of spelling established in the spelling reform of 1901 and the later continued to be compulsory for German spelling...in schools. In cases of doubt, the spelling used in the "Duden" and its rules are compulsory.'

In the quoted passage, a famous trade name is mentioned: the spelling dictionary Duden. This book is connected with Konrad Duden (1829–1911), a Grammar School teacher and finally headmaster. In the last century, he tried to standardize German spelling conventions. He was at the conference in Berlin in 1876 and 1901, and in 1880, he published the first edition of his *Vollständiges orthographisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Complete orthographic dictionary of the German language; reprinted in 1980 by the Duden Bibliographic Institute).

In some respects, printers were still dissatisfied after the conference of Berlin (in 1901), because the agreement did not strictly rule out fluctuations and uncertainties in spelling, especially in the spelling of loan words. They therefore asked Konrad Duden to produce a special dictionary without any variations for them. In 1903, the so-called *Buchdruckerduden* (Printers' Duden) appeared in its first edition. In the following years, Konrad Duden made up his mind to combine his dictionary for the general public with the Printers' Duden. This book appeared after his death in

1915 as the 9th edition: *Duden – Die Rechtschreibung der deutschen Sprache* (Duden – the spelling of the German language). This edition made the rules which has been specially set for the use of the printers compulsory for everyone in schools and administrative bodies.

Every year thousands of men and women write letters to editors or even phone them, asking how to write this to that word or how to interpret this or that rule. The Bibliographic Institute team collected all these queries, and in every edition, it developed the rules and the spelling to cover these cases. So, in the 9th edition, you could find rules for punctuation, in the 15th edition rules for the separate or compound spelling of words. Through the years, the rules have become and are still becoming more and more complicated. Let me give an example: According to the rules of the conference of 1901, compound words could be written with three consecutive, identical letters in the middle, when the two identical letters in the final position of the first component were simply concatenated with the same letter of the following component. The latest edition, however showed that you must apply a whole array of rules writing: Ballettanzer, Ballettuppe – Ballettheater, Balletthriller (ballet dance, ballet troupe, ballet theatre, ballet thriller (August 1982).

The conference of Berlin led to the adoption of one spelling convention by the nations participating, this being a compromise for the more ambitious simplification which they could not agree upon. Instead of being simplified, German spelling became more and more complicated, especially under the influence of the Duden. It is not astonishing therefore that the demands to change the spelling increased shortly after the conference. There have been many conferences and resolutions since that time. It is not necessary to mention them all. The most important resolution, binding at the time of the present discussion, is the “Wiesbadener Empfehlungen” (Wiesbaden recommendations) of 1958. The “kultusministerkonferenz”, mentioned above, established a committee of linguists, teachers, professors of education, printers and editors to consider the best way of changing the spelling.

The committee suggested a change of spelling the following main field: — to replace the capital letters for nouns by small letters. They called this a “gemaßigte Kleinschreibung” (moderate use of small letters). Capitals should only be used for the proper nouns.

A new wave of spelling reform arose around 1970. The discussion was started by the Pedagogical Seminars. Influenced by the theories of Basil Bernstein, there was a general discussion on the deficiency in spelling abilities among lower classes. There were two possible solutions: either to have more spelling exercises in class, or to change the spelling. AS lessons were thought to be more important for the practice of communicative and stylistic skills, the Pedagogical Movement decided to demand a spelling reform. To reduce the number of fields of controversy, they only emphasized point one of the Wiesbaden Recommendations. Their demand was supported by the GEW (Tradeunion of education and Sciences), which held a meeting on this subject at Frankfurt in 1973 (Drewitz –Reuter 1974). At the beginning of this campaign, the conditions for reform were extremely favorable because the then socialist government of Willi Brandt had created a climate of reform. By getting rid of the capitals, he wanted to get rid of the capitalists (Drewitz Reuter 1974:127). On the other hand, Hans Habe, a conservative journalist for the conservative newspaper Die Welt, denounced the reform by forecasting a new era of illiteracy (reprinted in August 1974:133).

The international working group published a first draft in 1988, which concerned with the alteration of spelling of words in specific, e.g. Aal > Al, Boot > Bot, because the diphthong letters in German are exceptions to mark the long vowel. Also the connection for /ae/as <ai> should be given up in favour of the regular <ei>, e.g. Kaiser > Keiser. With reference to this matter, the large daily newspaper FAZ titled: “Will we soon be writing Keiser instead of Kaiser?”, and a storm of indignation broke out in Germany. The proposal of the reform had to be drawn back. H.Zabel published an extensive collection of press articles, inclusive of reader’s letters with the title “The tilted Keiser” (Der gekippte Keiser) (1989).

The international working group worked further and presented a new draft as a rule to German spelling reform ("German spelling reform. Suggestions in its revision") ("Deutsche RS. Vorschläge in ihrer Neuregelung").

This became the basis of state trade in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Hence, the KMK and the German ministry of the interior sent the draft to 43 associations requesting for a written comment/statement. In May 1993, a hearing took place in Bonn, in which 30 corporations/associations took place. Some proposals for changes of the draft took place. During which some proposals for changes of the draft took place. The most important thing was that it was not possible to enforce the spelling of nouns in lower case letters. A modified draft was again criticized by the Bavarian Minister of Education and the Arts Zehetmair in 1995, specially in reference to the Integration of foreign words e.g. Rhabarber > Rabarber and hence, had to be modified again. This draft was then consented by KMK in December 1995 and during January till April 1996 also by the Federal Cabinet, the minister-presidents of the countries and the Federal Minister of the Interior. Before the planned signing took place, the Federal Constitutional Court rejected an urgent request from a constitutional lawyer Prof. Groeschner from Jena, who is the name of his daughter, wanted to stop the federal Republic of Germany from signing the afore mentioned "mutual declaration of intent for the revision of German spelling" ("Gemeinsame Absichtserklärung zur Neuregelung der deutschen Rechtschreibung")

2. Contents of the reform

There was a totally new formulated set of rules and regulations that replaced the one from 1902. Also the Duden privilege had to be stopped as it was only regarded as a carried out reform. The set of rules and regulations was subdivided into 6 parts. The 2 most important changes of each portion will be examined.

A. Phoneme — grapheme

With regard to content, the only reform which one could quite easily notice in a continual text, is the change of the β -spelling. Due to the principle of morphemes, there is no change between Fluss (until now Fluß) and Flüsse anymore, and the same with Küssen – du/er kusst (until now kußt). The principle of morpheme was also decisive in abandoning the acceptance of the most English change y –ies, e.g. Husky –huskies (now: Huskys). The difference of spelling dass – das stays the same even though the international study/working group had proposed its task to be only – das.

B. Separate and compound spelling

Until present, one had to differentiate between concrete and figurative meaning as a criterion for separate spelling (auf dem Stuhl) sitzen bleiben or for compound spelling (in der Schule) sitzenbleiben in the sense of "having to repeat the course in school". This Metaphorical criteria will be abandoned. But the following examples: baden gehen (to go swimming) and baden gehen (with a proposal) have always been written separately while the following examples: liegenbleiben (to stay in bed) and liegen bleiben (to leave work undone) have always been spelled together.

An adaptation to irgend + X (some + X) was also planned/intended. Until now, irgendein, irgendwas, irgenwer, were spelled together, but irgend jemand, irgend etwas were spelled separately. Hence, the latter will also be spelled together in the revised reform as: irgendetwas, irgendetwas.

C. Hyphens

The main problem caused here is due to the acceptance of compound words from English.

English knows three kinds: writing sth as two or more words, hyphenating words, or writing something as one word. German on the other hand does not know compounds written as two or more words since in German the normal case is to write sth as one word. Therefore the revised version tried, if possible, to get by without writing sth as two or more words. For example: Engl. Compact disc > Germ. Compactdisc.

D. Capital and lower case letters

As the proposal by the International Association for Orthography to spell nouns with lower case letters was not approved, a decision was taken on a proposal for the modified use of capital letters. For example; the differentiation between concrete and metaphoric meaning, where the concrete would be spelled with an uppercase letter, the metaphoric with a lower case letter; Let's consider the following phrase: "Auf dem trocknen sitzen" which is a German saying and would literally translated read "to sit on the dry" has a metaphoric meaning, which is "not to have anything to drink". In this case "trocknen", which means "the dry" is written in lower case letters. On the other hand "Auf dem Trockenen sitzen" (to sit on the dry) can have a concrete meaning, e.g. "to sit at the shore" and in this case "Trockenen" (the dry) is written in capital letters and auf dem Trocknen sitzen and auf dem Trocknen sitzen which has a concrete meaning – (at the shore) is written in capital letters. Besides, the writer need no longer needs to not write the time of day in lower cases letters as in – heute abend (this evening), gestern morgen (yesterday morning), since even linguists argue about whether an adverbial is used in relation to Abend, Morgen (Evening, Morning).

E. Punctuation

Here, the writer is granted liberty with regard to the placement of the comma in combination with infinitive groups since even better writers did not master the old Duden regulations with two main rules and eleven exceptions:

Er bat sie inständig(,) nach Hause zu kommen

He urgently asked her(,) to come home

Additionally, main clauses joined by *und* or *oder* need no longer be separated by a comma because if one can list words and parts of a sentence without a comma, why not also main clauses?

die hupsch, kluge _ und Fleißige Frau ...

the pretty, clever _ and hardworking woman

die hupsche Frau, der kluge Mann_und das Fleißige Kind ...

the pretty woman, the clever man_ and the hardworking child

die hupsche Frau fährt in die Stadt_und (sie) kauft ein

the pretty woman drives to the city_ and (she) shops

die hupsch Frau fährt in die Stadt, und der Mann repariert das Auto

the pretty woman drives to the city, and the man repairs the car

F. Dividing words at the end of a line

With regard to division of words, now the division of *st* is allowed. For example: fa-sten>fas-ten. In addition, ck (Zucker) will no longer be replaced by kk (previously Zuk-ker) when divided. In order to maintain the root spelling, ck moves to the next line intact, thus a spelling like Zu-cker. Words borrowed from foreign languages, can be separated according to the way the syllables are pronounced in speaking. For example: Heilko-pter>Helikopter, Inter-esse> Inte-resse.

All in all, the aim of the contents of the reform is to strengthen the basic rule and as much as enforceable to abolish exceptions and exceptions from exceptions. The effects in a continuous text are low. For example with regard the β -spelling, effects are only two words out of a hundred; all other changes, without the β , two words out of a thousand.

3. The development from 1996–2005

The Viennese declaration of intent recommended the introduction of the new spelling reform in schools in 1989/1999. Also the government offices began to adjust with the new spelling reform. The German news agencies switched over to the new spelling reform on the 01.08.1999 and with that also almost every newspaper, magazine and commercial with partly different individual orthographies e.g. Die Zeit (a weekly newspaper)

The publishing houses behaved differently, but in 2001, an average of 80% of every first published book was written in the new spelling. An agreement for a transition period until 01.08.2005 was made with the schools, in which the previous spelling regulations were to be marked as wrong and correction was to be provided, but they were not to be marked as mistakes. For example: Fluß instead of Fluss. Publishing houses for dictionaries like Duden, Bertelsmann and many other smaller publishing houses immediately published new edition of their dictionaries (but with incongruent application of the rules), Software manufacturers offered converter programs from the old spelling to the new as well as new spelling control programs.

Through the Vienna proposal, a committee between the states was established for the German spelling reform with three members each from Austria and Switzerland and six members from Germany who were to accompany the new spelling and later develop the official spelling further. These members communicated with publishing houses for dictionaries to achieve a uniform interpretation of the rules, they answered a host of queries regarding the new spelling reform, since everything new led to feeling of uncertainty. In spite of millions forms of information, many writers were still unsure of what had been changed. The commission published a status report every two years 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, where suggestions for detail and change were voiced.

This report of introduction to the new spelling is but only one side of what was carried out. The other side is the massive opposition against reform which became even greater over the years. The initiative was led by the afore mentioned, while the chronology is unimportant. The main groups are as follows.

- The writers, among others, Grass, Aichinger, Kempowski, Enzensberger, Walser and also the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung (German academy for language and poetry) who were invited for both the statement and hearing but perceived neither of the two. It founded its own spelling commission and published a "Kompromißvorschlag" (compromise proposal) (sic!) in 2003 where except for the β-new spelling reform, took back almost everything. In the year 2004, the KMK forced the academy to enter into conversation with the interstate commission. But this did not take place due to irreconcilable conflicts.
- In several German countries, the people desire against the reform was initiated; the only country that managed it was Schleswig-Holstein which went successfully. The parliament could bring the reform in force only after two years.
- Parents went to the administrative courts so that their children would be taught according to the old reform in their classes. The courts refused 18 times, 12 times they gave the parents the right until the Federal Constitutional Court finally in 1998 turned down the class-action lawsuit in a landmark decision.
- In politics, the FDP was determined to be against the reform. Through a non-partisan application, the Bundestag (Lower House of Parliament) occupied itself several times with this matter. In conversations between the KMK and the judicial committee of the Lower House of Parliament, an agreement was made up of 16 supporting Institutions whose

professions were writers. For example: the association of magazine publishers, the association of journalists. This advisory council had to present the interstate commission their opinionated reports before being sent to state offices.

- Linguistics was divided. Ickler denoted the reform as an “menschenverachtendes Massenexperiment” (inhuman mass experiment). To this, one has to know that this is a highly loaded expression, which characterized the criminal medical experiments carried out by the Nazis. Eisenberg, who critically worked out with the reform and who wrote Brochures to secretaries and students to learn, explained at the same time that the new/revised reform belongs to the “history’s heap of rubbish” (“auf den Mullahaufen der Geschichte”). He left the interstate commission and a few weeks later became a member of the commission of the German academy for language and poetry. Two scientists published a book “Rechtschreibreform und Nationalsozialismus” (spelling reform and National Socialism), in which they supposed that the new reform is the Nazis’ spelling reform that they did not accomplish in carrying out in 1944. The German academy for Language and Poetry took the book in one of their follow ups and their president presented it in the press. The potential suspicion of National Socialism was strengthened by Icklers conclusion that the old communist Dieter Nerius and the old 68er Gerhard Augst of the “Institut für Deutsche Sprache” (Institute for German language) decided, behind the people’s backs, to force the spelling reform of the National Socialism upon the Germans.
- A year after, when almost every newspaper decided to take in the new spelling reform, the FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung), which is a broadsheet daily newspaper, in 2000 returned back to the old spelling. The editor-in-chief in the culture section, Thomas Steinfeld explained that the new spelling reform is a “dangerous act”. This is a stable judicial formulation for serious facts constituting an offence. In summer 2004, the springer press and the “Spiegel” (a weekly magazine) decided to join this course of action, above all the massive tabloid “Bildzeitung” which carried out a highly emotional campaign against the spelling reform for two months.
- The interstate commission could not hold out against this pressure. The political authorities in Germany, Austria and Switzerland resolved to set up a “Rat für RS” (counsel for spelling) consisting of 37 people. It was lead by the Bavarian politician Zehetmair. Thus, this counsel’s responsibility was to find a solution.

4. Advice for the SSS

Spelling does not come from the outside in addition to the language, but is rather a part of the written communication the same as the sound is a part of the oral communication. The spelling is based on a written system which lets itself describe just linguistically as the sound system of a language. The writing of an alphabet script is neither phonologically nor syllabically sufficient to explain. It has much more a function of the logging of data for reading out and for the entry of mostly mute reading. In both of these cases, it has the goal of withdrawal of the meaning. That’s why the spelling has part in the rapid and unambiguous understanding which makes it visible by morphological, lexical and syntactical structures. It can be completely described by rules and exceptions. The linguistic theories concerning the recording of the writing system have changed in the past decade and will also keep on changing in the future. A reform proposal should always be in accord with the newest linguistic theories. The preparation should also not take long so that non-new theories endanger the theoretic basis of the reforms effort.

Besides the linguistic descriptions of the writing system, one should also take the functioning of psycholinguistics into consideration. The writer not only writes with the help of rules and exceptions, but also stores the writing as a written schemata. It is the same as when a child learns English or German, he/she organizes the sound schemata and meaning to a bilateral insoluble

symbol. Hence, the child not only learns rules but also stores the written schemata more frequently for its meaningful words so that a bilateral symbol of the oral language becomes a trilateral of the literacy. When all's said and done, every reform is an "attack" on the arbitrariness and conventionality of many trilateral symbols and they frequently set off high emotional reactions. This is more or less unconscious defense of an existential threat to the literal communication system. Writing is not only a part of the written communication but is a part of the literacy, of the written culture and with it has a historical depth.

The English and the German have written and read for over 1000 years and spelling is part of their long history. Visible cultural work of the literature, religion, humanities, natural sciences and the history of the country are well documented. Along with the psycholinguistic fear of losing the trilateral language symbols, comes the social psychology which is the fear of cultural tradition threat. To help the children pedagogically by means of a spelling reform to learn spelling easily is a respectable intention. It is just as legitimate social-linguistic motive for adults who do not write much, and may reduce their writing barriers by dealing with this problem. Both evoke individual and a social psychologically explainable fear which release an emotional, and potentially aggressive situation, which frequently surprises or appalls reformers who argue rationally. Besides, those who in the end have to carry out the reform are those, who have mastered the old spelling. The displeasure that they have to change something which until now have mastered increases even more because initially every reform produces uncertainty, for what has been considered for correct is now in question.

The individual psychological, the social psychological and the historical-cultural phenomena explain, for the most part, the enormous emotion of the reform debate. But they cannot be misinterpreted as fundamental arguments against any spelling reform. This is made clear by two basic differentiations; sound/oral and spelling.

- 1) The German and the English spelling has been increasingly standardized since the invention of art of printing. That means, the spelling system and everything that exist through convention has a firm standardization in Germany until the enforcement of the state. While all other parts of the language are determined internally by linguistic competence as a last instance, an external instance is applied to the spelling, which can be dictionaries, set of rules and regulations and if necessary state enforcement. The spelling will turn to a "Distinction Capital" in terms of Bourdieu only through this standardization. The over the centuries standardized linguists, poets, teachers and printers have partly carried their ideas and theories concerning the composition of a good spelling reform in this standardization. So, the spelling was adjusted to Latin and old Greek in the 16th and 17th century so that e.g. the English word "debt" received its "d" because of the Latin debitum and the Middle High German spelling "Keiser" was Latinised with "ai" to "Kaiser". In the 17th and 18th century, the phenomenon of heterography was fully developed so that e.g. the difference between "seyn" to be and "sein" his or "Ton" sound and "Thon" clay. This was partly taken back mid. 19th century as the two examples show I, II "sein"; I, II "Ton". In the early 20th century, the orthographical conformity of foreign words played the role of a linguistic, a national consciousness, which today has faded away, which partly led to the return of foreign spelling/writing: Cord>Kord>Cord, Ski>Schi>Ski. Let us consider the small reform of 1880/1901 to these interventions of the spelling reform e.g. Thon>Ton, it is clear that not only the spelling changes as language in general from century to century has changed by the invisible hand and will continue to change, but since the beginning of printing, there have been purposeful interventions in the spelling reform with different motives until two small reforms (1880/1901 and 1996). Since the beginning of the standardization, the spelling reform never fully asserted the principle "Leave your language alone". Standardization and reform are therefore two sides of the same coin. The standardization as an intervention from the outside, the "right" and "wrong" instead of "usual" and "unusual" established and demands the simplicity of the spelling reform as a consequence so that the standardized spelling reform stays teachable and easy to handle.

Standardization always leads to a casuistic of the extreme cases (so when to write 2, when 3 of the same spelling to a joint composition).

2. The spelling reform is not only phylogenetic but also ontogenetic, a special case. A small child learns his/her mother tongue without having a systematic language class. Case studies of the last two decades have shown that a child between the age of 5–6 learns the basics of writing/spelling without systematic teaching. But the learning of the standardized spelling reform with all its superior quality, requires a systematic schooling. It is therefore an act of conscious learning and requires much practice while learning a mother tongue, the complexity hardly plays a role which empirically shows, that the complexity of the spelling reform has a major influence on the speed and success learning.

The continual standardization of the spelling reform hence, also creates the necessity of a continual reform, even against every emotional response.

Here is some advice which has been derived from the German reform discussion.

- The spelling reform is not concerned with a linguistically perfect system of spelling, changes should be made only to those which normal adult writers have a problem.
- Major reforms are not possible to be made in “old” spelling
- An aimed variant as an imitation of the concept of the natural change in language hardly seems to function in a reform since those who should carry out the reforms, in this case, stay with the old spelling.
- Spelling reform requires a favourable climate. In the 70's in Germany, the spelling reform was a very responsive undertaking in the context of language barriers. While today in a rather conservative atmosphere of forming and promoting the elites the body of argument for a spelling reform is hardly able to connect.
- Plans for spelling reform should not only seek approvals with the schools and the school politic but rather from the beginning should also include the news agencies, the media, the dictionary publishers and the software manufacturers.
- Spelling control programs could make the phenomenon and problem of the spelling of word appear in a new light. If this has been a very important, often the most important part in the reform programs, this order of priority could be changed in favor of morphological and syntactical phenomenon.
- What needs to be waited for, is whether writing short messages and chatting would lead to a breaking down of the norm in the long run which would also moderate the necessity of a reform.

There are certainly many good reasons to change the English spelling but it is of little use. As you have seen in the German as an example, you have to be prepared for a high emotional mudslinging. You need a long breath, much staying power and you should hardly reckon on recognition. In spite of all these, I wish you all the best with your plans and thank you for your attention.

The Chairman thanked Prof. Augst for his paper and opened the floor to questions.

Discussion and Question time

Edward Merchant: What did you decide to do with the letter β (letter s) ?

Prof. Augst: Did not abolish the ß exclusively, compromise made
E.g. Fluß - Flusse. Now Fluss

Chairman: When did Germany abolish Gothic script?

Prof. Augst: Gothic script was associated with Nationalism and was abolished in 1941 by Hitler (within six months all school books were changed)

John Dalby: What was the reason for the 1944 reforms?

Prof. Augst: Two reasons: Change of Gothic script and change of German orthography. Hitler stated in 1944 with a spelling reform you could never win a war.

Standardization of reform creates that only one orthography is right and the other wrong

Ze Do Rock: 80% of the German population against German spelling reform, why?

Prof. Augst: German language /only language nouns are written with an uppercase. This rule causes a high amount of orthographic mistakes. Authorities etc would not change this so we gave up on changing this.

Dr. Rollason: The FDP political party rejected the spelling reform. Who was for it and who against — Was it mainly political divisions between left and right?

Prof. Augst: 1972 Congress in Frankfurt in favour of the reforms, extreme efforts to be made to help lower classes, 1970's era of new universities. Now it is different.

Isobel Raven: What do you mean by 'Trilingual' development in the study of children?

Prof. Augst: A percentage of children need to read and write before they go to school, but when they come to school they have to learn the standardised orthographics.

Saturday 30 July 2005. 16:50hrs

4.5 Mr. Adrian Alphohziel

Section 1: Report on the Spelling Bee Contest in Washington

In the late afternoon of Tuesday, 31st May, ten members of the Simplified Spelling Society met in a rented conference room of the Grand Hyatt Washington DC, venue of the 78th Annual Scripps-Howard National Spelling Bee, the Olympics of spelling, to plan a picketing strategy requesting a radical reform of English spelling.

Present were:

Joe Little from New York City, a manager of the American Literary Council. He brought his 7 year old daughter, called Somer, along to picket too.

Tim Travis from the Washington DC area.

Elizabeth Kuizenga an ESL and adult literacy teacher from San Francisco, California, Chair of the Bee picketing group.

Jim Campbell, a research engineer from a world famous automobile company. He lives in Dearborn, Michigan

Allan Campbell a retired journalist from New Zealand (no relation)

Nicholas Kerr from England, an Anglican priest.

Niall Waldmann from Glasgow, Scotland, now living in Ontario, Canada. He is the author of "Spelling Dearest". He is also an engineer.

Tim Finan from the D.C. area also participated for 6 hours.

Ursula Nicklas from Germany, Manager of this Spelcon Conference.
and myself.

Our aim, as cited in the words of Allan Campbell, was to attract the attention of parents, politicians and educators to protest the "dysfunctional role of current English spelling in acquiring literacy in the English language." We were demanding one symbol for one sound. "We are not protesting against the Spelling Bee," Allan Campbell told TV reporters, "rather, our problem is with the irregular spelling that precludes kids from reaching passable educational standards and hampers their reading."

This year's Washington Spelling Bee had a record 273 finalists of which 147 were school boys and 127 school girls. They were aged from nine to fourteen years old. The Spelling Bee has become a cultural phenomenon, with 10 million children participating in school competitions throughout the length and breadth of the USA. 9 other countries besides the United States entered contestants, including Canada, Germany, Guam, Jamaica, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and American Samoa.

The representative selected from the home of English; The United Kingdom; the winning speller of the BBC programme Hard Spell, was disqualified for being selected in December last year, which was before the official selection date of 1st February 2005!

Competitors eagerly train with Webster's volumes of their Third New International Dictionary, filled choc-a-bloc with over 470,000 words, in preparation for this year's marathon two-day contest in Washington DC. Contestants travelled with their parents, brothers and sisters to stay at the Grand Hyatt in Washington DC for up to three nights. Myriads of cheerfully chuckling Spelling Bee competitors virtually took over the hotel for three days.

During the warm up to the contest in the vast font on the inside of the hotel with its lagoon restaurant embellished with plants and even trees, its expansive breakfast rooms, bar lounges and reading lounges, there was a continuous buzz of chatting gregarious children, either practising for the contest, playing monopoly, or indeed quietly reading great tomes of literature in remote corners of the recessed lounges of this gargantuan 800 bedroom hotel. All the families' expenses were paid for by the promoters of the contest.

The American Literary Council had rented a small conference room in the basement of the Grand Hyatt for those members of the Simplified Spelling Society intending on picketing the Spelling Bee. In this room we constructed our picket posters and scripted salutary slogans advocating the reform of English spelling.

Here are examples of some of them:

Danger: Outdated spelling breeds illiteracy

Outdated spelling – a help or hindrance?

Update spelling; improve literacy rate

Q: What price literacy? A: Update spelling!

We're thru with through

Enuf is enuf. Enough is too much.

Spelling shud bee lojical

Take the sting out of spelling

Spell different difrent

English spelling leaves many a child behind

Must you be a wizard to spell?

What part of KNOW do you not understand?

Ursula Nicklas and I distributed white baseball caps we had brought from Germany with the compliments of Roy Blain, a research engineer, renowned for his ingenious mechanical inventions. The stitching on the cap read:

"Simplify spelling and everybody wins!"

Joe Little had brought along 400 copies of the combined ALC + SSS 6 page pocket folding posters from New York City for us to hand out to passers-by while picketing the Spelling Bee.

Elizabeth Kuizenga gave us all a bag of Simplified Spelling Society pin-on badges divided into two sets of slogans to hand out to children and interested adults:

“I’m thru with through” or. “Enuf is enuf. Enough is too much”

The following morning on Wednesday, 1st June, adhering to the request of Elizabeth Kuizenga to dress smartly and not to wear jeans or sloppy tops; but simply “to be dressed to kill”, we began picketing on the northern and eastern sidewalk outside the Grand Hyatt hotel at 8.30 am simultaneous with the start of the Spelling Bee. We immediately began handing out flyers and buttons to passers-by.

The Grand Hyatt chief executive officers came out and insisted we did not picket under the arched passage way surrounding the hotel but aside on the sidewalk parallel to it. We complied graciously. They left us alone. I nevertheless noticed a car draw up and park along the northern 150 metre long hotel sidewalk with a burly man seated in it scrutinising us for the entire morning. After that I never saw him again.

At around 10.30 am several TV film crews and reporters came out of the hotel to interview and film us, the pickets. Niall Waldman, wearing a Scottish tartan kilt, was the first to be surrounded by TV cameras and reporters.

Then three different TV film crews from New Zealand interviewed and filmed Allan Campbell, one of their kinsfolk. This year a New Zealand schoolgirl, Charlotte Roose, a 12-year-old from Hillcrest High in Hamilton was taking part in the Spelling Bee.

Several parents came out with their children who had been eliminated from the contest to get a breath of fresh air. They queried us if we were picketing against the Spelling Bee. We told them we admired parents who encouraged their children to knuckle down to homework. We applauded the diligent children’s discipline for pursuing the task of learning to spell difficult English spelt words, for indeed this discipline would help them to master other subjects in their school curriculum.

We told the parents we advocated spelling reform for less gifted children than their own ones. The parents appeared to be softened with these replies.

This knock-out spelling contest only recognises traditional English or American spelling. Their children had to spell such words like:

ichthyophagi, mycetophagous, nemathelminth, schnecke, keratinophilic, ornithorhynchous, athyreosis, nyctipelagic, torrenticole.

As the day progressed, more and more disillusioned parents with their children sauntered out of the hotel to take a breath of air. You could detect a spark of frustration in the demeanour of some of the parents looking at us as they walked by. We always congratulated them and their children on having come so far in this tough competition. This appeared to whip up a good repartee between Spelling Bee competitors and ourselves. The final rounds of this spelling contest turned out to be a hilariously difficult!

Dozens of US civil servants, referred to by Elizabeth as the “suits”, walked along the northern sidewalk during the lunch hour. Many stopped to ask us what we where trying to achieve. 90% per cent of them were sympathetic with the idea of one spelling symbol for one sound.

One 35 year old “suit” gave me a fatherly look pointing his finger at me and said, “You should get yourself a job!”

Our protest carried on for two days. It was now 4 o'clock on Thursday afternoon. The number of spellers had whittled down. It was now round 16. There were four contestants left; three boys of Indian descent and a girl of Bangladesh descent.

This Bee trend has been fuelled by the sports network, ESPN, televising the US Final live since 1994, the Academy Award-nominated documentary "Spellbound", based on the 1999 competition, and a current Broadway musical hit, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of children and parents were glued to their TV sets at home.

There were now few passers-by on the sidewalks. We surreptitiously slipped into the Grand Hyatt hotel, crept down into the basement, past the 20 metre long battery of newspaper reporters, each with a TV set, laptop, and cell phone in the foyer to the entrance of this vast underground conference hall. We unobtrusively walked into the packed hall. We found a few empty seats at the rear alongside a makeshift wooden stage sprouting with clusters of TV cameras and microphones all bearing down on the bright exuberant competitor of the moment standing in the limelight. The surge of enthusiasm of this awestruck child audience swept us along in its euphoria. In muted tones we began laying bets among ourselves on the correct spellings during these last rounds of thorny words! Here are some examples of the final words that the children had to spell correctly:

epideictic (= rhetoric effect). This was spelt incorrectly by Aliza Deri from San Francisco

sobornost: It was spelt correctly by Patel aged 11.

hodiernal : It was spelt correctly by Anurag Kashyap

trouvaille (= a lucky find) It was not spelt correctly by Deri

rosciand – It was not spelt correctly by Patel, 11 years old from Texas who gained 2nd place

A few minutes and two rounds later, speller number 20, 13-year-old Anurag Kashyap, from San Diego, who had tied for 47th place in the 2004 national finals, now had to spell appoggiatura (musical grace-note) which he did correctly and thereupon became the 2005 national champion. His win can mean a visit to the White House, appearances on the talkshow circuit, homecomings and cash – his prize money was \$US 22,000 and a college scholarship.

Section 2: Challenges involved teaching English in Germany

Pupils of English in Germany are never able to fathom out how to spell English words correctly unless either the teacher first writes it out on the flipchart or they take the initiative into their own hands and delve into a dictionary during the English lesson searching for words. They then cannot concentrate on the rules for English syntax. English or American children are not exempt from this hurdle either. The reason for this was elucidated by President Theodor Roosevelt in 1892 when he said that English spelling was a mass of inconsistencies!

Quoting Masha Bell's book, there are approximately 3700 common words which do not adhere to the basic rules of English spelling. The erratic spelling of English causes many pupils to give up learning the language, or they never master it to a satisfactory level. Does this matter?

"Misspelling leads to one judgment. This person is careless with their work," says Kimble of The BBC. Misspelling also costs the tax payer of any country in the world millions of euros, pounds sterling and dollars to foot the bill for unnecessary lengthy tuition of pupils of English. The pupils have many other important things in life to learn than to waste time scanning thousands of idiotic spellings into their minds.

I would say about 40% of German adults and children take considerably more time than their more academically graced colleagues in memorising the spelling of traditional English or respectively American spelt words.

Here are some of the pitfalls that pupils have to face:

Look at these confusing alternative spellings for one sound, even in simple words:

eight, day, date, break, gauge, gaol, jail, (+ obey)!

See how they can be replaced without complications, for example, by simply adding “e” to “a” so as to give the “a” sound!”

aet, dae, daet, braec, gaej, jael, gael, (+ obae).

There is indeed another hairy exception that crops up for the ‘ai’ symbol in the spelling of ob’ey’. ‘ey’ which adds to this bubbling soup of superfluous alternatives!

Other examples: Six inconsistent sounds of the letter ‘a’:

“any waste tap salt water father!”

German pupils have a great struggle to learn traditional English spelling.

This may be a good stage at which to ask delegates how many can spell the following common day English words correctly? A show of hands please.

decision, occasion, succumb, accommodate, spinach,...

As a reserve:

(aggravate, immense, personnel, stomach, pheasant, jeopardy, liquor, lacquer, adolescent, convalescence, recipe, menace, lieutenant, separate, caricature, sincerity, conspiracy, calendar, valiant, deluge, eligible, bilious, ventriloquist, polythene, voluntary, abominable, treble, casserole, putty,)

It has been my experience when using a phonetic simplified spelling system developed by a member of the simplified spelling society, that it works well as a pronunciation guide and even better as orthography in itself, when teaching English.

A good example of its effectiveness was evident with a Polish acquaintance, who could speak some English, but could hardly read or write it. I nevertheless wrote a letter to him in phonetically spelt English script, which he consequently read out loud in his Polish accent to his English speaking German friends. To their astonishment they understood the gist of the English letter perfectly although they knew he could hardly read traditional English, yet alone always grasped the gist of it!

The German University students at the local Mosbach University of Co-operative Education where I teach English, experienced a phonetically spelt English script for the first time in a business English lesson. I downloaded an article from the International Herald Tribune dealing with the economic forecasts for China this year. Using the simplified spelling converter I transcribed it into simplified spelling.

To my delight they read off the article perfectly at their very first glance of it! In fact the poorer traditional English speakers read out aloud words correctly in this phonetically spelt English script that they could not read in traditional English. It was even more exiting when they read out business English words correctly in this script, which they had never previously heard of! Several of them claimed that they could memorise the code to this system in less than an hour and would find it easy to apply.

They agreed to prepare for a dictated vocabulary test at a later date in the course. Unfortunately two out of the two groups, each with 12 students taking part, complained behind my back to the head of their department that they did not want to dabble in any attempts at reformed English spelling. The head of the department bade me to restrain from the topic of reformed spelling throughout the remainder of the course. The rest of the groups with the exception of the two grumpies continued to attend the course until the end.

Section 3: A Spelling converter

Two important instruments for classrooms will be the audio pronunciation guide and the PC converter to transcribe words or text from English into a simplified spelling system. There are a few converters on the market of differing performance. We are able to demonstrate perhaps one of the most versatile of these, using fictitious spelling.

My friend and esteemed colleague, **Mr Parag Mehta**, who is responsible for the development of this converter program has prepared for you today a presentation which he will now beam onto the lecture hall screen!

(Welcome text ->

1). Parag opens the program, Adrian explains the features of the program.)

Welcome to the conference

With the help of this converter program, text in English can be transcribed into a spelling reform System; it can also translate the same in other European languages.

2) Welcome text gets transcribed into Exp_ scheme.

3) Welcome text gets transcribed with diacritics

4) Welcome text gets transcribed with stressing

'We wonder whether there is true reason for the delay in the third payment, which was supposed to be made 5 months ago.'

5) Business text gets transcribed into Exp_Scheme.

E_Scheme:- We wundr wethr ther iz truu reezn fr th dilaa in th tturd paamnt, wich

6) Business text gets transcribed into Scheme A.

Scheme A:- We wundr wetdr tder iz true raiznfr td dilae in td tzurd paement, wich

(Explain in detail the variations possible – eg. Delay with 'dil' then 'ay' as aa, or ae or even ail!)

7) Business text gets transcribed into Scheme B.

Scheme B:- We wundr wetdr tder iz troo reazn fr td dilai in td tzurd paimnt, wich

8) Comparison between TS, Exp_Scheme & Scheme A & B.

TS:- We wonder whether there is true reason for the delay in the third payment, which

E_Scheme:- We wundr wethrther iz truu reezn fr th dilaa in th tturd paamnt, wich

Scheme A:- We wundr wetdr tder iz true raizn fr td dilae in td tzurd paement, wich

Scheme B:- We wundr wetdr tder iz troo reazn fr td dilai in tdtzurd paimnt, wich

TS:- was supposed to be made 5 months ago.

E-Scheme:- woz supoozd tu b maad 5 muntts ago.

Scheme A:- woz supoezd tu b maed 5 muntzs ago.

Scheme B:- woz supouz d tu b maid 5 muntzs ago.

9) *Example of SMS text using spontaneous transcription*

In the future near future SMS texts will be able to be translated!

10) *NASA web page gets translated into Exp_Scheme.*

This program does not translate images only text.

If a person has a mobile telephone capable of receiving data or files from a computer, the output of this electronic converter program could be transmitted to this mobile device, i.e. the telephone appliance.

Why do we need this? The reason is that it takes a lot of time to type a message onto the keyboard pad of a mobile telephone appliance typing only with one finger instead of using ten fingers blind on a conventional computer text keyboard! — Well isn't that indeed useful?

11) *Now a beam summary of the converter program from Parag operating the laptop next to the podium magnified on to the lecture hall screen.*

Converter Program

This converter program offers the following features

Sasspel Converter Program available on disc

- 1) **For translating Traditional English text into Saaspel, German, Spanish, e-spel.**
- 2) **Word for word, online and offline translation of websites and web pages into Saaspel, e-spel, German, Spanish.**
- 3) **A comprehensive and expanding dictionary.**
- 4) **A program designed to run on all windows platforms irrespective of the system configuration.**
- 5) **Functions and runs in the same language as the installed operating system making user interface easy for non-English speaking users.**
- 6) **Fully integrated with Microsoft Office for exchanging data.**
- 7) **Includes spellchecking through integration with MS-Word**
- 8) **The translation sequence can be used in any order.**
- 9) **The conversion to unwanted symbols can be changed to other symbols or can be blocked. In this latter case, the traditional word is kept.**
- 10) **Possibility of having transcription with diacritics, stressing and Schwa.**

12) *Thank the audience for having given their attention to this lecture and ask them to give a round of applause for Parag Mehta!*

Now are there any questions, ladies and gentlemen? ...

Sunday 31 July 2005. 10:00 hrs

4.6 Dr. Jenny Bayer

Spelling in Indian English

English spelling simplification activity in 'my' country: The classroom experience

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Abstract

Multilingual multicultural India re-interprets English as influenced by their mother tongues. There are over 200 languages, and several hundred home languages. Three languages in three scripts are taught and learned in schools.

Consequently English in India is pronounced differently, spelled variously, used in local flavor, and yet mutually intelligible.

There are differences between Consonants and vowels of English and Indian languages. Consequently, English is spoken in different styles unlike other English (es) across the world.

Spelling is a compelling issue amongst learners of English in India.

This paper focuses on issues of English spelling in India. Taking samples from one region of India, issues relating to English spelling are discussed.

This paper also tries to suggest minimal changes that could be made in English spelling for enhancing global literacy in English.

1. Introduction:

India is a nation with multiple languages and multiple scripts, rooted in multiple cultures.

The English language in India is the legacy of the British. As keen adventurers, they skirted the Indian landscape, weathered through its harsh ecological realities, influenced and continue to persuade the Indian mindset to acquire higher communicative skills in English. There are local colloquialisms and syntactical idiosyncrasies.

The guess estimate speakers of English in India are between 50–60 million. Post-independent India continuously faces debates, strikes and political vendetta on the role and status of English in multilingual India. The pendulum swings between 'Angrezi hatao' and 'Angrezi bachao' — "Chase out English" to "Save English." The effects of 'globalization' have now changed attitudes of language fundamentalists.

India lives in her villages. Schooling is on every parent's mind. Social as well as economic hierarchy determine affordability for a child to enter school. Children in rural schools learn English language as a subject. Well organized school and village libraries are still a distant dream.

As second language learning requires reinforcement beyond school time, English used by these children evolve as streams washed in their mother tongue. Moreover, most homes hardly ever have literature in English to cushion their English skills.

They perceive English to be "**the**" ladder to climb the hierarchy of economic stability. Money power is tied with the language that empowers.

This study presents classroom examples of English spelled by some speakers of Kannada, an Indian language, spoken in Karnataka, in South India. Their English is evolving as a type of its own, coloured in spelling which is phonetic in nature.

2. Languages used in formal domains:

a) Education:

The history of education in India is a combination of the local Sanskrit tradition, and phases of Perso-Arabic and English presence in India, traditions brought in by conquerors who ruled India for several centuries. Progress in standards of education and advances in science and technology have English and Indian languages share prominence in school education.

The multilingual scenario is governed by strategies that enable children to learn a minimum of three languages in school. One language is learned as medium of instruction and the other two as subjects. The three languages are:

1. Regional language, for identity. E.g. Kannada in the State of Karnataka.
2. Hindi, the national official language for national pride and integration.
3. English, the international language, which is considered a window to the world beyond our borders, a universe of intense competition.

The most significant aspect of learning languages in Indian schools is that these three languages are written in three different scripts, Dravidian, Devanagari and Roman scripts. Hand movement in forming alphabets and letters differ. Each language belongs to a specific language family and therefore rules of language use vary. Children get attuned to this as a natural process of living in a multilingual multicultural environment. Learning three languages in school is normal.

b) Administration:

Similar to processes and trends in the domain of education, language use in Administration is complex. This is compounded by its hierarchical structure, which begins from the local village Panchayat (governing body) and moves to larger and wider bodies, such as Village Blocks, Taluks, Districts and State. Forms of administration in this sphere are governed by rules of language use prescribed by the State Government. For example, at Panchayat level, administration is in the local language. English has no role to play.

At the State level, administration used to be through English. Independent India has ushered in change in perspectives of language use. Through implementation of a language policy, each State is ensuring use of the regional language. To that extent the role of the indigenous regional languages are progressively replacing English. In so far as inter-state and states with Centre communication is concerned, English continues to play a major role.

c) Mass Media:

Media is where one listens, reads and watches language at its height of complexity. We watch and hear Englishes from across the globe, BBC, CNN, Star, and a multiple of Indian language channels

that relay news and interviews in varieties of Indian English. Intricate colours of code mixing happen with much ease through TV media. From televising news, films, TV serials in the regional language which is purely in the local language to extensive code switching and code mixing happening, between local language and English.

Radio, Newspapers and magazines add to the colour spectrum.

3. The spread of English

A multilingual multicultural scenario like India has rich literary and cultural traditions. Folk art, song and dance are what make India diverse, complex and resilient. Prior to independence, two processes evolved:

1. Knowledge of cross-regional language literatures, art and culture was facilitated through English language. Colonial rule made it possible through translations.
2. Right to knowledge in English was for only the high and mighty in the social hierarchy of Indian society.

Consequently there was a wide gap between the schooled and the unschooled. Independent India brought about sweeping changes in its social structure, thus opening horizons for the poor and powerless.

The Planning Commission through its several Five Year Plans has progressively unlocked the doors of education by spreading and locating schools in rural and interior India. Rural people have used opportunities to widen their perspectives in life as individuals and social groups.

Large-scale migration across regions in the country has opened their insecure worldviews. The scheme of the Government of India "Education for all" and free primary education up to the age of 14 years has gone a long way in enlightening the rural poor. Wise parents ensure their children go to school. In case of dropouts, government follows a strategy to have children return to school. Use of language plays a significant role in our social behaviour.

4. English re-interpreted in terms of the mother tongue

Regional Indian Englishes has evolved across time. The most popular varieties which are heard on Indian Television Channels are:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| ➤ 'Hindi + English' | → 'Hinglish' |
| ➤ 'Bangla + English' | → 'Banglish' |
| ➤ 'Tamil + English' | → 'Tamilish' |
| ➤ 'Malayalam + English' | → 'Mallish' |
| ➤ 'Kannada + English' | → 'Kanglish' |

5. English spelling specific to one region: Karnataka

Data for this paper is from language used by students who attended the two month course in language and communication held at Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, in April-May, 2005

Examples of their spoken and written English are interesting giving rise to fascinating innovations. In fact new words have been coined to represent such mixtures of English and local language.

Current trends in spoken English in Karnataka show that among some users /ya/ is prefixed in pronouncing alphabets:

➤ /f/	→	/yf/
➤ /l/	→	/yl/
➤ /m/	→	/ym/
➤ /n/	→	/yn/
➤ /s/	→	/ys/
➤ /x/	→	/yx/

So, to orally spell a word like /life/ ~ it is spelled out as /yliyfe/; /money/ ~ as /ymoyney/; /sister/ ~ as /ysiysteyr/ etc. In written form it is could be spelled as 'laif'; 'mony';

Some speakers of Kannada language have difficulty to produce the English diphthongs /au/; /oi/; /æ/; /Uə/; /ea/

➤ /au/

/caught/	→	/caat/
/bought/	→	/baat/
/sought/	→	/saat/
/involvement/	→	/invalvment/

➤ /oi/

/joy/	→	/jaay/
/boy/	→	/baay/
/avoid/	→	/avied/
/destroyed/	→	/destraied/

➤ /æ/

/længuage/	→	/laangwije/
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➤ /Uə/

/poor/	→	/puur/
/pure/	→	/pyur/

➤ /ea/

/realise/	→	relise/
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We add the /sh/ sound in words like:

➤ /sister/	→	/shister/
➤ /straight /	→	/shtrate /
➤ /studies/	→	/shtudees/
➤ /so/	→	/sho/

There are some speakers who could prefix an /i/ before the above mentioned words. In fact one could say that free variation occurs between /s/ and /sh/.

We stress on the wrong 'syllable' e.g. /**hotel**/ in stead of /hot**el**/, and most often pronounce it as /**ot**el/.

When we code-mix English words in Kannada conversation, we add a vowel. For example, in nouns such as the following /u/ is added in the final position

/car+u/ → /caru/
 /bus+u/ → /basu/
 /train+u/ → /trainu/
 /court+u/ → /courtu/;
 /doctor+u=doctoru/; /bank+u=banku/

5. The status of spelling

Following examples have been taken from written scripts of some students where sounds in English are not there in Kannada:

Kanglish words	English meaning	Absence of sound
Preparasin	Preparation	/sh/
Britisers	Britishers	/sh/
Penson	Pension	/sh/
Profeson	Profession	/sh/
Same	shame	/sh/
Published	Published	/sh/
Haffy	happy	/ph/
vaste	waste	/w/
Leafes	leaves	/f:/w/
ferfect	perfect	/p/
transfort	transport	/p/
pace	Phase	/f/
shelf	self	/s/
vessel	weasel	/w/
Destrayed	destroyed	/au/
invalvment	Involvement	“
impartent	important	“
shart	short	“
navel	novel	“
avied	avoid	“
Aspitalised	hospitalised	Initial aspiration + aw
claimet	climate	/ai/
problums	problems	
becums	become	
tree	three	/th/

6. Analogy is often the criteria for second language learners to spell. Examples are as follows:

Kanglish	English	Analogy
Analise	analyse	penalise
Pripair	prepare	pair
Butiful	beautiful	dutiful
Feest	feast	fees
Tention	tension	attention
Proffetion	profession	protection
Gole	goal	pole, hole, sole
Clime	climb	lime, time, and slime
Sence	sense	pence; fence
Choise	choice	noise, poise,
Tung	tongue	rung, sung, dung
Sujession	suggestion	session

7. Spelling in Kanglish (English influenced by Kannada) where the double letter is removed, as in:

Sl. No.	Standard English spelling	Spelling in Kanglish
1.	according	acording
2.	appreciate	apreciate
3.	attract	Atract
4.	challenge	chalange
5.	discuss	discus
6	effort	efert
7	essential	esential:
8	good	gud
9	impressed	impreced
10	manner	maner
11	opportunity	opertunity
12	profession	profetion
13	quarrel	qural
14	small	smal
15	suffering	saforing
16	stopped	Stoped
17	umbrella	Umbrala
18	stopped	stoped
19	flood	Flod

8. Words spelled as pronounced

Sl. No.	Kanglish	English	Comment
	belif	Belief	Absence vowel length
	drem	Dream	"
	Fild/feald	Field	"
	gud	good	"
	befor	Before	Deletion of final /e/
	creat	Create	

	desid	Decide	
	direy	Diary	substitution of diphthong
	gilti	guilty	
	failur	Failure	
	helth	health	
	handsum	Handsome	
	elegant	Elegant	Substitution of /e/ for /a/
	encarege	encourage	
	evary	Every	
	enything	Anything	
	edvance	Advance	
	expline	Explain	
	Grete/grate	Great	
	havy	Heavy	
	infents	Infants	
	Lerne/lern	Learn	
	impruv	Improve	
	increese	Increase	
	Mentel	Mental	
	maind	Mind	
	neetly	Neatly	
	provid	Provide	
	preyer	Prayer	
	perpose	Purpose	
	plesure	Pleasure	
	rarly	Rarely	
	sum	Some	
	trian	train	
	Lern	learn	
	serch	search	
	jain	join	
	farm	form	
	lengage	language	
	tong	tongue	
	oppertunity	opportunity	
	responcibility	responsibility	
	compromise	compromise	
	corse	course	
	perpose	purpose	
	affrid	Afraid	
	displine	discipline	
	saffer	suffer	
	wight	wait	
	dicision	decision	
	Raf and taf	Rough and tough	

9. Is spelling an issue to envisage change and modification:

Spelling the English language is not a problem for second language learners in India. The difficulty is in the initial stages of learning, particularly for those children who have insufficient time for learning the language other than in the classroom. Several factors contribute to the emerging changes happening in the standard of English. We are positive and creative. We blend in effortlessly with what is happening globally and are resilient to global forces of change.

Social mobility coupled with current trends in globalizing communicative networks will

10. To Conclude:

English has been on the Indian horizons for over a century. Attitudes to stabilizing English are conditioned by many, if not all the features which are delineated in the present paper.

The fact that there are commonalities with what is envisaged as 'Euro English' and the existing ways of spelling English among some of India's underprivileged children is interesting. New approaches of simplifying spelling English will necessarily have to draw upon the creativity happening among second language learners.

It is now up to planners responsible for evolving international English for global literacy to take cognizance of how English spelling could be simplified. By spreading its net wider to capture creative intuitive approaches of simple people in distant interior regions of the globe to develop simple ways of spelling English, could be the most fruitful approach.

Discussion and Question time

Edward Merchant: The use of 'Al' to spell the English letter 'l' is strange.

Dr. Bayer: our regional languages influence English

Niall Waldman: There are many dialects in Glasgow, Scotland but everyone still writes words the same. India has so many vast dialects

Dr. Bayer: There is a hierarchy of dialects and spellings in India

Masha Bell: Do children have access to computer programmes that aid spelling?

Dr. Bayer: The Indian government is trying to close the gap between rich and poor and computers are now being introduced into the villages.

Niall Waldman: Are you correcting the kids English if it is not standard?

Dr. Bayer: We are targeting students that do not have confidence in the English language and literacy and provide them with help with academic writing. Industry also participates in our programme we are activity based.

Sunday 31 July 2005. 10:45hrs

4.7 Mr. Christopher Jolly

Strategies for implementing spelling reforms

Mr. Jolly introduced himself as the Managing Director of a company named 'Jolly Learning' which founded the 'Jolly Phonics' programme. This programme is used in 54% of UK primary schools as well as being widely used overseas. For example it is also used in fifty percent of primary schools in Ontario, Jamaica and in Queensland, Australia.

The system used in his publications was not a reform but was testing the boundaries of flexibility.

He stated that the Simplified Spelling Society has helped him enormously over the years.

He highlights that so far the theme of the papers presented gives the case for spelling reform as if it is a government issue. It is wrong to assume that the prime focus should be on persuading the government to take reform forward. He would like to take a different approach, a 'bottom up' approach, as he believes the driver for spelling reform is through popular and commercial use.

The compelling advantage

Aspirin, I Pod, Email, Sliced bread, Dr. Johnson's dictionary

Potential gains from spelling reform

Children learning to read

- just normally
- with English as a second language
- who need remedial help

Economy of use, e.g. Texting

Jolly Learning Ltd

1. Trials in 1990–91 with extended alphabet
2. Distorted letters from 1992
3. Feint letters from 2002
4. Pronunciation guide from 2003

Mr. Jolly gave examples of some of his books.

He talks about the first trial of the system used in his publications, which took place in one school and involved several control schools. Although the sample was not large enough there was a reason to believe that this offered something.

Second Initiative – Distorted letters

e.g. Cook Coo
 Book Moon

Result: No negative feedback received in distorted letters trial

Third Initiative – Feint letters (grayed out the silent letters)

E.g. lived

He has used this approach in 54 children's reading books

Result: No negative responses. Readily understood / advantage on how to pronounce the words. Teachers were happy to use it for learners with special needs, but did not use it for other pupils.

Fourth Initiative – Pronunciation Guide

Produced the Children's Dictionary, which caters for different pronunciations in different regions.

"The Phonics Handbook"

The pronunciation guide has been welcomed, receiving complementary feedback.

This last initiative can be marketed to third parties.

Mr. Jolly mentions 'CUED' speech, published by the CUED Society. CUED speech is a series of hand movements around the face to aid lip reading.

He then described how in the 12th and 13th centuries the letter 'j' became a final form of the letter 'i'

e.g. i ii iij

Dr. Johnson's dictionary also treats the letters 'u' and 'v' as the same letter even though a clear distinction is made between them.

Mr. Jolly then spoke about the letter 'y', which is referred to as both a consonant (year) and a vowel (sky) and suggested it was because there was no available variant form.

e.g. Fly – pronounced 'i' but spelt 'y'

Discussion and Question time

Niall Waldman: How long has Jolly Phonics been going?

Christopher Jolly: Thirteen years, it is the most researched reading programme ever. Children that are taught effectively over one year have a reading age a year ahead of their actual age.

Edward Marchant: Symbols used are similar to Pitman

Christopher Jolly: The author of the books used ITA

Sunday 31st July 2005. 12:00 hrs

4.8 Mrs Isobel Raven

Centres of Power in Reading Education

The results are out! Eighteen percent of Ontario's Grade 10 students fail a basic literacy test. A test designed to identify those whose reading and writing is so poor that they will not graduate from high school unless they improve. Toronto Star, May 6, 2005.

These Canadian statistics are typical of test results in English speaking nations. Up to 20 percent of our children have difficulty learning to read and write. I am convinced that the most important benefit to be reaped from modification of English spelling is the liberation such a change would bring to children around the world who strive to become readers and writers of English.

I.T.A.

We have proof that a more phonemic spelling of English would lead to easier and faster acquisition of literacy in the i.t.a. experiment carried out in England in 1961–64.

At the risk of telling you things that you may already know, I will review the story of i.t.a. with these emphases: how the experiment was initiated; how it was financed, and why i.t.a. fell into the bottomless pit of failed enterprises.

The story of i.t.a. begins with a pamphlet called *Reading Ability* published in 1950 by the British Ministry of Education. The statistics showed an abysmal level of reading skill in England's school children. Sir James Pitman rose in the House of Commons to deliver his indictment of the standards of reading being achieved in the schools of that time. The pamphlet provided an occasion for member Mont Follick to make a second try at introducing a private member's bill a Simplified Spelling Bill. Seconded by Pitman, the bill asked the government to make provision for the determination of a suitable system of simplified spelling and for investigation of the improvements in the reading of children likely to result from the introduction of the system and to facilitate the subsequent introduction of the system in certain schools. This bill was approved on second reading and at committee level, but was never sent to the House of Lords, probably because its passage was pretty iffy. The action of Miss Florence Horsbrugh, the Minister of Education, afforded the promoters of the bill some support, and they were perhaps content to go with that rather than risk total loss. What Miss Horsbrugh did was consent to the *investigation*: did traditional orthography (which I'm going to call t.o.) interfere with children's learning to read? Would a simplified orthography facilitate that learning? She authorized an investigation, but she *didn't* authorize a special grant for it. No money.

How fortunate that Sir James had at his fingertips just the right vehicle for use in the investigation! His grandfather, Isaac Pitman, had developed a nearly phonemic alphabet. It consisted of 24 regular Latin characters and an additional new 20 characters to represent the 44 phonemes of the English language. Here at hand was "the suitable system of simplified spelling" mentioned in the legislation. A system to be tested against the efficacy of t.o. as a medium of early instruction in reading. The system was called i.t.a., the initial teaching alphabet. A reading Research Unit was set up at the University of London Institute of Education. John Downing was chosen to head up the investigation. Funding came from a variety of sources: Associated Television, Boots Pure Drug Company, the Department of Education and Science, the Ford Foundation, the Fund for the Advancement of Education, the Grant Foundation, the Nuffield Foundation, Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Ltd., Sir James Pitman, as well as many other individuals who made small contributions. Downing reported the results of two experiments in his book *Evaluating the Initial Teaching Alphabet*. Suffice it to say that i.t.a. as a medium of beginning reading instruction proved to be markedly superior to t.o. Children tested after one year of i.t.a. instruction read real words, read non-words and had better comprehension than their counterparts schooled in t.o.

Why didn't the educational systems flock to the use of i.t.a.? Because the children who were schooled in i.t.a. didn't maintain their early superiority in the later grades. And why should they? They were required to abandon reading and writing in the special alphabet they had learned. They had to transfer to reading t.o. once they had completed the John and Janet readers provided for the first two years. Just like the children who had struggled with t.o. from the beginning, they slugged it out with a turgid orthography. You know, *laugh, move, thought, through, shoe*, and all the rest.

Downing was the first to say that i.t.a. wasn't perfect. He closes his book with a list of further investigations that needed to be carried out. But a sad footnote tells the fate of his projected research:

Since this chapter was written, the Reading Research Unit has been forced by lack of funds to close down, and thus the probability of the required research being carried out very considerably reduced.

In the i.t.a. experiment, we see a limited use of a simplified spelling system put in motion by a government initiative, supported by the impetus for research and knowledge, aborted by inadequate funding.

The Future of Fonics

I have concluded my book, *The Future of Fonics* with the suggestion that a 2000-word sensibly-spelled basic vocabulary should be used for beginning learners of English.

This re-spelled vocabulary should never be abandoned, but should become part of public usage everywhere. I don't propose to defend this suggestion at this time, but to ask a different question. What would it take for this, or any other major change in spelling to make inroads in the education systems of the English-speaking world? The enormity of the task boggles the mind. But the paths are already open for the transmission of fads and facts throughout the educational systems of The United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. As recently as 1990, a teaching strategy (or rather a bundle of teaching strategies) called Whole Language spread like wild-fire through those regions. A modification of this movement called Balanced Literacy is now well established. (77,100 sites when you Google "Balanced Literacy") Even among the San people of South Africa, Balanced Literacy is the order of the day.

Centers of Power

Where are the centers of power in the web of educational systems?

There are three main centers: governments, publishers, and faculties of education—the universities. When you look for power centers, look for the holders of purse strings. Clearly, Ministries of Education, with their ability to access tax dollars hold the money bags.

Control of What Happens in the Classroom

Government Control

In most countries with a federal system, each province or state governs its own education system. In the U.K., England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland each have a department of education. The control exerted by provincial or state ministries of education varies from a benign sort of oversight to a vigilant micro-management. There are three avenues of control over what takes place in the classrooms: first, the establishment of a curriculum (a list of what shall be taught); second, periodic state-wide testing which reveals the non-performers among the schools; third, authorization of textbooks to be used in the schools. And, of course, the money in the form of per pupil grants to finance the buildings, the custodians, the teachers, the books, computers, the software, etc.

The state of Victoria in Australia stands as one of the most laissez-faire educational authorities of those I investigated. In Victoria, schools design their own curriculum guided by a broad general

framework set by the government. But there is statewide testing in years 3, 6, and 9. I didn't see any indication of government regulation of teaching materials on the web-site.

The state of Texas stands at the other end of the spectrum. The curriculum is laid out in a series of TEKS: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills requirements. Adherence to the TEKS is assured by the administration of TAKS: Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. Reading tests take place in Grades 3 and 9. Writing tests take place in Grades 4 and 7.

Successful performance on the TAKS at Grade 11 is a prerequisite for high school graduation. In addition to these controls, the state specifies the reading texts that may be used in the schools. In the list of approved texts, books or programs are designated as conforming or not conforming to the TEKS. If the material is non-conforming, its shortcomings are specified.

Publishers

Who has the ear of the ministry officials who select the texts? The publishers. Educational publishing is dominated by five big, and I mean bi-ig companies. Pearson Ed, for example, operates in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the Middle east, and Africa. Its list of imprints includes many formerly independent educational publishers: Allyn and Bacon, Longman, Prentice Hall, Scott Foresman. The big five in educational publishing now are Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Scholastic, VivendiUniversal SA, Reed ElsevierPLC. There remain a few small independent publishers of course.

Primary reading instruction has long been the playing field for publishers of hefty reading programs. These programs consisting of the readers, teachers' manuals and consumable workbooks, tests, CD-ROMS and other multi-media gadgets. A primary reading program is a very expensive thing to produce, upwards of 50 million dollars. It behooves the publishers to sell their wares thru vigorous lobbying. The educational publishers send their salesmen to the bodies that select texts. In Ontario, to the Ministry, in some U.S. states to text selection committees, in some areas to local school administrators. They also set up book displays at every teachers' conference and workshop.

What would motivate a publisher to produce a reading program using modified spelling? Only the hope of selling it at least in the English-speaking countries of the world. If we could persuade Pearson Ed that simplifying the spelling for beginning readers was a great idea, we'd have it made.

The Universities

To gain widespread acceptance a program needs considerable ideological clout, and some of that clout has to be scientific backing. Universities. Faculties of Education. Or one charismatic reading guru attached to one faculty of education. Here is the third centre of power.

Historically, educational publishers and reading experts have had a symbiotic relationship. Faculties of Education are the home of reading experts. Reading experts act as consultants and senior authors for the teams of writers who produce reading programs. It is thru reading experts that the current research in reading bears upon the content of new reading programs, especially upon the detailed instructions in the teachers' manuals. From the reading experts, publishers gain scientific credibility for their programs. It is thru the publishers that reading experts gain a wide audience for their findings and for the philosophies of reading they espouse.

Funding of Research

What about the money? Who funds reading research? Who enables the exploration of new approaches to reading instruction?

Some research is funded by **publishers**. A company called Leapfrog Schoolhouse, which produces electronic learning aids ("Leap-pads") conducts research comparing achievement in classrooms using its products with classrooms that don't. Pearson Education has commissioned 21 independent studies to validate the effectiveness of its K-12 mathematics, reading, and science

products.

Governments fund educational research. In the U.S., the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2002 provides grants for educational research. Individuals, non-profit organisations and Local Education Agencies may apply for these grants. The What Works Clearinghouse is a government authority for reviewing educational research that is submitted for evaluation. Each project must reach certain standards of rigour to be accepted for review and the results published by WWC.

Universities fund reading research. But the majority of their research funding seems to come from outside sources. An examination of a list of educational research projects undertaken at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, yields the following results; most (7) were funded and in large amounts by charitable foundations, including Imperial Oil; six items were funded in small amounts by the university itself. A thousand dollars here, a thousand there. Four were government funded. Four were funded by industry. And **three** by nongovernmental organizations. Florida State University boasts that it has attracted \$182.7 million in research dollars from outside sources. Of this, \$16 million went to the Learning Systems Institute. Among other things, the institute administers Florida's Center for Reading Research, charged with improving the reading skills of Florida school children. At the Open University in England, literacy research is funded by government, foundations, and the university itself. Southern Methodist University in the U.S. boasts an Institute for reading research funded in part by the Texas Instruments Foundation. Texas Instruments are manufacturers of electronic learning aids. They also list several research projects funded by government agencies.

To sum up, funding for reading research is provided by publishers, who have a vested interest in the outcomes, by the universities, by governments, by charitable foundations. *Occasionally though, non-governmental organizations have funded reading research.*

What Can be Done?

How can the use of a simply-spelled teaching vocabulary become a reality in the schools? Where can an inroad be made into this web of power represented by ministries of Education, educational publishers and reading experts?

Taken as a whole, these groups have a solid interest in maintaining the status quo. The ministries cannot initiate such a movement without the approval of the people who elect the government. The publishers will not develop and print such a reading program without assurance that they can sell it in huge numbers. The experts and researchers of the universities need outside funding to support the work that must go into designing the program to give it the seal of Science.

Where there is democracy, there are ways for people to bring about change. What is needed is a well-informed public, aware of the need for improved literacy and the role better spelling could play in bringing that about.

An example of a public movement that is exerting strong influence in the Ontario Ministry of Education is the Organization for Quality Education. This organization grew from a group of nine frustrated parents to become an organization whose members sit on many government committees. Their March newsletter reports on the status of ten recommendations made to the Ministry in 2001 – how well the government is doing at implementing them. The people have power, and spelling reformers need to mobilise that power.

A second avenue of attack is the funding of research. Non-governmental organizations can and do fund research. The efficacy of spelling change in promoting literacy is not an easy topic to research. But we already have the i.t.a. experiment, the basic result of which has been corroborated by numerous smaller studies. Could the Simplified Spelling Society support an investigation of the cost of remedial reading programs in a given jurisdiction and a statistical analysis of the savings that could be made if the need for such programs was reduced by even 5–10 %? How about a survey of practising teachers of remedial reading, asking them what they

consider to be the most recalcitrant difficulties of disabled readers and asking them to estimate the value of rendering spelling more phonemic?

We need to put our money, if we have any, where our mouth is, and commission suitable research to investigate the ramifications of spelling change. In a few years, the bloom will be off the Balanced Literacy movement. I predict that Balanced Literacy, with its emphasis on direct, systematic phonics will serve most of the children quite well, but there will still be a substantial group, the group that I call in my book the “struggling average”, who don’t really master the art of reading. They do not enjoy reading, do as little of it as possible, and fall further and further behind their classmates. They are likely to drop out of high school before graduation, and remain the marginally employed, the poor, and the denizens of our prisons. When the cry goes up again that our schools are failing to produce a literate population, we need to be ready to propose our solution.

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- Texas Education Agency. <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/>

Discussion and Question time

Christopher Jolly: The big players, e.g. Texas as a state will determine what happens in schools. States that do not mandate are more receptive to innovation.

Masha Bell: Making the public aware is the main issue. Would you agree?

Isobel Raven: Funding of research is more important.

Isobel Raven: Question to Christopher Jolly: Four PhD studies on Jolly Phonics have been done. How did this come about?

Christopher Jolly: Prof. Willows in Ontario was the first to do her thesis on it. Then became a PhD thesis for four of her students, two of which have already produced a PhD.

Isobel Raven: The way forward is to come through small publishers, undergraduates and PhD students.

5. Final announcement by the Chairman

The Chairman noted that he would have liked to include the contributions sent from Dr. Valerie Yule and Dr. Edward Rondthaler but due to time constraints this was not possible, however their papers would be included in the conference report.

He repeated the message sent from the president of the society, Prof. John Wells.

The Chairman informed those at the conference that he wished to have a de-briefing session, looking at what went well and what could be improved on. He spoke again about the 'Rosetta Stone' and that the top down puzzle had not been completed, which was a mirror image that our work has not yet ended.

He thanked all those that had presented their papers, which covered a wide range of interesting topics, providing new ideas and insights both nationally and globally.

He thanked Dr. Rollason for his EU contribution. He noted that there were many authors here and that many papers had been sent in, all of which would be included in the conference proceedings.

He thanked all the attendees for a successful and well-organised conference.

CLOSE

6. De-briefing session

What went well?

- ✓ Good catering
- ✓ Good information provided
- ✓ Good arrangements
- ✓ JIT Programme
- ✓ University setting was a good size
- ✓ Good location
- ✓ Stimulating variety of speakers
- ✓ Good learning experience
- ✓ Good technical help
- ✓ Friendly atmosphere
- ✓ Good to have a local person present
- ✓ Hotel in close proximity to the conference
- ✓ Positive receptive listeners
- ✓ Impressive range of countries people had travelled from
- ✓ Good timetable of events
- ✓ Pens, bags etc great idea
- ✓ Good conversations
- ✓ Good break out displays
- ✓ Rosetta stone
- ✓ Bilingual helpers

If we did this again, what would you do differently?

- Research local area beforehand with the object of attracting more local people / students
- Smaller conference during term time
- Larger urban area
- Advertise conference more widely (possibly use local T.V in future)
- Have a possible bait to attract people to attend e.g. Spelling Bee in reformed English; prize etc
- Attract the press etc Commercial backing
- Description of technical devices available
- More information to speakers (possibly put in the initial booking form all the relevant information)
- Send out joining instructions a month beforehand
- Start at least six months ahead in planning for the next conference
- Possibly just have a one day conference

7. Additional Papers

7.1 Dr. Conrad Crown

SUMMARY: AN ALPHABET FOR ENGLISH—XXII

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INTRODUCTION (First paragraph transliterated using proposed alphabet)

In an everyday alphabet we prefer one that is essentially phonetic, maintains the “look” of English as much as possible, and contains sufficient flexibility so that regional differences can be accommodated without changing the spelling. The Bostonian accent is somewhat similar to “English” English, which shortens many of the vowels. We prefer to keep the spelling uniform and let the pronunciation be a bit flexible.

Furthermore, for use beyond the USA and the British Empire, it would be advantageous for an “alphabet” to be more-or-less phonetic to facilitate learning the language. While we would like to retain the traditional spelling (TS) as much as possible, this presents problems. Consider the word string “ea” as in “sea” and “eat”. How then shall we spell “great”? Thus, some respelling may be **necessary** even for words that are currently “recognizable”, so that the basic phonetics rules are essentially maintained.

While spoken English is not concerned with the spelling of words and can accept the spelling of a word if “recognized” (like a character in Chinese), phonetic spelling is a distinct aid in learning to speak and write English. Rather than rely on the “recognition” of a word, we adopt very flexible phonetic rules to accomplish the same purpose.

We introduce the following notation for convenience:

1. The double colon “::” is used to mean “as in” where examples of **pronunciation** follow;
2. The double semi-colon “;:” indicates examples of **transliterations** from the current spelling to the new spelling follow; and
3. Transliterations are indicated by “->” as in current-spelling -> new-spelling.

RATIONALE FOR CHOICE OF VOWELS

We try to maintain a specific sound for a given letter pair. However, we have no problem with allowing more than one letter pair to correspond to a specific sound to reduce respelling.

For the most part we have used the most common vowels and vowel pairs. Vowel pairs ending in “i” or “u” are sometimes non-terminal (nt) while those ending in “y” or “w” are sometimes terminal (t), unless they are between two vowels as in “vowel” and “foyer”:
ai(nt) = ay(t), au(nt) = aw(t), oi(nt) = oy(t), ou(nt) = ow(t).

We let (r) denote a trailing “r” as in “her”. With a single trailing “r”, we have “car”; while a double trailing “rr”, as in “carry”, restores the usual vowel sound.

Some vowel strings have an enhanced range of sounds. On the other hand there may be multiple vowel strings corresponding to a given sound to reduce the necessity for respelling. Letter pairs ending with “h” are used for only a few words. We avoid double consonants whenever reasonable.

There is one particular aspect of the choice of vowels that should be discussed. In the current English language, the sound of the **consonant** “c” changes depending on whether it is followed by

a long or short vowel. Here we examine having the pronunciation of a **vowel** change when followed by a consonant that is in turn followed by an "e".

Thus, let C be some consonant or consonant pair, "ng" or "nj", q.v., and V be some vowel. For the last syllable of many words (or their roots), we could use the transliteration VCe -> VeC to define systematically a set of certain basic long-vowel diphthongs of the form Ve: specifically, {æe, ee, ie, oe, ue}, ("ye" and "we" were omitted here since "y" and "w" are used also **initially** as consonants).

We now have a choice. We can use the transliteration VCe -> VeC to respell words. Alternatively, we can and do use this transliteration to retain the TS and pronounce "VCe" as "VeC", as if the vowel pair were "Ve" while spelled "VCe", as follows:.

aCe (pron. aeC) :: **ale, ate**;
eCe (pron. eeC) :: **cede, mete, complete**;
iCe (pron. ieC) :: **bite, mile, five**;
oCe (pron. oeC) :: **bone, hole, owe**;
uCe (pron. = ueC) :: **rule, tube, plume**;
yCe = iCe :: **type, style** ;; type -> tipe, style -> stile.

There are many words for which this transliteration cannot be used:

love -> luv, move -> mwv, live(verb) -> liv, live(adj.) -> live;
live(verb) -> liv, livving and live(adj.) -> live, living;

Note the participles that have doubled consonants:

rid and ridding, ride and riding.

The participle is formed by replacing the "e" of "VCe" by "ing" and retaining the "Ve" vowel sound. The terminal "e" of "VCe" may also serve to soften the consonant "C" where appropriate.

LIST OF VOWELS

We now present a complete list of all vowels and vowel pairs including vowel pairs ending with "h", "y", "w", and "(r)", where (r) denotes a trailing "r". Vowels like "VCe" are included with "Ve".

a :: **an, at**, and when unaccented may shorten to "u", so that we write "about" rather than "ubout" and "...ial" rather than "...iul"; The indefinite article "a" sounds like "u" when unaccented, but like "ay" (as in "day") when accented;

e :: **end, bed** ;; read(pres. t.) -> read, read(past t.) -> red;

When terminal, "e" may lengthen to "ee" :: **be, me, we, he**;

Initial strings such as "re" (prefix or otherwise) may lengthen "e" to "ee" ;; react, prefix, region;

The definite article "dhe" ("th" as in thin, "dh" as in "then") is pronounced "dhu" when unaccented or before a consonant, but "dhee" when accented or before a vowel.

Thus, we write "a" and "dhe" (or "the") and accept the variable pronunciation.

e(r) = i(r) = u(r) :: **her, verb, fir, first, fur, hurt**;

i :: **in, is, it**; when terminal "i" may lengthen to "ie"

:: **I, alibi** ;; high -> hi, thigh -> thi, sigh -> si;

"I" is both initial and terminal, so retains its TS;

o = ah = a(r) :: **on, ah, far** ;; are -> ar, father -> fodher;

when terminal, "o" may lengthen to "oe" :: **so, go** ;;

low -> lo, row -> ro, though -> dho, throw -> thro, blow -> blo, flow -> flo, elbow -> elbo;

when unaccented may shorten to "u", so that we write "...ion" rather than "...iun";

u = u(r) :: **up, but, un...**, **fur, hurt** ; done -> dun, come -> cum, mother -> mudher, rough -> ruf;

w = ue :: **cwm, blue, fruit, new, too, food, pool, tool**

;; you -> yw, to -> tw, two -> tw, do -> dw, does -> dus,

through -> thrw, fruit -> frwt, new -> nw, neuter -> nwter,

too -> tw, food -> fwd, pool -> pwl, tool -> twl;
 y : y = ie (nt) :: **by, my, cry, try, cycle, gyro, psyche**;
 y = ee (t):: **city, ...ly**, but "ee" may shorten to "i";
 ae = eh = ai(nt) = ay(t) :: **aerial, eh, daily, day, vein, they** ;; vein -> vain, they -> dhay, weigh -> way, weight -> wait;
 au(nt) = aw(t) = o(r) :: **auto, saw, or** ;; "or" but "sorry",
 fore -> for, your -> yor, door -> dor,
 warm -> worm, worm -> werm (cognate: vermin),
 and word -> werd (cognate: verb),
 strings "all" are pronounced "aul" ;; also -> allso, and
 strings "off" are pronounced "auf", cough -> coff,
 so that "all" and "off" retain their traditional spelling;
 ee = ea :: **see, sea** ;; people -> peepl;
 Thus, we transliterate "great -> grate" as the most reasonable possibility and similarly
 "tear(rip) -> tare", or we must accept the violation of the phonetic rules.
 ie = ih :: **I, die** ;; high -> hi, height -> hite, night -> nite;
 iw :: **few, view** ;; few -> fiw, view -> viw, feud -> fiwd, fuel -> fiwl;
 oe = oh :: **toe, oh, boat** ;; low -> lo, row -> ro, boat-> boet;
 oi(nt) = oy(t) :: **boil, boy** ;; buoy -> boy or bwee;
 oo :: **book, cook, wood, put, pull** ;; put -> poot, pull -> pool;
 ou(nt) = ow(t) :: **our, out, how** ;; low -> lo, your -> yor,
 down -> doun, bough(branch) -> bow, bow(curved) -> bo.

LIST OF CONSONANTS

In an Initial Teaching Alphabet we avoid the use the consonant "c" except in the letter pair "ch" and instead use "k" or "s". Here we allow "c" to have both sounds "k" and "s". Thus, we have the following list of basic consonant sounds as letters or letter pairs:

b :: **bob, bhang** ;; bhang -> bang;
 c: The letter "c" has two sounds, "k" and "s":
 c = s followed by a short vowel ("e", "i", "y") :: **cent, city, cycle** ;; cycle -> cycl;
 ce = s when terminal :: **fence**;
 c = k otherwise :: **can, come, cut, cwm, act, magic, scar** ;; catch-> cach, cute -> kiwt, pick -> pik.
 ch :: **church, catch, cello** ;; catch -> cach, cello -> chelo;
 d :: **dad, did, deed, do** ;; do -> dw;
 dh :: **the, then** (as distinct from "th", q.v.)

Note: The letter string "dh" has the sound of the old English letter "edh". While current spoken English retains this sound, current English spelling does not. We have re-introduced it with the letter pair "dh" to emphasize the distinction between "th" as in "thin" and "th" as in "then". Now we make the assignment "dh -> th", so that "th" now has the sounds of both "th" and "dh".

f :: **if, fat, fifty** ;; of -> ov, tough -> tuf, phone -> fone;
 We try to avoid "ph = f", except possibly in proper names.
 g :: **go, gag, gut, get, guilt, ghetto, tiger, bigger** ;;
 guard -> gard, guilt -> gilt, ghost -> goest;
 ge(t) = j; "...age" is pronounced two ways: "...a-ge" (= ...aj) ;; manage, vantage;
 and "...ae-ge" (= ...aej) ;; age; engage;
 h :: **has, hat, his**;
 j :: **jest, jibe, jam, job, joy, jump**; Also for some words we use
 g(soft) = j when followed by a short vowel (e, i, y) :: **gent, gyro, ginger, region**;
 k :: **kick, pique** ;; kick -> kik, pique -> peek;
 l :: **let, lily**;

m :: **mom, may, autumn** :: autumn -> autum;
 n :: **no, noon, mnemonic**;; mnemonic -> nemonic;
 ng is pronounced as one sound "ng" when terminal or
 terminal in root :: **sing, bring, ...ing** and not changed with suffixes :: **singer, bringing, changing** ;; tongue -> tung;
 There are exceptions (without respelling) :: finger(fingger), anger(angger);
 ng = n+g when there is a prefix ending with an "n"
 :: **ingather, ungird, engine** ;; engine -> engin;
 nge = nj = n+j :: **hinge, change, angel**;
 ny = n+y :: **canyon, poignant** ;; poignant -> poinyant;
 p :: **pop, paper**;
 q = kw :: **quick** ;; quick -> qik, squat -> sqot, quantum -> qontum;
 r :: **rat, roar, rhyme, write** ; rhyme -> rym, write -> rite;
 s: The letter "s" has two sounds, "s" and "z"
 :: **sister, scene, psyche** :: psyche -> syky;
 except that a terminal letter "s" is pronounced like a "z"
 and the "s" sound is then rendered with a double "s" ("ss")
 :: **hiss, his, is** ;; us -> uss, this -> dhiss, lose -> luse, loose -> lwss;

Also, many words in English come from French or German where the rule is common that an "s" between two vowels in the root of a word is pronounced like a "z". To avoid extensive respelling, we adopt this rule also and preserve the "s" sound with "ss". Thus we have "resent" (to be indignant at) with a "z" sound and "essence" with an "s" sound ;; use -> yuse, uses -> yuses, using -> yusing, "desert", and dessert -> dezzert;

sh :: **ship, fish, sure, chamois, mention** ;; sure -> shure, chamois -> shamy;
 Note: We avoid "sch" as distinct from "sh", "sc", or "s" and use "sk" or "s", or "sc" depending on length of the vowel following the "c" ;; scheme -> skeme, scholar -> scolar, schism -> sizm, schilling -> shilling;

t :: **to, tot, thyme, ptomaine** ;; to -> tw, thyme -> tym, ptomaine -> toemain;

th :: **thin, thick** (as distinct from "dh", q.v.);

v :: **vivid, of** ;; of -> ov;

w :: **wow, with, when** ;; when -> wen, who -> hw;

x = ks :: **box, next, axle**, but pronunciation may slur into "gs" :: **exit, luxury**;

Note: Plurals ending in "ks" are not written with an "x".

y :: **yes, tortilla, hallelujah** ;; yes -> yess;

z :: **zoo, his, desert, dessert** ;; xerox -> zerox;

zh :: **azure, vision** ;; azure -> azhure.

We try to avoid silent consonants, so that we can write "write -> rite" and "isle -> ile".

Double consonants are used when they serve some purpose, otherwise usually avoided. Proper names may keep their current spellings.

Finally, for suffixes the letter pairs "ci", "si", and "ti" are frequently pronounced "sh" as in "facial", "tension", and "action".

CONCLUDING REMARKS

More complicated phonetic rules usually require less respelling. We prefer to minimize respelling rather than rely on "recognition" of a word as do the Chinese with their non-phonetic characters.

7.2 Dr. Devaki

Strategies for English Spelling Reforms: the Indian Context

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Introduction

We are living in a world that is actively promoting user-friendliness – be it in a shopping mall or for using a computer or language. If a commodity is not user-friendly it is either discarded or distorted. English spellings are definitely not user-friendly. So learners tend to distort the spellings and the ability to spell correctly is achieved at the cost of heavy time and resource investments. This cost factor underlines the need for implementing spelling reforms in English. This paper discusses the strategies for spelling reforms in India.

Spelling, according to the Word Reference Dictionary (online), is defined as the writing of words with letters according to principles underlying *accepted* usage (italics added). The term “accepted usage” indicates that spelling is a matter of social convention and like all social conventions it has to adhere to two principles:

- a) Social conventions are made to bring about order to systems
- b) When social conventions become inconvenient, they are subjected to change.

In practice, however, spellings are regarded as sacrosanct touch-me-nots. This feeling persists even though English spellings have seen some changes as for instance “publick” becoming “public”, “musick” becoming “music”, hiccough becoming hiccup
(Wikipedia http://wikipedia.org/wiki/english#list_of_leading_spelling_reform_proposals)

Irregular spellings are the sources of several problems. It has been shown that there is a high correlation between inconsistent spelling and functional illiteracy (Times Editorial Supplement, Dec 13,2002). According to the Human Development report of 2002, the functional illiteracy in UK is as high as 21.8%, (undp united Nations Development Program, 2002). Irregular spelling has been related to dyslexia, poor English language learning among immigrants and second language learners. In the face of these problems, it is essential to actively promote the efforts at spelling reforms.

English Spelling Reforms

Languages are not static. They keep constantly evolving, borrowing, undergoing linguistic processes, historical changes etc. English was said to have a relatively systematic spelling system during the period ranging from the 12–15 century. During the end of the 14th century began the “Great Vowel Shift” whereby two highest long vowels /a:/ and /E:/ became diphthongs and five long vowels increased their heights. The consequences of the shift for English language were not uniform and spelling became irregular. There is no one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. Some sounds are represented by various letters, while one letter is pronounced in different ways. Letters are added to spellings to have a faithful representation of its etymology. For instance, adding ‘b’ to ‘debt’ to indicate the Latin origin of the word ‘debitum’. Spelling reforms make attempts to introduce a logical structure connecting the spelling and pronunciation of words. While many scholars agree on the need for spelling reforms in English, there is little agreement on the strategies for the task.

Before going into the strategies of spelling reform in English for India, it is essential to have an understanding of the language situation in the country.

India: English as Second Language

It is interesting that India has been chosen as the country for implementing Spelling Reforms. In fact, the study of English as a literary subject was first introduced in the Madras University as early as 1800s since both Oxford and Cambridge Universities considered English literature as unworthy of serious study (Srinivasan 2002 <http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/sep/22rajeev.htm>)

India is a multilingual country with her Constitution recognizing 18 Indian languages, namely, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmir, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Hindi and English have been declared as the languages to be used for official purposes (Report of the Official Language Act (1963, 1967). The status of English accrues not only from its wide-spread ness, but also the purposes for which it is used. Crystal (The Guardian, 30 November 2004) observes that ten years ago, the United States had the largest English-speaking population. Today, India has taken over that status. With roughly a third of its population – or more than 300 million – possessing English language capability, India has more people speaking the language than the US and UK combined. Indian English however is not entirely the same as British or American English, as it has been influenced by indigenous languages. Further, new elements to the Indian English language are constantly added.

Historically, English occupies a special Status in the country. It was introduced by the British when they came to India for trade purposes. Although the East India Company was set up on 1600 it was in the 18th century that Britain changed from an economic power to political power. Specifically, with the battle of Plassey, in 1757 the East India Company became a ruling power. With the Crown taking over the Company, The Charter Act was passed in 1813 and this decreed that English would be taught in the Indian education system but not as a replacement for indigenous languages. Instead, it was anticipated that English would co-exist with Oriental languages. But in 1817 John Mill's *History of British India* was published and this defined the formation of educational policies in the country. (ed.Horace Hayman Wilson: London, Piper, Stephenson and Spence, 1858). The Education Resolution was passed in 1834 following this publication (<http://sify.com/itihaas/fullstory.php?id=13375027>). AS per this resolution, all the scholarships for students studying through “vernacular” medium were stopped and funds diverted to English medium education. Funds for oriental publications were also stopped. This marked a firm foundation for English education in the country. In 1835 Lord William Bentinck revitalized the earlier Charter Act with his New Education Policy which determined that English should be the official language of the courts, diplomacy and administration. From this time onwards, only those citizens with knowledge of English had access to Government jobs. Macaulay's Minutes of Education in 1835 fully formalized English education in the country. English became a major tool for economic and social advancement acquisition of English enabled the individual to transcend the formerly impenetrable barriers of caste and class. The same continues even after more then 55 yrs of Indian Independence.

Today, English has the status of associate Official Language as per the Official Language Act of 1953 and its amendment in 1967. It is used widely in Education. The Fifth All-India Education Survey (1992) reports that 1.3 percent of primary schools, 3.4 percent of upper primary schools, 3.9 percent of middle schools, and 13.2 percent of high schools use English as a medium of instruction. Schools treating English as the first language (requiring ten years of study) are around 0.6 percent of rural primary schools, 2.8 percent of rural high schools, and 9.9 percent of urban high schools. English in India is offered as a second language (six years of study) in 51 percent of rural primary schools, 55 percent of urban primary schools, 57 percent of rural high schools, and 51 percent of urban high schools. As a third language (three years of study), English is offered in 5 percent of rural primary schools, 21 percent of urban primary schools, 44 percent of rural high schools, and 41 percent of urban high schools. In higher education, English continues to be the sole medium of instruction particularly for teaching Science subjects. These numbers are just growing.

Apart from education, English is used for several other purposes too. It is one of the main languages used for communication, reading newspapers, using computers, doing Science, for Judicial purposes, particularly in the Supreme Court, for International relations, for inter state communication particularly in the southern part of the Country, and as a means of entertainment and for tourism.

Not only is English important, its importance is growing. With outsourcing and Call Centres emphasis is being laid on the knowledge of English. English is seen as a passport to jobs in the multinational corporate sectors and to the betterment of one's economic station in life. Another reason for the growing importance of English in India is the increase in the number of educational opportunities outside the country. Both these together have resulted in a mushrooming of English language teaching centers in the country.

Although English enjoys a high status within the country, the motivation behind the high status for English has undergone changes from time to time. One set of thinkers, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others, demanded English language for educational purposes as a means to overcome the social ills of the Society like Sati, Child marriages to promote Girls education etc. To another set of thinkers, like Annadurairai it was a means to transcend the caste boundaries. Politically, also English was a shield used by the people of South India, particularly in Tamil Nadu to protect themselves against the imposition of Hindi. Currently, some scholars like Salman Rushdie are tending to see English as a weapon of resistance. These multi-pronged changing roles make English a language of power, a shield or protection, a leveler for equality and a weapon of resistance. These multiple roles entail a positive attitude towards the language and stress on a good knowledge of English. The use of good English is associated with high status and high levels of literacy. On the reverse side, bad English, particularly in terms of its syntax or bad spelling is looked down upon and associated with low levels of literacy. So bad spelling is a problem of the learner and not a problem of the language. In fact the need for spelling reform has so far not been felt in the country. The erratic English spellings are seen as a necessary evil that has to be put up with by learners. It is against this background that a discussion on the strategies of spelling reform is necessitated.

Strategies of Spelling Reform in India

How does one go about implementing spelling reforms? This question relates to the strategies of spelling reform. The strategies of spelling reforms consist of two aspects, namely, (a) the Linguistic Aspect and (b) the Psychological aspect.

The Linguistic Aspect of the Strategies of Spelling Reform

The linguistic strategy of spelling reform is concerned with what aspect of spelling needs to be changed and the modality to be used for this change. An examination of the various proposals for spelling reforms shows that there is no consensus among the reformers on what aspect to change and how to go about the change. A reference to the Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English#List_of_learning_spelling_reform_proposals) on English spelling reforms shows that some scholars have proposed complete overhaul of the spelling-orthographic system. The Shavian orthography of Shaw and Deseret orthography of Watt and Pratt are two such examples. Others have put forward a more modest proposal in the form of cut spellings and sound spelling that are intended to make a few changes in the spelling system. In terms of the modalities proposals again vary from advocating change to the new system in one go to gradual change. The merits and demerits of these proposals have been widely discussed and will not be repeated here.

It needs to be emphasized that there are hardly any studies on Spelling reforms for English in the country. So the arguments presented here are more a matter of discussion, expressed opinions of users and intuition rather than on any empirical basis. First and foremost, a complete overhaul of the spelling system will not be accepted within the country. Such an overhaul would imply almost a relearning of the language and will be rejected. A phonetic based spelling system would also not

be accepted because as has been rightly observed by scholars, the pronunciation differs from country to country. It is also difficult to argue for a spelling system using broad criteria like simplification, regularity etc, because in applying the simplification criteria the already existing words that are easy, and consisting of one or two syllables will change to become strange. For e.g: /Do/ will become/ Du/ which would not be acceptable. Hence, the linguistic strategy has to see that the appearance of the words is not disturbed. The use of diacritics would make spelling cumbersome and will be rejected. In fact it is doubtful how this could make learning easy.

In the face of such problems, the most efficient strategy is to look at spellings at the micro-level rather than the macro-level. It is not doubt considered scientific to air the linguistic strategies of spelling reform in the form of rules. For e.g. In the cut spelling proposals one of its rules is: cut vowel when it comes before approximants or nasals [victim becoming victm]. Problem with such rules is that when they are applied to individual words the change may be acceptable for some words and not for other. In a rule based approach the non-acceptance would result in abandoning the rules or discussing the merits of the rule rather than the word. A more fruitful approach, at least in the Indian context, is to go in for statistical approach. As the first step, this consists of listing all the words for which changes are essential. The second step is to change their spellings to the required shape. In case of disagreements among language experts, it is necessary to list all the proposed shapes. The third step is to give this to a cross-section of the population and get their acceptability ratings. The final decision on the spelling reform has to be based on the acceptability ratings. Perhaps, such a study can be undertaken across countries, acceptability ratings compared to arrive at a list of words with simplified spellings. The words for which the acceptability rating is high can be taken for implementation immediately and the rest of the words be kept in abeyance to diagnose the reasons for low acceptability. This strategy inevitably requires implementation in stages.

The Psychological Aspect of the Strategies of Spelling Reform:

The psychological aspect of the strategy of spelling reform is of two types. The first is due to the second language context and second relates to the attitudinal component of spelling reform.

Strategy of Spelling Reform in Second Language Context:

Spelling reforms have for a long time focused their efforts at reforming English spellings in countries where English is used as a first language without making much of a head way. Now, the reformers have turned their attention to countries where English is used as a second language. These countries put together, face exceed the number of English as first language speakers. The underlying hope is that when majority of English second language speakers spell in particular ways it is bound to impact the spelling of first language English speakers. While this strategy sounds good in theory, the spelling reform context in second language English countries is not a replica of the context in first language countries. Not only does the status of language change from first to second but this change brings in certain additional issues which need to be addressed in discussing the strategies of spelling reforms. These issues are:

- a) Strategy for Spelling Reforms : which English?
- b) Strategy for Spelling Reforms ; what purpose?

While the present discussion is limited to India, these two issues hold good for all South Asian countries.

Universalization of Education has resulted in more and more students, for whom education was hither too un-accessible, acquiring English. Simultaneously English is also being used as the main means of communication.

Spelling Reform: Which English?

The use of English for the purposes of education and communication has given rise to two varieties of English, namely,

- a) English for intellectual pursuits – education
- b) English for communication

This division of English at the societal level is similar to Cummins (1979) distinction between bilingualism for Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency and for the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills. Following Cummins, these two uses of English may be labeled as Cognitive English and Communication English. On a continuum, Cognitive English is closer to British English while Communicative English is further away. Apart from reflecting the differences between written and spoken language, the Communicative English takes the flavor that is distinctively Indian. This variety of English has been formally labeled as Indian English (Kachru,

1983; Baldrige 2002, Hotenthal <http://postcolonialweb.org/india/hohenthal/contents.html> It is essential to remember that although Indian English may refer to the English spoken in India, it does not include Cognitive English. It is a variety, that is basically spoken and as far as its written version is concerned it is confined to novels. This is a variety that evolved from the masses and so it was endowed with legitimacy. The use of this language in films, televisions, popular writings, mass media, locally published newspapers, advertisements, signboards etc., is a natural expression of widely used English. There are several works on phonology, morphology, syntax, compounding etc of Indian English but almost no work has been conducted on the spelling system of Indian English.

From the perspective of strategies of Spelling Reform, it is essential to recognize there two varieties English because the strategies differ with the variety of English.

Strategy for Spelling Reform: What purpose?

The second issue flows from the first. In the process of differentiating between two varieties of English within the country, the notion of Spelling reforms itself gets differentiated. Spelling reforms in the first language context means simplification. But in a second language context, it acquires the additional connotation of nativization. When we are talking of spelling reforms, particularly in the second language context, it is essential to differentiate between simplification of spellings and nativization of spellings and keep the two processes distinct. For e.g.: fotograf is an instance of simplification but writing 'nooj' for news is an instance of nativization. An examination of popular magazines, advertisements, signboards in rural areas show that Nativization of English spelling is already prevalent in the country. It is essential to decide and remember what exactly we are aiming in the process of making spelling reforms. Much of Japanese spelling reform is more towards Nativization rather than simplification. For e.g.: writing fairu for file; foku for fork, ragubi for rugby. Under the assumption that the concern of Spelling Reformers is not Indian English, Japlish or Indonglish the strategy of spelling reforms needs to be unambiguously address spelling simplification and not Nativization.

Spelling Reforms: An Attitudinal Issue

The issue of spelling reform is not just linguistic; it is attitudinal also. The perception of notion of spelling itself is undergoing change consequent to the pervading influence of Piaget in the form of Constructivism. The change is from seeing spelling as instruments of control whose norms must be taught and learnt to seeing it as a tool for making statements about identity. The spelling system of American English illustrates this notion of identity. Scholars are also talking of 'spelling rebellion' wherein adolescents use non-conventionalised spellings to create distance from the main stream, rebel against adult norms and establish adolescent identity (Sebba 2003). Cyber Spellings used in e-mails (eg: how R U?) constructs a view of being cyber savvy.

Attitudes are learnt predispositions and in course of time they become deep rooted and take a long time to change. Though theoretically effective, attitudinal changes are seldom achieved through sweeping spelling changes. Hence the strategy that needs to be used to bring about changes necessarily has to aim for slow changes. When we talk of attitude, it needs to be recognized that

attitude consists of three components, the cognitive, the affective and the behavioral. The route we take, either going from the cognitive to the affective to the behavioral or vice versa depends on the product towards which attitude has to be changed. As far as spelling is concerned, most people do believe that spellings can be changed. There are of course no studies on this issue with reference to the Indian context. However a survey Jolly in UK (1988) reports that 60% of the sample reported their belief that spelling could be changed. In India, although there is no survey as such, many people have expressed the opinion for the need to change. So as far as the cognitive dimension is concerned, people are ready for spelling reforms. What about affective dimension? Some people do not want reforms because of the fear that such reforms would result in confusion. Spelling reform has to be contend with this aspect of attitude. As far as the behavior dimension is concerned, again, the picture is not a simple one. Most people agree with the use of different spelling in advertisements, personal letters, and in novel. So the behavioral component accepts it to some extent but not for serious intellectual purposes.

India follows the spellings of British English. But the attitude towards English spelling reform is termed as "indifference" (Gogatte 1988 <http://www.spellingsociety.org/journals/j7/world.php>) In my view, this is a strange sort of indifference. It is not indifference in the sense of neutrality. At the cognitive level there is no indifference. At the affective level people do think spelling reforms will result in chaos and so there is a reluctance to accept reforms. At the behavioral level, the indifference takes the form of passivity. As the British English spelling is the model for English in India, spelling changes in British English will gain acceptance within the country for Cognitive English. Those spellings which are changed in the English used in India are accepted only for Communicative English. So it is a loaded indifference.

In the light of these issues, some specific strategies for spelling reforms are listed.

Specific Strategies of Spelling Reform

It is widely assumed that popularizing simplified spelling will help promote its use. In line with this assumption, some of the strategies that are generally suggested for spelling reform is to use simplified spelling in advertisements, novels, magazines and journals, newspapers, computers etc., It is certainly true that a language must be used for it to grow; the use of simplified spelling will help establish the reformed spelling system. But these strategies do not transfer the effects of simplified spelling to Cognitive English.

The use of simplified English for Cognitive English purpose needs a certain amount of authority. Cognitive English in India, as pointed out earlier, follows the spelling of British English. So reforms in British English will have a greater impact on Cognitive English in India. However, if one assumes that British English will not change its spelling system; does it mean that Cognitive English in India will also remain the same? It is still possible to change Cognitive English, but the time taken may be longer and for its success it needs a certain degree of authority. In other words, there is a need for top-down model for bringing about changes. Some sort on International agreement and co-ordination between British and Indian authorities will definitely help to promote and hasten this process.

The reform strategy could also use a bottom-up model. At present, India has no machinery for planning spelling reforms or implementing them. So the first step is to set up Centres for Spelling Reforms in various parts of the Country. This Centre will have to be vested with the responsibility of using a multi-pronged strategy aimed at teachers, students and materials.

At the level of teachers

- ❖ Give orientation programs to school teachers on use of simplified spelling. The aim of such programs is not that teachers will begin using simplified spelling — rather they will begin to have an attitude of acceptance for simplified spellings.
- ❖ Introduce Simplified English Spellings as a topic for study in Teacher Education Courses.

At the level of Students

- ❖ Promote simplified spelling activism among the student community.
- ❖ Hold debates, essay contests and encourage students to write articles using simplified spellings.

At the level of Materials

- ❖ Develop and distribute dictionaries with simplified spellings.
- ❖ Prepare learning materials using Simplified Spellings.
- ❖ Incorporate lessons using simplified Spellings in Textbooks
- ❖ Motivate Text book Committee Members and Member of National Book Trust to use simplified English spelling.

The center also has to

- ❖ Conduct and publish Spelling Reform Surveys.
- ❖ Conduct acceptability and feasibility studies on.
- ❖ Conduct studies on development of English spellings in adult and child language learners.
- ❖ Be vested with power and authority to carry out and implement spelling reforms.

Conclusions

To sum up, the strategy of English Spelling Reform needs to be based on:

- A. Acceptability Ratings of users
- B. Cognitive English and not just communicative English
- C. Simplification rather than Nativization
- D. Gradual introduction of reformed spellings

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7.3 Mr. J Carter

A practical plan for achieving spelling reform

The issue

As many as 60,000,000 people in English-speaking countries have major difficulties in reading and writing, and 20,000,000 or so of these are likely to be crippled all their lives in both reading and writing as a result of the absurdities of existing English spelling. Those burdens would be lifted from the shoulders of a huge number of these unfortunates through a well designed and comprehensive reform of the spelling system.

Such a reform would also mean that hundreds of millions of people from non-English-speaking backgrounds attempting to learn the language could in future learn to speak it effectively. This would enable English to overcome the last (but very major) barrier to reaching its full potential as an international language in facilitating economic intercourse and understanding between the peoples of the world.

The problem of English spelling

The illogicalities and inconsistencies of English spelling have persisted for nearly a thousand years without effective reform.

The problems introduced by Norman scribes in applying Norman French spelling methods to the language of the Anglo-Saxons still remain, and the misguided activities of etymologists in the sixteenth century and later in trying to spell words according to their root origins have led to the deeply entrenched corruption of the written language.

This address is primarily about standard English, which is the most geographically widespread, developed, and prestigious form of the language. It is the language of government, the law, business, administration, science and technology, academia, religion, the media, and national and international trade and communication. It has been described as “the language used by the powerful” (David Crystal). It is a central reference point for the other versions of English.

If standard English is to meet its full potential as an international (or, perhaps, even world) language in the twenty-first century, it will be necessary for English speaking countries to cease imposing, by default, the burdens of an inefficient spelling system on their own citizens who are attempting to achieve literacy and on non-English speakers who are struggling to learn how to pronounce the language correctly and intelligibly. Reform in this area would considerably enhance the use of English around the world and enable it to play a more effective role in future in facilitating economic intercourse and understanding between the world's peoples.

Having a broadly standard pronunciation, based on a logical and consistent system of spelling, would be especially helpful, worldwide, in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language.

As pointed out by the Simplified Spelling Society:

“English has never faced the practicalities of spelling reform, and many basic questions need exploring. Who could introduce reform, how, and what would the effect be? Other languages offer few parallels: their spelling is often well ordered, many have institutions responsible for setting rules (e.g., academics, dictionaries, education authorities), and they cover a single country or just a few countries.

“English is very different. Its spelling is systemically disordered, and it lacks agreed standards. It has no machinery for planning or introducing improvements. It serves as a mother tongue in five continents, and is used worldwide as a lingua franca. And many of those who might have the power to organise reform do not appreciate the gravity of the English spelling problem and/or have little will to tackle it. The hurdles on the road to reform are therefore considerable. Yet the demand for higher levels of literacy ensures continuing global dissatisfaction with the present position, and research (e.g., comparing literacy standards between languages) is increasingly revealing the harm done by the erratic spelling of English.”

Solving the problem

What governments will be required to establish

For the issue of spelling reform to be taken seriously by governments of English speaking countries, there is a need for the following:

- clear evidence of the technical feasibility of developing a suitable reformed spelling system;
- clear evidence of the technical feasibility of implementing the reform in a practical sense;
- selection of the approach to reform to be adopted, i.e., whether all-at-once or gradual;
- evidence that the new system was already working satisfactorily in practice for a significant number of people (“pilot” basis);
- clear preliminary evidence that the benefits of reform would exceed the costs by a sufficiently wide margin to be worth pursuing the issue;
- detailed benefit/cost and other related analyses to clearly identify the individual costs and benefits of reform and the overall balance between benefit and cost;
- strong political support where it counts; and
- very extensive discussions over a period of probably many years between all interested governments.

The technical feasibility of reform

English spelling can be reformed to bring it into line with the modern world of the 21st century, and this would, technically, be quite a simple thing to do.

The key to the comprehensive reform of English spelling is contained in the following six sentences.

“The Mau Mau veteran defended the laager with zest.”

“The men from Taipei bet on a boxer.”

“The bishops in Hawaii administer a rich district.”

“Poor Jon drops the hot moulded object on the boiler.”

“Yes, the muu-muu’d fit – the convivial American puts it on in Niugini”.

“The foehn, a hot wind – not in Caen.”

These sentences, referred to collectively as “Spelrait”, would be spelt the *same way* under both the existing and the proposed new spelling systems. The reform would then consist essentially of spelling all words in standard English in accordance with those models.

It would be a simple matter to familiarise people with the standardised spellings through memorable illustrations of each of the model sentences (see illustration). The entire system could be portrayed on a single card or sheet of paper, and most adults would be well on the way to mastering the system in less than 24 hours.

The following are examples of sentences spelt in accordance with the above rules.

It's fan to ran in the san, sed Mather Paart ov the laard'z in a jaar on the raaft Ai wudn't bai aet a prais thaet woz hai	a aa ai	The tiim didn't fiil thaet the diil woz riil Dot woz fond ov hoer cotij pot The poor yang Boor then coold aet the door	ii o oo
Hau nau braun cau, faund on a maund The faet blaec caet saet on the maet Cent then sent hiz pet tu a vet Deer tu sheer a heerstail with fleer The rein in Spein foolz meinli in the plein The bilder dipd hiz lid tu Mili	au ae e ee ei i	The boiz wil toil aet boiling thi oil Nou, the moutorbout woun't gou slou Shoerli loernt not tu boern thi oern Cud ould Yul bi lucing foor a bul? The ruul foor fuud iz cuul with a spuun Aur diuti in fiutiur iz tu biutifai the viu	oi ou oe u uu iu

Under the new system, using the six standard sentences, anyone could immediately *spell* any word whose pronunciation they knew, without reference to a dictionary or any other source.

Under the new system, using the six standard sentences, anyone could also immediately *pronounce* any word correctly by just looking at the written representation of the word, again without reference to a dictionary or any other source.

The Attachment to this paper provides more detail on the proposed system.

The approach to be adopted

Comprehensive reform versus piecemeal reform

While English spelling has not been entirely static over recent centuries, the process of change has been extremely slow, especially when compared with almost all other major European languages, and the spelling of English is now practically unique in being so far away from a consistent phonetic basis. Debate continues in linguistic circles about whether spelling reform would most realistically come from further very gradual reform or from a major comprehensive all-at-once reform.

The two basic approaches to English spelling reform

There are basically two possible approaches to the reform of English spelling.

It is tempting to apply to these approaches the names used by Dean Swift to describe the two competing political parties in "Gulliver's Travels". The parties were named the "Big Endians" and the "Little Endians", depending on whether they believed that boiled eggs should be opened at the big end or the little end.

However, unlike the situation in Gulliver, the issues between the two schools of thought in English spelling reform are far from trivial.

I have referred to the two schools of thought here as the "Drip Feed" approach and the "Big Bang" approach.

The “Drip-feed” approach

The problem with the simplification of spelling using a gradual approach — the “Drip-feed” approach, is that the benefit/cost ratio is not favourable. If that type of reform could be achieved at all, which seems very unlikely, it would be a huge amount of effort for little or no benefit. The problem with this type of approach, arguably, is that it has no realistic chance of ever being adopted, because there is no realistic mechanism in sight for getting it adopted.

The idea of reforming English spelling gradually in small steps seems, unfortunately, to be impractical. There would, under such a reform regime, be an on-going state of transition from one seriously defective version of English spelling to another, with hardly anybody clear about where the spelling system was currently supposed to be. With, say, six, eight or ten separate distinct and timed steps involved in gradual reform, there would eventually be six, eight or ten different versions of English in print. This would be a formula for continuous confusion. There would be no public support for the process, and it would soon peter out.

The experiment in (gradual) simplification of English spelling initiated by Noah Webster in the US went on for 50 years or so. If the gradual simplification of English spelling was going to come to anything, that was the opportune time. The US was a confident new nation state, keen to express its independence from the European motherland. The world of English spelling lay at its feet.

However, the result from all that time and effort (and disruption) was less than 1% of the spelling reform that was/is actually required to bring English spelling back to its phonetic roots. Arguably, little of any real value was achieved. English is still just as poorly spelt in the US today as it is in the UK and elsewhere. In fact, there were negative results, in that there are now a number of minor but essentially arbitrary and pointless differences between the British and American versions of English which are more of an irritation than anything else. “Center” (GA) is no particular improvement on “centre” (RP), it matters little whether it is “traveled” (one l) or “travelled” (two l’s), and “plow” rather than “plough” still does not tell us how to pronounce the word properly.

The “Big Bang” approach

It is contended here that English spelling needs fundamental reform to put it back in touch with its original roots in the use of the Latin script, spelt, as far as practical, *in the Latin manner*. Any other approach, using the Latin script will essentially be arbitrary. And any such approach will never receive general acceptance, because there will always be other competing but equally arbitrary schemes which can and will be argued to be equally good (or bad).

It is contended that the only way in which spelling reform could now be achieved would be if it was seen as a major project, on a scale which could excite the public imagination and interest governments and leaders in the mass media.

The use of Latin examples will not completely cover the situation, because English has some sounds that Latin does not have. A degree of inventiveness is therefore required to adapt the Latin symbols to those English sounds. But the additional spellings should build on the original Latin values as far as possible, for overall consistency.

For example, the spelling of English diphthongs should be built up from the Latin-type vowels that compose them. In the case of a word, for example, like “Taipei” (OS/NS), the “ai” sound (NS) is made up of the Latin vowels “a” and “i” (LS) in a Latin word such as “agricola” (LS). This is the most logical spelling of the “ai” sound (NS) in the Latin script. (The Romans also used “ae”.) It is both familiar and practical. There is no need to look any further.

English spelling by now is so sclerotic and dysfunctional that only a total housecleaning is feasible. And such a total housecleaning would be much easier to achieve than an attempt to smooth out

some of the more sclerotic bits and leave the overall mess largely untouched.

Once a decision is taken to go for a comprehensive reform, school children would learn the new system at school, in about a third the time it takes now, and once having learned it would never want to go back to the bad old ways. Most adults would soon learn it too, because it is easy – one just writes down what one says, and just reads what is plainly written.

In all this, it is essential not to overlook the power and potential of the computer technology. Virtually everyone in the English speaking world will within a decade or two have access to a PC. In the transitional stages, those who were literate but who found the new system difficult could start with the “old” version on a PC, then with the press of a button (and a small amount of additional work selecting between homographs, where necessary), convert to the new. The Chinese already do this sort of thing in converting between Chinese ideographs characters and pinyin, and it works well.

But before the authorities will take comprehensive spelling reform seriously, there will need to be an established body of communication that effectively uses the new system.

Questions for the Conference to address

The Conference focus

The focus for this Conference is on two issues, namely —

- the development of an English standardised orthography suitable for global use, easy to learn for children, and second language adults; and
- an assessment of which countries and by which promotional means such an orthography would have the best chance of implementation. This to be in view of opposition to improvements to spelling in mainly from British and American native adepts of traditional (irregular) English spelling.

A number of very relevant questions have been raised by the organisers of the Conference, to which I would now like to suggest some answers.

Regularised spelling for English?

“English is a world language and is not owned by Britain or America. Webster changed the spelling of over 1,000 words in his early dictionaries. Could an international commission issue a dictionary with an even greater number of regularised spellings?”

English is indeed a world language and not owned by any one country.

A large English dictionary may list 750,000 or more words, and the 1,000 or so words respelt by Webster therefore amount to no more than a drop in the bucket.

An international commission should recommend a thoroughgoing and comprehensive reform of English spelling. Such a reform would not be anything like the Webster changes. Realistically, as already mentioned, English spelling cannot be reformed in a gradual way. The only approach that could work would be a “Big bang” approach — see, for example, the far-reaching and very successful Dutch-Flemish and Turkish reforms.

The “general usefulness” feature of English will become even more pronounced as the world

information network becomes denser and stronger.

A new standardised orthography

“Is it possible to develop a new standardised orthography for the English language which is more suitable for global use and which is easier for children and ESL students to learn and master? Would the new system have to be just as flexible as the old one in accommodating as wide variety of dialects?”

It is, as already mentioned, a simple matter to develop a new standardised orthography for the English language which is more suitable for global use and easier for children and EFL and ESL students to learn and master.

The new system would be more efficient than the old one in accommodating a wide variety of dialects. “We have the technology!”.

A description of English spelling?

“Is English spelling preposterous? Or is it just a mix of three spelling systems that are often incompatible along with a vowel shift that corrupted the Middle English alphabet when changes in the pronunciation of the long vowels were not reflected in the way words were spelt?”

Both statements are true. For a major world language to persist with a spelling “system” that consists of a mix of three spelling systems that are often incompatible together with a vowel shift that corrupted the alphabet when changes occurred in the pronunciation of the long vowels is to perpetuate a preposterous system. The system needs to be comprehensively reformed in the interests of the whole world.

Restoration of the alphabet originally used for English?

“Can the alphabet originally adopted for English be restored? Should it be restored? Would this restore the full benefits of the alphabet to the English language?”

The original spelling of the language of the Anglo-Saxons (e.g, Kingdom of Wessex) was based closely on the spelling of similar Latin sounds, and sounds not found in Latin were spelt as logically as possible in terms of Latin symbols. Modern English should follow the same principle. The English language has been transformed over the last 1,000 years or so, and further major improvements to the earlier spelling system are now available.

The use of these improvements would indeed restore the full benefits of the Latin alphabet to the English language.

Two years of schooling to be saved?

“Does an opaque or deep orthography add two years of schooling?”

The evidence indicates that children compelled to learn an “opaque or deep orthography” do indeed take two years longer to master the writing and reading of their mother tongue than children who do not have this handicap. “Opaque or deep orthography” is a euphemism for what could be better described as “muddled, illogical, and inefficient”, even “preposterous”.

Changes in English over the last 250 years?

“How much has the spoken English changed in the last 250 years. Was Johnson right?”

The way people speak English is indeed changing, but compared with the total stock of existing words and practices the process of change is very slow. The changes in the sounds of spoken English over the last 250 years are not great when compared with the changes over the previous 700 years. Once the spelling of the language is comprehensively reformed to bring it back into line with actual pronunciation, it would only require very small changes to keep it regular.

Johnson’s dictum that spelling need not/should not be updated because the English language will only keep on changing is, therefore, entirely the wrong approach. The Johnson dictum was not a valid reason for not reforming English spelling, but more like a rationalisation for not undertaking a project that at the time seemed rather too difficult to be manageable. If the dictum were to be taken seriously, it would mean never making any change to spelling – which is precisely why English is now locked into a very major problem.

How to accelerate literacy?

“What changes in the orthography will accelerate literacy?”

The change to orthography that would most effectively accelerate literacy would be a change to a fully logical spelling system firmly based as far as possible on the original sounds of the Latin alphabet. After suitable preparation and with strong support from governments this change can and should be officially introduced as from a given date.

A phonemic, non-disruptive orthography?

“Can English spelling be made more phonemic without being disruptive to those literate in the traditional spelling system?”

Given that the only realistic way of now achieving English spelling reform is through a comprehensive reform, considerable effort would be required by everyone initially in making the change. If properly planned and executed, however, the process of change need not be overly disruptive. Reform can be greatly facilitated by the making available of standard sentences which are spelt the same in both systems.

The first step?

“Should the first step be to get dictionary publishers to use a keyboard friendly key?”

A fully satisfactory new spelling system of a “Spelrait” kind could be achieved without any change being required to existing keyboard layouts. This would clearly have large advantages in the transitional stage, as well as subsequently.

Dictionary publishers would need to be persuaded to show spelling guides expressed in the new spelling, and this should be extended to as many English/foreign language conversions as possible.

“Piloting” the new system

All that is required for the process of reform to begin is for a significant number of people to start spelling English in a properly phonetic manner, using the Latin script *in the Latin manner*, rather

than some other historically altered way. “High frequency established patterns” in the existing corrupted spelling system should be disregarded. Bad habits are bad habits, and should be abandoned. There is no legal requirement for English to be spelt in the present ridiculous manner, and the English-speaking world has nothing to lose but its Norman-French and Johnsonian chains.

If “piloting” of the new system develops on a substantial scale along the above lines, e.g., via communications on the Internet, governments can begin to take a serious interest in the subject, and official support can then follow.

A suitably reformed spelling system such as Spelrait would in the short to medium term mostly be useful as way of teaching correct English pronunciation. As time goes on, it could become first an alternative orthography and then the basis for comprehensive reform of English spelling, building on its familiarity in the former more limited uses. This would be especially applicable in Asian countries, where literacy might be achieved in the first instance in Chinese ideographs or Indian scripts, rather than a European language.

The way to bring this about would be to persuade those teaching English as a foreign language to use Spelrait in their “pronunciation guides” as a substitute for (or alternative to) IPA spellings, and for dictionary producers, particularly English/foreign dictionaries, to do the same. Many people would start to wonder about which spelling system they would prefer to use, and would become a constituency for change.

Benefits and costs of reform

The overall benefits and costs are fundamental to any large scale real-life reform such as the reform of English spelling. Preliminary investigation indicates that the costs of converting throughout the world to a suitably and comprehensively reformed spelling system would be large, amounting to some tens of billions of dollars per annum, but the benefits of reform would be many times larger, eventually of the order of hundreds of billions of dollars per annum.

If 20,000,000 people in the US, for example, should be so seriously disadvantaged in their work activities through the perplexities of current English spelling as to suffer each, on average, ongoing economic losses of say (conservatively) \$5,000 per annum, that would represent an economic loss of \$100 billion per annum. And the losses concerned continue year after year.

The corresponding figure for the UK would be of the order of \$15 billion per annum.

As reported in the New York Times of 9 September 1993, businesses in the US estimate that they lose approximately \$30 billion a year nationwide in lost productivity, errors, and accidents attributable to poor literacy (American Literacy Council).

In this context, Brenda Bell, vice president of marketing for the National Alliance of Business, a US group of 3,000 businesses engaged in training and education issues, stated that, “We have estimated that only about 25% of the adult population is highly literate”.

Against the benefits of reform would need to be ranged the costs of reform, which even in the early years would be far less than the benefits, and would quickly trail away to a low figure. Similar results would occur also in the UK.

Even if the total cost of producing books in the US, including public information campaigns, was initially increased as a result of the reform by 20% — which would appear to be a gross over-estimate — the extra cost, at \$10 billion per annum, would be small compared with the benefits, as

well as short lived. The level of the benefits which would after some years be attained would be the \$100 billion per annum *plus* the benefits to the individuals affected in their leisure activities *plus* all the net benefits to the rest of the population. Similar ratios would also apply in the UK.

Costs of introducing and operating the new system would be minimised through effective planning, which would have the objective of avoiding any unnecessary confusion.

For reprinted books, the costs would be greatly reduced, particularly if these books already existed in electronic form, by the use of computer conversion programs. Reprinting of books would, in general, only be necessary when this reprinting would have been due to happen anyway.

Political support

Some, perhaps many citizens would resist the fact that they were being required to abandon something old and comfortable in favour of something new, and might not be prepared to place much value on the medium and longer term benefits of the change to themselves and/or the community.

In any process of actual reform, this would be perhaps the biggest obstacle to overcome. Because the extent of the change required for English and the number of individuals and countries affected is so large, the scale of the reform would be virtually unprecedented in history. However, other languages have managed reform on a relative scale almost as large. For example, Turkey converted from the Arabic alphabet to the completely different Roman alphabet after the First World War, and several countries are in the process currently of converting from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Roman alphabet. There was a major reform of Russian over a hundred years ago. French, Spanish, and German have all undergone recent reforms, albeit relatively minor.

There was a major joint reform of Dutch and Flemish after the Second World War, which changed the spelling of almost every word, involved close international collaboration, and was carried through very successfully in spite of initial opposition. Changes such as the Dutch/Flemish reform, however, do not come about quickly, but require a "wave of social agreement", based on a long process of education, publicity, and persuasion. It would be the same with English.

Strong political support for the reform, based on a proper understanding by the population at large of these issues, sympathetic public information campaigns, the identification by private interests (e.g., the mass media and publishing industry generally) of the economic benefits, and possibly even consideration of wider political benefits, would be essential.

Inter-governmental discussions

Inter-governmental discussions would be designed to lead to inter-governmental agreements, initially in principle, and then action plans.

International coordination of English spelling reform would engage mainly the US and the countries of the Commonwealth. The greater part of the international work would probably be done through Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings (CHOGM), but with the USA also involved. The necessary committees could be quickly established. There should be little trouble in coopting the necessary expertise in the various interested countries.

In view of the large number of countries which would be affected by English spelling reform, it is likely that the UN General Assembly would also take a close interest in the the subject and instruct its relevant committees and agencies to make helpful contributions and cooperate with CHOGM

and the US in developing and implementing the initiative.

It would be necessary for the governments of English-speaking countries, by common agreement, to require all government publications and documents and all documents having legal significance, e.g., many business documents, to be printed using the reformed spelling.

Governments in other countries with significant English language media would participate in the change-over on a similar basis. The United Nations and other international bodies would cooperate in relation to international publications.

As for other far-reaching international reforms, e.g., reform of industry protection or policy on greenhouse gas emissions, it could possibly be desirable for some financial assistance to be provided to less developed countries to enlist their willing cooperation.

Any relevant lessons from the experience with conversion to metric weights and measures, e.g., Britain and Australia, and conversion from motor vehicles driving on the left hand side of the road to driving on the right, e.g., Japan, would be applied.

The metric conversion process involved much preparation, re-design work, and the implementation of educational programs, and the change-over from driving on the left to driving on the right was implemented on a single day.

While both metric conversion and shifting from driving on the left to driving on the right were relatively simple matters compared with the reform of English spelling, nevertheless, many useful lessons could be derived from those reforms.

Implementation of reform

Coordination

It would be necessary to plan in some detail the activities of government, the legal fraternity, etc., in preparing for the changeover. In re-spelling and reprinting of legislation, the opportunity may be taken to consolidate existing pieces of legislation, and the opportunity may be taken to update maps, etc.

A detailed plan for cooperation between all affected parties would be worked out.

A preparation period of some years should be enough for affected industries to plan the disposition of their investments to avoid any losses that might otherwise be caused by the changeover to the new system.

Those institutions who wish to “beat the gun” in producing material according to the reformed system may be doing something useful. There would be trial runs on various aspects. Publishers producing books in the lead-up to the changeover would readily be able to prepare electronic versions of text according to both systems, if necessary.

Two country examples of how coordination would be carried out at the national level are the US and Australia.

Decisions on spelling reform in the US would be handled primarily at the federal level rather than the level of individual States. Federal legislation to coordinate the activities of the States would be necessary, probably with funding made conditional on compliance, as the States have responsibilities in such areas as education.

Federal Bills to support a move to English spelling reform in the US would need to go through all the negotiation stages that typically face any Bill in the US Congress. The Committee hearings for both Houses of Congress would be critical in gaining and consolidating Congressional support for the proposals.

Bills would need the support of the US President to become law, given that he/she has the power to veto any Bill passed by both Houses of Congress of which he/she disapproves (subject to being overridden by a two-thirds majority in the Congress). Strong positive support from the President for the Bill would be needed in practice, together with effective efforts to elicit public support. It would be necessary for the President to exercise strong leadership during the implementation stages, through the enforcement of suitable regulations and direction in the preparation of the national budget. It might be necessary for Congress to approve the formation of a new federal agency to coordinate the whole effort.

In Australia, the work of the Commonwealth (Australian) Government and the six State and two Territory governments is coordinated via such mechanisms as the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). As in the US, spelling reform and associated issues could not be dealt with effectively by either the Commonwealth or the States on their own, given the constitutional restrictions.

Under the Australian Constitution, the Commonwealth (Australian) Government is responsible for international relations and international agreements, and the States largely run the educational system. The operation of the legal system is divided between the Commonwealth and the States, and control of the corporate sector is also shared. The above arrangement is, for the most part, a successful model for achieving cooperative outcomes on matters of common interest, as the Commonwealth is able to bring a perspective on the national interest and the States and Territories are able to bring depth of knowledge on implementation and administration. COAG would probably be a suitable mechanism for dealing with the issue of spelling reform.

As the idea gained momentum, groups involved in industry, employment, and foreign affairs would become increasingly involved. Decisions would be developed through discussion of all aspects, including technical and political, at all relevant levels, and a consensus position would be reached, taking into account relevant international developments.

Change-over as from a given date

Governments in English-speaking countries would agree to implement the reform as from a given day. All newspapers and magazines issued by the mass media would be spelt in reformed spelling as from that given date.

The key to the reform of English spelling in the one step proposed is that well over 99% of the volume of English material published (counting all copies individually) is accounted for by newspapers and topical magazines. Less than 1% is accounted for by books and other types of published material.

Accordingly, the change-over to the reformed spelling system, on a given day, of all newspapers, etc. would mean that more than 99% of the total volume of published material would be brought under the reformed spelling system in one fell swoop. This change-over would require a coordinated decision to be made and implemented by only a very small number of influential people in the mass media. But the benefits would be available to the entire world.

If there was a good level of cooperation from publishers of other material, very close to 100% of all newly published material in the reformed spelling could be achieved almost immediately.

Given that many people read only newspapers and magazines, familiarisation and competence in the reformed spelling would proceed apace.

Preparatory work required

Although the change-over would occur on a given date, the preparation for the change-over would be spread over several years, with government encouragement and guidance.

During the preparatory phase to the change-over, all useful measures which could be put in place prior to the actual change-over date would be implemented.

These measures would include the following.

Education

School-children would for some years prior to the change-over date be taught the reformed spelling system as well as the traditional system. Emphasis on the reformed system would increase as the change-over date approached, but both systems would need to continue to be taught also for some years after the change-over date to assist children in reading the stock of books spelt in the old way.

Very extensive adult education classes, inter alia using the mass media, and emphasising the six key sentences, would be organised to familiarise adults with the reformed spelling system prior to the change-over, and there would be extensive educational material presented in the mass media.

As the date for the change-over approached, surveys would be conducted to determine the extent to which the message was getting through to the general public, and educational programs would be intensified and fine-tuned as necessary.

Dictionaries and personal names

Development of comprehensive general dictionaries would be developed based on the reformed spelling principles.

Development of technical dictionaries which would include the translation of technical terms into the reformed spelling, e.g., relating to physical, chemical, biological, zoological, medical, geographical terms, and common foreign names. Of the 3,000,000 or so words in the English language, very broadly defined, over 1,000,000 are technical names and terms, and there are at least 500,000 abbreviations in use.

Computerised dictionaries converting traditional spelling into reformed spelling, and also the obverse, would be organised and made available on a mass basis.

Reformed spelling of all personal names used in English-speaking countries could be arranged, together with official Government support and encouragement for the adoption and use of those spellings by the population at large.

Reprinting of publications

Legislation, or at least relatively recent legislation, other government documents, signs, maps, legal forms, and some contracts would be reprinted in reformed spelling.

At the introduction of the reform, previously published books will be more or less equally intelligible to all readers as newly published books. As time went on, the more useful of earlier books would be reprinted in the new spelling. Others would remain in the old spelling and would tend to gradually recede into history, but would always remain intelligible to those who wished to read them, as the gap between the old and the reformed spelling systems would remain basically unchanged.

As pointed out by Deans, "... if reading and writing were made easier, more people would want to read and write. Everything worth reading would in a very short time be transcribed into the new spelling and would be available to this new class of readers just as Greek and Latin books have been reproduced in English."

Re-printing of existing books would be greatly aided by the fact that the existing and reformed versions of spelling produce text of almost exactly the same length, which means that there would be no difficulties arising from the placement of pictures, graphs and diagrams in existing material.

Conversion programs could automatically respell every name and technical term throughout a document as soon as the correct respelling had been identified once. The process would be similar to spellcheck now.

Putting the issue on the public agenda

It is essential, as in any other major proposed beneficial reform, to get the issue firmly onto the public agenda as a serious issue. Without that, all the discussions in spelling reform societies, etc. will be best portrayed by the well-known Brueghel painting of a sturdy peasant apparently attempting to put out the moon by peeing on it.

Even if nothing more should come out of the examination of the issue than greater assistance to the very large number of illiterate or semi-literate people (including especially dyslexics) in the community, and/or a more effective way of helping school children in learning how to read and write under the existing spelling system, that would still be very worthwhile.

But far-reaching actual reform would be of vastly greater benefit.

Jim Carter

29 July 2005

7.4 Dr. Valerie Yule

International English Spelling: how systematic repair is possible

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SUMMARY 1

This paper sets out a way to remove the present unpredictability of present English spelling that combines the advantages of minimal change in the appearance of present spelling, systematization by principles, and a phonemic spelling for learners. It keeps accessible our heritage of print, past and present, while matching spelling more closely to the needs and abilities of readers and writers, learners and English language learners, using both visual and auditory reading processes, and improving visible relationships of English and international vocabulary.

This combination of advantages has been claimed to be impossible, but psychological and linguistic research and technological advances now make it feasible when accepted assumptions are challenged. The first of seven research-based principles is unexpected — to retain the irregular spellings of around thirty of the hundred most common words which make up about half of everyday text. For the rest, orthography follows a conventionalized standard; the basic alphabetic principle is used for initial learning spelling and dictionary keys, and is progressively modified into adult text modified by morphemic principles; spelling of homophones is only differentiated when essential; there are indicators for irregular stress; and some transitional features include personal choice for the spelling of names. The sound-symbol relationships suggested for investigation include consistent spelling patterns for final vowels, grave accents to distinguish long and short vowels when needed, mostly for beginners, different spellings for /s/ in word and case endings, and, for transitional reading, eight one-way alternative vowel spellings and three consonant alternatives. Rationale is given at each point.

Investigation is called for, with formal and informal experiments, and the establishment of an official International English Spelling Commission to oversee, monitor, and implement whatever improvements these or other investigations indicate. Methods of pilot testing are briefly discussed

INTRODUCTION

Most modern languages have implemented major or minor reforms of their writing systems in the past 150 years. English spelling alone has not been improved. Yet orthography requires the same human-engineering research and development as the rest of modern communications technology, since it is an essential tool (Yule, 1986). The challenge is to retain the advantages of present spelling but take out its difficulties, rather than more sweeping change. This policy has many practical advantages in retaining backwards compatibility and costs of implementation. Present spelling has useful features that suit the English language and its users, and that are overlooked by proposers of new systems or plain phonemics. There is a basic underlying system that can be made consistent by applying principles rather than ad hoc series of rules, which has been another approach. The assumptions against improving English spelling can be turned into ways to improve

it. For example, Noam Chomsky's work on deep phonology (Chomsky & Halle, 1968, and Carol Chomsky, 1970) is still misinterpreted as a key argument against spelling reform, to his expressed distress. The way to go is to apply 'Chomsky' to improve spelling.

Do not let your hackles rise instinctively against any changes, at least for ten minutes. Any change in a long-learned habit is affected by psychologist Gordon Allport's insight that we can stand our own spit but other people's spit is revolting. Spelling is like spit. Your own misspellings are OK to you but anyone else's altered spellings can seem to you — well, spittable. That is, until they are familiar and you become used to them. We no longer spell *develop* with an e on the end, or *frenzy* with a *ph* — but that took us over a hundred years, and there are still doughty diehards fighting these changes.

Yet while dictionary English spelling is static, informal spelling is in flux if not chaos, as is everywhere observed and often deplored — from Text Messages on mobile phones, decisions to stop marking down undergraduates' exam papers for spelling errors, advertising spelling, and linguist Vivian Cook's revelations in his little book about broccoli in the graveyard that is spelling (Cook, 2004). Further documentation of the surprising state of spelling today is set out in *The Book of Spells and Misspells* (Yule 1005), which I hope everyone will buy for their friends and for a good laugh.

Seven principles are presented here for investigation, to clean up the underlying English spelling system to be predictable, yet change as little as 2.6% of letters in everyday text. The principles turn spelling reform assumptions on their heads and cut Gordian knots. They are research-based, to consider the needs and abilities of all users — readers, writers, learners, computers and international communicators. They use both visual and auditory channels for reading and writing, keep our heritage of print accessible, and improve, not lose, visible relationships of words within the language and with international vocabulary in other languages.

PRINCIPLE 1.

Retain half of everyday text unchanged. The rationale for this conceptual breakthrough is simple. Only one hundred common words make up about half of everything you read, and only thirty-one of these ubiquitous words are irregular. Thirty-one words are not too many even for beginners to acquire explicitly as 'tricky sight-words' for rote-learning; they are capable of learning up to forty words from flash-cards without decoding clues, and can be assured that the rest of English spelling will be manageable. Contrast the present burden. Suggested 'sight-words' are: *all almost always among are come some could should would half know of off one only once other pull push put as was what want who why*, and international word endings *-ion/-tion/-ssion* plus *-zion* — as in *question, passion, vizion*.

PRINCIPLE 2

Continue to regard spelling as a standardized convention, as it is now, but systematized and the simpler the better — for example *banana* for 'banana', despite its three different 'a' sounds. *Dog* can be read by anyone as saying *dog*, regardless of how you say *dog*. That is, spelling representation is like a line sketch of a man that is recognized for such the world over, rather than a photograph that is of a specific man. The traditional aim of phonemic reform, spelling as you speak, comes to grief in decisions over choice of dialects, as if spelling were to be like the photograph. Instead, the standardized pronunciation of words would be taken from present standard UK and American dictionaries, but applied in spelling as in formal speech-making, not slurred as in casual talk, for example, *indescrībabl* rather than, say, *'ndscribbl*, *independant* not *independnt*, *pictūr* not *pikcha*. When you say words like *spesial* or *qestion* quickly, they sound like *speshl* and *kweschn*. (For present purposes the definition of a phoneme is a speech sound that discriminates words in a language.) Users would speak with their own accents, as now.

This clear representation of the full structure of words would help to keep global Englishes similar in pronunciation rather than drifting into further dialects and slurrings. National Englishes would

maintain their individuality in their vocabulary development, which can be shared with the world too, as well as in our distinctive accents, which are inevitable, and indeed charming, unless global broadcasting homogenizes us all. In my own multicultural Australia, the diversity of the pronunciation of English, and our tolerance of this, demonstrates how faint now is the possibility of a global closely phonemic spelling system — broadband is essential.

There are already several thousand words with alternative but similar spellings in dictionaries. This flexibility would be extended, especially during transition, but not to the extent of disturbing automatic visual recognition in reading.

PRINCIPLE 3

The original base of English spelling, the alphabetic principle that letters represent sounds, is the base in its systematic repair. Beginners start with direct sound-symbol correspondence, it is used in dictionary pronunciation keys, and is acceptable for informal writing. Vowel letters *a e i o u* represent both long and short vowels, a massive simplification, but long vowels can have a grave accent as diacritic when needed, or be given the 'silent e' treatment — the latter chiefly to enable recognition reading in present spelling, not required for memorizing or writing.

Letters match sounds. The details of this section are tentative.

a. Consonants.

As in bad dad fad gag hag jag keg leg meg nag peg quik rag sag tag van wag ax yen zen chin shin this thin which sink sing plezhur. Distinctions are unnecessary for th. For now, c = k and q = kw.

Dubld consonants have 3 uses only:

1. Morphemic: Final /ss/ for single nouns and adjectives, as in the prinsess and the prinsses found the dragons' dens in the denss forest.
2. Showing irregular stress — comitty distinguishd from comity.
3. RR to distinguish a short vowel when needed as in carrot corral currant. (Contrast car, coral cur.)

b. Vowels

Vowel spellings are based on existing dominant spelling patterns.

a e i o u as in mat pet bit not cut

A E I O U as in màt pèt bit nòt cùt or, in transition, as in mate, pete, bite, note, cute

ar er air or au as in car perturb (ur = stressed) hair fort taut

ow oy oo oo as in round boil boot ?buuk

At present there is no distinctiv spelling for the vowel sound as in *wolf could put book*. What is the solution? *wlf cd pt bk?* *wwlf cwd pwt bwk?* *wulf cud put buk?*

Consistent spelling patterns for final vowels

The second step for learners is consistent spelling patterns for final vowels – as in *pity, may, be hi-fi, go, emu, spa, her, hair, for, saw, cow, boy, too*. This regularizes present common conventions for vowels in final place, which add to the visual distinctiveness of words in reading for meaning, and maintain visual appearance.

Sequences of vowels are very simply represented. Accents for lerners are optional.

a - bazaar pàella dàis (paid) càos taut

e - idèa, (year) (meet) bèing crèol hidèus

i - dial dièt fliing ìon piùs

o - òasis, (boat) pòet gòing(boil) Zoo/zòolojy out

u - dùal sùet flùid dùo inocùus

For reading, seven additional one-way vowel spellings can be recognized in reading present spelling, but need not to be learned for writing — *ai, ea, ee, igh, oa, ew, ir*. Each of these spelling patterns is pronounced only one way, not many ways as now, and nobody has to learn these spelling patterns to use themselves.

Details of three considerations that apply are discussed in appendices below that are only summarized here:

1. The English primary vowel system rather than ‘Continental’.

- a. The English short vowels a e i o u are used in the English language far more often than the Continental sounds as in pasta, ballet, police, depot tabu, so changed spellings would be fairly drastic.
- b. The toggling of short and long vowels in English means that there are great advantages in similar visual representation of word families (the Chomsky line). This is possible when both long and short vowel spellings can appear as a e i o u by using à è ì ò ù for the long vowels. I do not see any other solution.
- c. In latin-alfabet languages of the world a great deal of shared English and classically-derived vocabulary is visually similar when the English versions keep their present spelling/sound relationship.

2. The effects of commonality of visual representation of long and short vowels for reading for meaning.

3. The advantages when an initial phonemic learning spelling modifies rapidly and systematically into adult text that also maintains the ability to read present spelling.

A passage from *Don Quixote* in the fonemic spelling for learners, with consistent spellings for final vowels, plus 31 very common irregular words learnt as ‘sight words’.

In a vilaj in La Mancha in Spàn, of which I cannot remember the nàm, ther livd not long ago one of thòz òld-fashond jentlmen, who ar never without a lanss upon a stand, an òld shèld, a thin horsse and a grayhound. He àt bèf mor than muton; and, with minsd mèt on mòst nits, lentils on Frìdays, and a pijon on Sundays, he consùmd thre-quarters of his income. The rest was spent on a plush còt, velvet briches, with velvet slipers for holidays; and a sùt of the best hòmspun cloth, which he gáv himself for wurking-days. The master was nearly fifty years òld, with a helthy and strong complexion, lèn-bodyd and thin-fàsð, an erly rizer, and a luver of hunting. Some say his surnàm was Quixada, ie. ‘lantern-jaws’, tho this dus not mater much tu us, as long as we kèp strictly tu the trùth in every point of this history.

Comment. I cannot see why a fonemic base for learners need be any further from present spelling than the exampl above.

4. Morfemic principles

Visual representation of units of meaning promotes fast automatic recognition of meaning, and gives clues to vocabulary and grammar. Three morfemic principles modify the alfabetic base.

1. Consistent spelling -s/-es and -d/-ed for verb and plural endings, even if the sound is like /z/ or /t/ as in The cats, dogs and foxes barkd, snarld and shouted.
2. Words are not changed by additions, — as in dàzys, downsìze.
3. Consistent spellings for classical afixes — as in education, passion, vizion, depiction.

5. Words that sound the same.

Only a handful of sets of words that are ‘homofones’, may need to be spelled differently to avoid confusion, eg possibly *too/to (?tu) /two, for/fore/four/ know/no*. Most homofones are already spelled the same, and the meaning is automatically directed by context. You can check this up yourself. In the last few paragraphs, homofonic homografs have included *second, present*,

conventions, just, long, short, can, pronounced, fast, base, even, sound, like, letter, and tense.

6. Indicators of irregular stress.

Irregular stress in words can cause confusion and even incomprehension for learners, especially foriners. It can be indicated by dubld letters as in *comitty, umbrella, and lapell* contrasted with *làbel*; by syllabic consonants when schwa sounds are minimal, as in *in melncoly*; and with 'ur' for the stressed 'er' sound, as in *perturb*.

This is a flexibl matter and adult text may simplify, e.g. *predicament* rather than *predicament*, but both acseptabl.

7. Some transitional features, and personal spellings for names and places

Silent initial letters are temporarily retained to avoid problems with dictionary serches, as with *psicology* and *knot*.

The spelling of names of pepl and places are the owners' responsibility and right.

Spellings for French imported words — Most imported words can be given an English spelling, but some, especialy French, are so problematic to respel they may be best left until the pronunciation has 'englishd', as with *beef, pork* and *mutton*. Lerners can be given a page that lists Continental sounds and untransliterabl forin spelling patterns and pronunciation rules — e.g. for **bouffant boutique boudoir bouffe bouillon bouquet bourgeois bourgeoisie** — rather than attempting, as some have tried, *buurzhwaazee* or *boekai* — until eventually such words become mor anglicised in everyday speech, as in perhaps, *depo, amatur, cadet*.

Applications

The result is spelling without traps. As fonts and handwriting can be varied according to purpose, so 'spelling without traps' can be adapted to vary according to three purposes – for reading; for reading aloud and showing pronunciation by adding occasional acsents for long vowels and dubld letters for unexpected stress; and thirdly for writing and initial lerning.

1. **Spelling without traps for reading** is almost identical to what we now have, but is without traps. The only training required for present readers is to realize that sounds as in the letter names A E I O U can be represented with grav accents as in *à è ì ò ù*.

During this transition, new readers will be enabled to read some spelling variations, which have one-way pronunciation, but new writers will only need one-way spelling.

2. **Spelling without traps for reading with pronunciation clues** includes grav accents to show long vowels and dubld letters to show unexpected stress.

3. **Spelling without traps for beginners and for writing.** Phonemic with minimal modification. Writers are not bothered with having to recall alternative spellings. See example above.

Example of **Spelling without traps for reading, with pronunciation clues.**

In a villaj in La Mancha in Spain, of which I cannot remember the name, ther livd not long ago one of those òld-fashond jentlmen, who ar never without a lanss upon a stand, an òld shield, a thin hors and a grayhound. He ate beef mor than mutton; and, with minsd meat on mòst nights, lentils on Fridays, and a pijon on Sundays, he consùmd three-quarters of his income. The rest was spent on a plush coat, velvet britches, with velvet slippers for holidays; and a sute of the best homespun cloth, which he gave himself for wurking-days. The master was nearly fifty years òld, with a helthy and strong complexion, lean-bodyd and thin-fàsed, an erly rizer, and a luver of hunting. Some say his surname was Quixada, ie. 'lantern-jaws', tho this dus not matter much tu us, as long as we keep strictly to the trùth in every point of this history.

What investigation and action? Informal change in English spelling should not just add more uncoordinated chaos, as has happened with some past changes intended to improve.

Spelling improvement needs informal experiments by anyone — test out yourself what you like when you like. We can conduct our own experiments on the Net, and rebel at some of the stupidities that for so long have been enforced as a social strategy to keep the hoi polloi off the ladder of social mobility. Anyone could start with cutting out surplus letters that serve no purpose in representing meaning or pronunciation, as in *acomodate*, *delicat*, *disiplin*, *gardian*, *forin*. (See [Appendix D](#) on surplus letters in words.)

In the experimental pilot stages, publications can decide on their own house-styles, which may mix the three levels, or amend present spellings towards them. There may be more trends to 'spelling pronunciation' — speaking as it is spelled — as well as the dominant trend to streamline our written words.

Minor details such as predictable conventions for schwa in suffixes can also be sorted out, but there must be research — and official grants for R & D in this neglected branch of communications technology. For some reformers, R & D is a word connoting postponement and expense, but no one can claim that it has not produced amazing practical results in all other areas of modern IT.

Once spelling change gets on the way, it can move fast — as it has with text messaging, but it must not move into just other forms of chaos. English spelling has been a social oppression, and a global oppression. It needs an International English Spelling Commission, because the English language now belongs to the world, and not to a chosen few.

To be passive and not to rise up against these barriers to literacy represents what has been called 'a failure of the human spirit'.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Should the primary vowel letters a e i o u represent English or 'Continental' pronunciation in English spelling?

'Continental' spellings for the five basic vowel sounds a e i o u, as in *pasta ballet police depot tabu* are used in a significant proportion of spelling systems in the roman alphabet, and romaji transliterations for languages such as Japanese and Chinese. It would seem an attractive and sensible proposition for English spelling system to join this international usage. Many (but not all) learners of the English language would then not have to change the values of these five vowel letters from their accustomed usage. However, the very fact that English is currently the major international language turns out to be one of the many reasons why the primary English vowel sounds should continue to be represented as they are now, but consistently, without present unpredictable variations.

The English language has around twenty vowel sounds, more than most languages. Some, such as Hawaiian, Japanese, Italian and Spanish, have five or hardly more, so that it is no problem for them that the roman alphabet has only five primary vowel letters, *a e i o u*. English, however, does have problems, and the many different solutions over time have only made the spellings worse. There are over 218 different ways to spell those twenty vowel sounds.

In the future, English pronunciation may collapse its many vowels into say ten, or experience yet another Great Vowel Shift as in medieval times, but current distinctive features of the language require continuity in the present usage for the five primary vowels a e i o u as the short vowel sounds as in *man men bit not but*.

English 'short' and 'long' vowel sounds *a e i o u* and AEIOU (the sounds in the letter names) are the predominant vowels in English text, where usually around 60% of words will contain short vowels and 20% long vowels, so that change in their representation is a significant disruption. The five most common vowel sounds in English are the so-called 'short' vowels, and are usually spelled with the five primary vowel letters. These five vowel sounds often present difficulties for foreigners to discriminate and pronounce, and have no clear representation in the 'Continental' vowel system, altho they may occur in some other European languages.

The 'Continental' vowel sounds occur significantly less frequently in English, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The frequencies in a million words of English text of 'English' and Continental pronunciations for the five primary vowel letters a e i o u

English 'a' as in <i>mat</i> , including 30% unstressed as in <i>about</i>	212,867
Continental 'a' as in <i>pasta</i> , <i>n</i> 1,475, plus spellings for the sound as in <i>car</i> , 18,791	20,266
English 'e' as in <i>pet</i> , including 30% unstressed as in <i>system</i> , plus even more obscure, as in <i>demand</i> , <i>n</i> 25,699.	185,608
Continental 'e' as in <i>ballet</i>	63,174
English 'i' as in <i>pig</i> , including 1% unstressed as in <i>possible</i> , plus even less stressed as in <i>edit</i> , 4,504.	232,238
Continental as in <i>police</i>	75,063
English 'o' as in <i>dog</i> , including 22% unstressed as in <i>atom</i>	113,858
Continental 'o' as in <i>depot</i>	48,485
English 'u' as in <i>sun</i> , including 1% unstressed as in <i>focus</i> .	92,862
Continental 'u' as in <i>debut</i>	22,214

(Compiled from Rondthaler & Lias, *Dictionary of Simplified American Spelling*, Scholars Edition, 1986, pp 305–397, showing frequencies in a million words.)

That is, in 1,000,000 English words there are a total of 675,035 Anglo pronunciations of *a e i o u*, that is, up to 76%. In the million words, there is a total of only 228,202 Continental pronunciations, that is, roughly 23%.

To use Continental vowel spellings for the primary vowels would clearly change far more of English text, especially if it meant that the English primary vowels were spelled with digraphs, two letters, lengthening the spelling of English words, when the trend and the demands are that it should become shorter and more streamlined.

The English short vowel sounds are often hard for foreigners to distinguish and pronounce in any case, but they are clearly a staple of the English language and some approximation must be made. For example, it would cause less disruption to the appearance of English spelling and of English vocabulary internationally to use the primary vowel letters for all instances of the Anglo sound *a* in *mat*. This would regularise traditional spellings such as *meringue*, *have*, *plait*, *guarantee*, *salmon*, and *harangue* into *merang*, *hav*, *plat*, *garantee* and *samon*, but all except one of these instances require only omission of redundant letters, which is the least disrupting change to the appearance of text and does not affect reading for meaning.

2. The relation of short and 'long' vowels in word-families

The English language has a special linguistic relationship between the so-called 'short' vowel sounds *a e i o u* and the 'long' sounds pronounced as in the letter names A E I O U, in a significant proportion of English word families. Noam Chomsky has made of this an argument for the visibl representation of what he perceives as underlying structure.

Present spelling may show this relationship of words visually, facilitating reading for meaning, as in *nation/national*, *finite/infinity*, *reduce/reduction* — altho not nearly as often or consistently as the

Chomsky theory of optimal spelling supposes. A spelling repair could make these relationships visible more consistently when needed for learners and when discriminations are needed (as in the suggested use of grav accent diacritics, as in *nàtion/national*, for learners and when needed — which is not always.)

3. Visible relationships of vocabulary shared by English and other languages facilitate reading and understanding. Much modern vocabulary has similar forms across the world, as also vocabulary with Romance, classical and Germanic origins. Often enough this shared vocabulary is pronounced with English short vowels in English, and with Continental or other vowels in other languages, as in *dame/dame*, *gas/gas*, *man/mann*, *material/material*, *mild/mild nature/natur*, *number/nummer*, *cadet/cadet*, *fruit/frucht*, *under/unter*. In an Indonesian children's picture book, for example, 80% of the words were modern imports — *alkohol*, *dokter*, *kompres*, *pil*, *dekor*, *kamera*, *televisi*, *mikrofon*, *monitor*, *musik*, *rol film*, *sekretaris*, *generator*, *hanggar*, *helikopter*, *kabin*, *kompresor*, *mobil*, *mobil*, *pilot*, *kompas*, *kronometer*, *antena*, *interkom*, *traktor*, *transformator*, *voltmeter*, *basket*, *kroket*, *ping-pong*, *raket*, *ski*, *pelican*, *vultur*. (The K consonant is familiar enough to us, but switching of vowel spellings would slow visual recognition.)

4. Greater disruption and reduced backward compatibility when English spelling is greatly changed. There may be a breakthrough to a writing system that can cross languages, without the problems of Chinese or Blissymbols, and with phonemic representation only needed for local grammars, but until then, repair of English spelling system is more useful and practicable than radical change. For example, observe in the following sentence the high proportion of print that would be affected by changing the spelling of the five primary English vowel sounds:

Thx need for cxmpxtxbxltx wxth thx xmmxns xmount xf prxnt xn Englsh txdy xnd our globxl
hxrxtxge xf prxnt xn Englsh xs xn xmpoxtnt cxnsxdxration.

5. Pronunciation of English vowels by foreign learners of English

The 20+ English vowel sounds present many overseas learners with problems of discrimination and pronunciation, especially for those who may be accustomed to only five or hardly more. There is only one advantage in applying the Continental vowel system. Learners of English accustomed to the spelling of the five Continental vowels can experience some initial confusion when the primary vowels are pronounced differently. However, they are likely to have difficulties in discrimination of spoken English primary vowels in any case, the usage is not a bar to comprehension, and the transfer is not a serious handicap.

As long as a new vowel system is consistent and they can distinguish the sounds, learners can transfer quickly — for example, English-speakers can learn German or Italian pronunciation from principles that can be listed on a quarto sheet. Research on Serbo-Croatian biscriptalism can also be useful on how readers can transfer to different linguistic environments.

In short, the reasons for retention of the English pronunciation of the five primary vowel letters are:

1. Predominance of the five 'short' vowel sounds in English speech
2. The relationship of short and 'long' vowels in word-families, discussed further in Appendix B.
3. The visible relationships of vocabulary in English and other languages that facilitate reading and understanding,
4. The need for backward compatibility with the amount of print in English today and the global heritage of print in English, which probably outweigh the amount of print in all other languages.

APPENDIX B. The effect of commonality in visual representation of short and long primary vowels for reading for meaning.

The 'Chomsky theory' and diacritics for 'long' vowels

A diacritic is a mark added to a character to change its pronunciation.

The five 'name' vowels sounded as in A E I O U and often called 'long vowels' are not a proper linguistic set can be regarded as one in practice.

1. They make a set as far as ordinary people are concerned, because from childhood they know them as the names of the five primary vowel letters a e i o u, and 'magic e' is a shared spelling device.

2. In the English language long vowels often toggle with the short vowel sounds a e i o u within word families, and often share spellings, as in *national/nation, finish/final, disposition/dispose, production/produce* (but not always, as in *repetition/repeat* and *succeed/success*). Noam Chomsky interpreted these spelling relationships of words as derived from underlying deep phonological structure (Chomsky & Halle, 1968), and Carol Chomsky (1970) gave this as an argument that present English spelling is 'optimal', because often (but not always) the same morpheme is spelled the same way regardless of whether it is pronounced long or short, or even slurred into insignificance.

The 'long' vowels are the biggest bugbear in English spelling. The hotchpotches of expedients to spell them are major booby traps (see list below) while reformers' 'sensible' respellings (e.g with two letters to represent one long vowel sound) can make words look so different that they are often immediately rejected as uncouth, with no opportunity to become familiar and thus accepted.

A solution is single vowel letters with optional grav accents added as needed. Advantages:

- **Improved visible relationship of short and long vowels** in word families, *plus* pronunciation clue, is a neat answer to the common 'Chomskyan' objection to spelling reform. Diacritics for long vowels help learners to identify both meanings and pronunciation of related words, such as *pròsèd/pròsèssion national/ nàtion, repetition/ repèt, finish/final, dispozition/ dispòz, production/ prodùs, succsèss/sucsèd, repetition/repèt*. The testable claim is that such linkage also helps skilled readers to read text faster for meaning
- **Aid for learners.** J H Martin used macron diacritics over long vowels in teaching beginners to read. They added the marks in their own writing only if they chose. This also suits learners' 'natural spelling' tendencies to spell long vowels like short ones eg. *Suzi mit lik an iscrem*.
- **Economy.** Singl letters are then suficient to spell ten of the 19 or so English vowel sounds, and only two letters are needed for multipl vowel sequences such as *pòet*.
- **The minimal visibility of grav accents** does not disrupt skilled reading as macrons, dieresis or other diacritics might. The direction of the accents goes with the flow of the eye and flow of hand-writing. Colons (:) or 'silent e' can be substituted when email, typewriters or hasty writers cannot handle accents, but accents disrupt reading less, they can be made single-stroke on keyboards, are available for most fonts in word-processors, while customizing, internet and email formating capacities are continually improving. Accents can be applied according to house style, personal preference or the practicalities of transmission. Experience will show what is really needed.
- **Limited necessity.** Long-vowel diacritics are needed for less than one word in five and for adult text may be altogether omitted, as in *baby, medium, kind, most, education*. Context also often gives suficient clues to make diacritics unnecessary.

Examples of the many traditional spellings of the long vowels

a *bake play baby wait raise maize great eight straight dahlias gaols they reign ballet matinees veils bouquets 17*

e *we beat chief street police machine please freeze cheese receive people believe key league 14*

i *hi-fi my die like light sign either dye island guide eyed diamond aisle choir 14*

- o *old float know rogue chauffeur depot mauve brooch shoulder folk though, beau ghost Cologne 14*
- u *music new due refuse you view Hugh beautiful ewe deuce feud juice lieu fugue 14*

Appendix C. An initial learning spelling as the base

The concept of an initial learning spelling has been around for a long time, as with Pitman's initial teaching alphabet, i.t.a, which gave learners the shoehorn into how to read, but they had to adapt later to traditional spelling (TO), not all with success, particularly in spelling. Some think that an initial learning spelling that also operates as dictionary keys can itself lead into eventual adoption of a spelling system that is different from standard spelling conventions, while for the meantime, learners can acquire and cope with present spelling as well. However, this overlooks the important role of automatic visual word recognition in learning to read and skilled reading, whether this is the initial strategy or consequent from first decoding. To learn one set of letter strings and then adapt visually to another is not the most efficient way to go. It cannot be compared with Japanese initial learning of linear semi-syllabic *hiragana* and then learning Chinese characters.

In the repaired English spelling that is proposed here, the original alphabetic base that is first acquired by learners is almost immediately modified by the further principles, so that even within weeks it is possible to read a spelling system that is 'traditional spelling cleaned up', and they can begin to read it almost from the start.

Appendix D. Surplus letters in English spelling

Up to 6% of letters in words in English text are surplus, serving no purpose in representing meaning or pronunciation, and indeed often mislead. Individuals can make their own first step to improve their spelling by dropping letters they clearly see are useless.

- Efficiency. Save time and paper — and even hassle in trying to remember what the extra letters are and where they should go.
- Informal trends everywhere are to streamline. The commonest reason for spelling 'mistakes' is leaving out the surplus letters or putting them in the wrong place. See the 16-word test below.
- My extensive experiments in readers' response to omission of surplus letters show that for most people disruption is insignificant, many surplus-cut spellings are never even noticed, and poor readers can benefit.
- Omitting surplus letters only arouses negative responses from most readers when *the* is cut to *th*, probably because *the* is the most familiar and recurring word in text, so that it 'hits me in the face' when its three letters are cut by a third.
- On the other hand, readers take longer to adjust to changed letters in words. Adding letters changes the appearance even more and encounters most resistance. Spelling reformers can check this out with their own proposals.
- 'F' rather than 'ph' for the sound /f/ is a welcomed improvement, which has been increasing since 1750, as for example, *phrenzy* gives way to *frenzy*. 'F' is shorter, it is the modern translation of the Greek original, and we often see it internationally, as at airports, with 'telefon' 'fotograf' etc.

The Sixteen Word Spelling Test

for anyone who thinks they are a good speller. Some or all of these words may be incorrectly spelled. Write them out correctly.

acomodate . . .	exessiv	miniture	professr
gage	unparaleld . . .	disapoint	gardian
mischivus	psycology . . .	sovren	disiplin
iliterat	ocasion	recomend	tecnicly

See <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~ozideas/16sp.htm> for details of findings from this simple test. Most people, even literacy educators, cannot write out all these 16 words correctly. The missing letters are not even missed, or cannot be replaced correctly.

Appendix E. Spelling without traps for readers retains 31 very common words with irregular spellings; several different spelling patterns may represent one speech sound, but all are consistent, except for two possible pronunciations for *c/ce* and *g/ge*. The five primary vowels may be long or short.

Don Quixote is a suitable hero to illustrate this project.

In a village in La Mancha in Spain, of which I cannot remember the name, there lived not long ago one of those old-fashioned gentlemen, who are never without a lance upon a stand, an old shield, a thin horse and a grayhound. He ate beef more than mutton; and, with mutton meat on most nights, lentils on Fridays, and a pigeon on Sundays, he consumed three-quarters of his income. The rest was spent on a plush coat, velvet breeches, with velvet slippers for holidays; and a suite of the best homespun cloth, which he gave himself for working-days. The master was nearly fifty years old, with a healthy and strong complexion, lean-bodied and thin-faced, an early riser, and a lover of hunting. Some say his surname was Quixada, i.e. 'lantern-jaws', though this does not matter much to us, as long as we keep strictly to the truth in every point of this history.

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2. **Further examples of research in cognitive psychology and education** to show that much of the necessary work has already been done and still stands today. However, highly relevant fields such as computational linguistics, artificial intelligence and neurolinguistics are advancing so rapidly that references would soon be outdated. The tasks now are co-ordination, filling in the gaps, and the practical application of spelling improvement.

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 - Plus unpublished monographs on improving English spelling, 1997–2004, which contain basic information on why spelling needs repair, spelling as communications technology, barriers that prevent improvement, teaching literacy, bringing in the future, games and curiosities, and further references.

3. **Fuller bibliographies directly on spelling reform** are available in publications and website of the Simplified Spelling Society, www.spellingsociety.org, the web pages of Dr Steve Bett, and Ozideas Internet pages, examples below.

4. **Some Internet pages on spelling, literacy and writing systems.**

For accounts of background in research and theory, and the needs and abilities of users and learners, see: <http://www.valerieyule.com.au/spelling.htm>, <http://www.valerieyule.com.au/spelref.htm>, and other links from www.valerieyule.com.au on improving spelling for learners, spelling reform to help writers and readers, 7 principles to improve spelling (to be updated, spelling principles for research, English spelling for international use, criteria for spelling improvement, bibliography for spelling reform, surplus letters & spelling reform, the basic English spelling system in half a page, chart of present English vowel spellings, the 16-word spelling test, alphabetic writing systems, and problems of writing systems.

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7.5 Dr. Valerie Yule

The case for an International Commission on English Spelling [\[1\]](#)

Summary

The case for an International Commission on English Spelling has six aspects. Improvement of English spelling to make it more user-friendly is both more urgent and more feasible today. An International Commission on English Spelling is needed to monitor investigations and research, to consider whether orthographic repair or any drastic changes or completely new system reform is more advisable, and to oversee implementation, while individuals and groups remain free and encouraged to also investigate and experiment. For too long spelling reform has been a segregated province for hundreds of individual schemes often uninformed by modern communications research and global practicalities. Also to be considered is the composition of the Commission, drawing on international expertise in all relevant fields and the interest and co-operation of governments; its auspices, funding and sponsors; its means of operation; and possible directions. It can learn from the mistakes as well as the successes of past and contemporary national orthographic commissions and the modern design and implementation of hundreds of new writing systems for languages with none. An epoch-making and timely outcome from the 2005 Mannheim Conference on English Spelling would be a public call for the International Commission and initiating a Working Party to work for its establishment.

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

'The greatest barrier to the wider spread of English lies in its spelling.' R. E. Zachrisson, Upsalla, Sweden, 1931. Foreigners have always been keen to reform English spelling.

An International Commission on English Spelling under international auspices would have been impossible and even unthinkable, until very recently. Now it is feasible and more urgent, and its spin-offs would extend beyond spelling repair itself.

Some spelling reformer groups and individuals may think that such an official organisation is superfluous, that global improvement of English spelling can be achieved without it, that the solutions are known already and require only to gain acceptance, and that a Commission would be expensive, bureaucratic, dilatory, and ineffectual except to postpone reform or impose disastrous dictats by whimsy. This paper sets out the necessity for a Commission, its potential functions, and how its possible defects can be prevented.

In the 19th century Anglo-American 'Great Leap Forward' in industrialization, scientific advance and social reform, a natural part of this wave was to seek reform of English spelling. The movement was supported by thousands of eminent people. In post-World War II, the wave of reconstruction and reform included two Spelling Reform Bills that narrowly missed being passed in the British Parliament.

However, during both periods, enthusiasm was not matched by knowledge. Unchallenged and fallacious assumptions were held among reformers as well as among conservatives (Yule 2001) The media attitude of ridicule was often understandable. The practical and financial difficulties in implementing any systematic change were enormous, and the vested interests with power saw no benefit to themselves. Most people regard what everyone else accepts as normal and right. Two hundred years ago, most people regarded slavery as normal and right, and believed that to stop slavery would wreck the economies of Britain and America. A spelling barrier to literacy is a lesser oppression, but a barrier still widely regarded as normal and right, and impossible to alter.

Yet in today's electronic age, great technological changes in printing, publishing and communication make transliteration cheap, efficient and accessible. Global inter-communication can be instant. A simple Google search raises thousands of web pages about all aspects of spelling and literacy. Education in literacy, including self-help, is facilitated by access to electronic resources. Databases can be collated and public, and research and debate open to all. The internet is wide open for extensive and cheap experimentation.

The ownership of the English language is now in the international arena, because people not native-speakers who use English now outnumber those born to it. Now that English spelling is communications technology for the world's lingua franca, its purveyors have no right to continue nursing spelling antiquities and 'conspicuous consumption' in the orthography that handicap education and communication internationally as well as at home. Because English spelling now belongs to the world, an International English Spelling Commission is a necessary body to collate, promote, monitor, deliberate and implement changes in spelling to make it user-friendly for the world. Individual reformers may be unaware how much their schemes may represent their own local dialect and that more than phonology is involved in an efficient writing system, while even the ownership of English speech may be moving offshore (Jenkins, 2000). Over 150 years spelling reform has got nowhere in large part due to isolationism from the communications research that is making such advances in other areas of its technology.

There have been such rapid and extensive changes in the world in the past two decades that English spelling is like a stick in the sands before the tide. In the communications technology of which it is a basic element, hardly anything else has remained unchanged over the past 150 years, including the writing systems of other modern languages, which have mostly all been reformed to a major or minor degree, including international systems such as Spanish and Portuguese. There are those who claim that it does not matter that English spelling is unpredictable.

Even in education there are those who write articles claiming that print literacy is no longer essential for the masses, because it is upstaged by Hypertext, voice-overs, graphics and logo-language. But to abandon the hope of universal book-literacy is to abandon hopes of working democracies, of citizenship as part of being a full human being, of informed governments, of full access to our world heritage of civilization (so much of it in English, regardless of its origin), of contact with minds and hearts distant in time and space, and of full equipment to face the unparalleled challenges and dangers of our time. There are voices aware of the vital need for localism to co-exist with globalism, that are angry that there should be any lingua franca all. They do not see its advantages in how it can save cultures and share them with the world, and how local languages might still co-exist rather than be extinguished by drowning. A global lingua franca does not ensure peace, but it can help to make peace work in every area of life and science.

Tremendous advances in communications, cognitive psychology, linguistics, sociolinguistics and neuropsychology now provide solid research findings to collate in considering reforms. It is shown how a writing system must facilitate reading processes as well as learning processes, that learning to read requires more than simple sound-symbol relationships, that phonology can in fact be difficult for beginners, and that real improvement of a writing system requires understanding of the actual needs and abilities of all categories of learners and users. Anglo parochialism about English orthography is being broken down by awareness of so much to be learned from other writing systems of the world, and how they change, and how they facilitate or impede learning to read. The International English Spelling Commission would be informed by the knowledge and experience of those who have been involved with writing system reforms in their own countries and regions, their successes and their failures. We also know more about how people want to spell, and about ongoing informal spelling trends not yet recognized by dictionaries. We know more about adjusting to change, and the psychology of resistance.

Functions of an International English Spelling Commission

A proposed manifest: To prepare, authorize, promote and monitor repair of English spelling that can quickly benefit all users and learners, while remaining compatible with all that is currently in print. More radical reforms can also be considered, but this is the most urgent and immediate task.

The International Commission on English Spelling would not be aligned with any reform organization. It would not come to the task with any rigid unchangeable convictions about what type of change was desirable, and all options would receive attention — radical character changes, augmented alphabets, completely phonemic systems, making lists, a phonemic writing system used and introduced as dictionary key that would initially run parallel with traditional spelling, intuitive changes for difficult words, and principles that could update present spelling to make it predictable with minimum change to its visible appearance, plus looking forward to a future breakthrough to a writing system that can cross languages, like Chinese but without its difficulties.

International organizations already work effectively and cheaply to ensure the efficient working of international communication in many fields – as in SeaSpeak, airport language and telecommunications. The Spelling Commission can have similar status and prestige; its work will however be more complex.

The nature and effects of English spelling must be clearly set out and the record set straight, for misinformation and fallacious assumptions are rife and resist clearing up. The Commission will require public openness, and encourage academic and technological research, with pilot experiments that can quickly extend into action research and can be the first steps in implementation of change, while monitoring and taking into account the informal changes that are occurring in English spelling across the world. Universities and grant-giving bodies that currently reject English spelling improvement as a legitimate topic for R&D would rapidly turn to it as a field ripe for study, including for students' projects and theses.

Membership

It is possible and essential to ensure that an International Commission on English spelling does not fall prey to bureaucracy, overspending, over-publishing of weighty documents, such as can happen with inadequately competent managers and personnel.

The secretariat would be very small, and work chiefly with honorary staff and consultants holding positions in organizations, such as governments, Universities and research. The members and corresponding members would have the pre-requisite of readiness for change, rather than resistance; they must be aware why improvement is urgent rather than paddling along with some vague future in mind. Between them, they would cover a range of qualifications in relevant areas, from writing systems and communication to the socio-politics of international changes and the roles of governments, education and publishing. The members would be keen to become as informed as possible about the knowledge and research that is already out there.

Action research in change and implementing spelling change, wherever and by whoever would be welcomed, and all reports investigated. It could start in the first week of meeting, leaving administrative detail for the next week. The Commission is to be a means to promote spelling repair, not to postpone it. From its on-line pages and occasional publications, all reformers and conservatives could be informed on all the issues, instead of as at present operating in fogs of fallacious assumptions and even misinformation. The format of publications would aim at conciseness and clarity, with a summary under 500 words, the basic contents under 5000 words, books under 300 pages, and the remainder available online or by special request.

Sponsorship.

The Commission would be a legitimate object for big philanthropy plus financial sponsorship on particular issues, and Government and NGO contributions as with other UNESCO projects.

Central location.

Europe is most central to experiences of reforms in other alphabetic writing systems and other international relevant organizations. Correspondents would be located in all countries as far as possible, including within governments, so that all relevant experience within each country can be coordinated and reported.

Tasks

At this stage, many devisers of spelling schemes may impatiently exclaim that all that is needed is to authorize a spelling scheme with phoneme-grapheme regularity. Why hassle around checking out other possibilities and desirabilities? The answer is to look at so many schemes that have been imposed in the past with It Seemed a Good Idea at the Time, without sufficient care for what may be needed, and what may be the consequences. Consider, for example, the metric system, with its theoretical perfection, but the practical flaws we regret today. The present German spelling reforms — how did some of them manage to miss the mark? Orthographers and educators such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics and George O'Halloran have been very aware of the importance of considering conditions in the field in devising and implementing written languages.

Hence the need for research and collating research that is directed to practical outcomes in a way that avoids repeating the history of the tons of spelling and reading research that have piled up and recycled over the last eighty years.

Questions requiring research would be publicized, so that students in many disciplines and workers in other organizations can be encouraged to investigate them and report back findings.

The data-base collated and built up by the Commission has two functions — a foundation for experiments, decisions and action; and for spreading public knowledge about the issues of English spelling and its reform.

Information that is needed

Many issues require resolution by collating existing research and encouraging further research to fill the blanks. The on-going action research that is fostered to test the implementation of reforms itself can help to answer the questions.

Topics include:-

Description of the current situation

Collating financial, educational social and personal costs of English spelling in English language and non-English language countries, especially in multilingual developing countries.

The time and money spent on spelling in English language classrooms and the degree of success relative to that.

The difficulties set by spelling unpredictabilities for dyslexic, disabled and disadvantaged learners, with comparisons with more predictable spellings and initial learning spellings.

The annual number and costs of publications about learning and teaching spelling, and the extent of the research literature

The efficiency of the English orthography for its many purposes. This includes cross-lingual comparisons.

How important is a standardized orthography for readers? For learners? For learners of spoken English? For writers? Does a degree of variation or permitted alternative spellings matter, and if so, to what degree? Could there be variations in the orthography for initial learning, personal writing and print?

The relationship of how learners learn to read and the efficiency of their adult reading strategies.

How well do adults read? Does method of learning to read affect adult's reading strategies?

Readers' and writers' adjustment to spelling change. The electronic technology for change.

Consequences of initial learning spellings that are not the same as the final system to be used.

Individual and group differences.

Streamlining English spelling of surplus letters in words would make reading easier to learn, faster to type, and save trees. Would it facilitate faster reading or does the redundancy serve a function in adding to distinctiveness of words?

If grav accents, say were used as a diacritic for long vowels, what would be the responses of skilled readers — would they find them to be like punctuation signals but do not obtrude, or would their visual skimming for meaning be disturbed?

Classrooms where all learners have no problems in acquiring phonemic awareness — how is this achieved?

Could skilled shorthand users read printed shorthand as rapidly, accurately and comprehendingly as normal print? (Hard to test this out today, perhaps.)

Collating findings and investigating other writing systems –e.g:

Comparisons of adult readers in different writing systems. (Tricky but not impossible, to match groups at educational level.)

Comparisons of writing system difficulty and its effects for different levels of ability and different types of handicap. What factors explain why learners in some very regular writing systems who learn to read quickly and easily appear to not maintain their superiority in later schooling?

What factors explain why school literacy learning rates are slow in some regions with very regular spelling systems?

Does variety of spelling patterns add to quick automatic visual recognition reading? i.e, would a predictable English spelling that retained many spelling patterns be more efficient for skilled reading than a spelling like Italian that has far fewer, or Hawaiian which has fewer still?

How do readers (and writers and learners) in other alphabetic spelling systems cope with diacritics? Are they always necessary? Could many diacritics be abolished except for helping learners with pronunciation or do they serve a purpose in distinctiveness as well?

What are the effects of exposure to different orthographies for English? — including different possibilities for change?

Advantages and disadvantages of the Japanese 5-script system. What factors make Japanese adult 5-script orthography preferred over plain simple regular hiragana? What factors make Japanese kanji preferred over simple regular hiragana?

What can users and former users of Blissymbolics pictographic interlingual writing, Isotype, logos and other symbols tell us about the use of ideographic, pictographic and other alternatives in conjunction with alphabetic writing?

Learning from writing system reforms in other languages. How have they been carried out? How have they been successful and unsuccessful? What for example, was the weakness of the recent German spelling reform program? What is the difference between reforms when the populace are largely illiterate (as in Turkey) or literate (as in the Netherlands)?

Towards implementation of an International English Spelling.

This is a matter for deliberation. Some initial steps are suggested:

The Internet, with pilot trials for responses of all types of users and learners and using transliteration software that is already easily available. Experiments can range from the most rigorous laboratory and other research conducted by University and other research establishments, to freelance explorations by anyone.

Media. Polls and experiments, include writing, reading and spelling abilities of adults.

Publishing. Encourage testing dictionary keys that can be a base for the standardized spelling system. Test texts, including experiments with a variety of spelling representations on the same page.

Education. Collating experiments in initial learning spellings, and encouraging pilot experiments. Testing the value of spelling systems for students with different types of learning disabilities.

Conclusion:

Media publicity and public interest is needed for this initiative of an International English Spelling Commission. At present even teachers know hardly anything about English spelling except that it must be learnt, and bad spelling is regarded as the fault of the speller, not of the task. Miracles of

scientific ingenuity now bring us the world's entertainment, explore universes and microcosms, means of healing and means of death. Scientific ingenuity can now apply human engineering to the tools for print communication on paper and on screen, for exchange and permanent record of knowledge, thinking and the means to face and deal with the challenges ahead. It will require organization and cooperation.

Footnotes

- 1 Occasionally some spellings of words may drop surplus letters or rationalise the spelling of /f/. Readers can observe their initial responses and, indeed, whether they notice all modifications.
2. A Chinese scheme for English spelling reform uses one letter for both /l/ and /r/, considering any difference to be imperceptible and unnecessary

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Links from www.valeriyule.com.au include further unpublished papers on spelling and writing systems, and their reforms.

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Paper for presentation to the First International Conference on English Spelling in a non-English language country, at the University of Mannheim, German, under the auspices of the Simplified Spelling Society, July 29–31, 2005.

7.6 Dr. Valerie Yule

13 June 2005

Working Party for an International English Spelling Commission (IESC)

II. DEVELOPING FURTHER DETAIL.

(This section can be filled in and categories expanded)

AIM: To work for the setting up of an International English Spelling Commission under international auspices (UNESCO?)

Draft notes for organization and ways forward

PART I. AIMS and means to implement. (to be completed)

PART B. WORKINGS of setting up WP and IESP and their operation.

1. Setting up

2. Composition. 2.1. a. Ways & Means committee which develops into a Working party. b. The Commission

Members must have the constructive attitude of 'How can English spelling be improved?' so that difficulties are approached as being soluble.

c. Consultants and correspondents can include anti-reformers.

2.2. Members. The quality and enthusiasm of the active members are most important. Too big a committee is clutter, so 10–14 or less might be the optimum there — but from the rest who are interested, others should be able to contribute material, keep in email touch with whatever is being produced, and act in their own area.

- A 'secretary' for the Ways-and-Means who can organize the communications and be a webmaster for a home-page that is open to the public to read. Until an independent site is possible, this can begin as a link from SSS website.
- Dictionary organizations and lexicographers, particularly in the first instance for a dictionary key that can be a base for an initial learning spelling, which can lead into a repaired spelling for general use.
- University and Communications research, including Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Social Psychology, English, Telecommunications, Cybernetics, Psychoneurology — wherever interest can be found
- Printers, publishers
- Education in all countries of the world.
- Chambers of commerce, including organizations concerned with international trade and industry.
- Media, advertising and public relations
- Government departments that are relevant, including communications, science, education & training, childcare, immigration, foreign affairs, trade, etc. Observers and contributors here must be keen on the prospect of English spelling, improvement, not congenital obstructors.
- International organizations including Aid, which need to be able to communicate with peopl in developing countries.
- Voluntary organizations eg those concerned with the English language and internet communicators
- Youth culture and minority representatives.
- Politicians who are interested and need to be informed about the issues
- Community literacy organizations.
- Spelling reformers with their own schemes. These must be recognised as adjuncts and hold no offices. They can have their own independent page-links from the website and contribute documents for the data-base, to be considered.

Many of the first personnel will have to be people with the time and already adequate income, as well as the expertise, so including retired and part-time, such as honorary research associates at Universities.

3. Structure, Finance, Methods of Working. Relationship to SSS and other spelling-reform voluntary organizations. Relationship to anti-reform groups/individuals.

4. Action agenda (not in chronological sequence — all are worked on)

- 4.1. Publicity. Including press-release from the conference to go everywhere. (Have a pro forma prepared that can be quickly adapted to the conference outcomes and resolutions)
- 4.2. Finding and recruiting more expertise in relevant fields, as WP members, honorary consultants and correspondents, and supporters
- 4.3. Location. Finding a locus for the Working Party (which is also interim locus for IESC) and for database/documents/library.

The location may be a political issue — for example, should there be three places for library records — USA, UK and Europe/UNESCO in Europe?

- 4.4. Seeking financial sponsors for both overall and specific (or overall!) needs. Government and philanthropic. e.g. philanthropists to endow a Chair of English Spelling Improvement (possibly in the field of Applied Linguistics) and in this department Research Fellowships and Postgraduate Scholarships for R & D. The prospect of funding will make many Universities keen on pioneering Chairs, as examples can show. (It was because I had an Australian Commonwealth Research scholarship that my university was keen to welcome me as a doctoral student, even on the then verboten subject of spelling reform! Otherwise it would have been most un-keen.) And many researchers will be glad to find a new field that they can get grants for studying as the old ones are getting worked out! And applied research and development is very satisfying to the bright and energetic. (And anyone who thinks that the available research does not need to be collated, extended and published is asking for the trouble which results from ignorance of ISAGIAT — It Seemed a Good Idea at The Time. If the metric system had not been taken on as it is simply because it is so ideally logical, but had human engineering research, a good deal of its permanent difficulties would have been avoided.) Applied Research is not postponing action, but works like a shoe-horn in getting things going.

5. Trouble-shooting and preventing trouble.

- 5.1. Copyrights and patents. Governments must ensure that any English spelling system for international use is free-for-all, and cannot be commercially copyright. Ownership of patents for improved technology for transliteration and keyboarding to allow fair rewards for designers, developers and distributors but not for other 'owners'.
- 5.2. Keeping expenses and paperwork within limits, and avoiding bureaucracy. No doorstep government-style reports! Each document sent around to have a summary of under 100 words and main document of under 4000 words. Documents of 3000–4000 words to also include an outline of under 1200 words. Any further documentation can be available as archive or on-line or requestable by those who want it all, but not printed on paper by the WP or IESC. Authors or other agents can publish the whole if they so desire. Theses can be included in the same way, but the full theses should be sourceable from Dissertation Abstracts or the academic place of origin.

A public database to be kept that lists all available documentation that comes in.

- 5.3 Avoiding dissension, duplication, dispersion.

PART C. THE AGENDA. As above,
Collating the research that is available
Research that is needed

Using the internet for cheap experimenting

Experiments in initial learning spelling

Experiments in promoting literacy with adults, ESL and in developing countries

Publishing educational materials about English spelling and its improvement. including publicity for books that can be bought by individuals and libraries, and the drafts for a book, provisional title INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH SPELLING — THE FUTURE, or whatever (also to be worked on by SSS, to get it going quickly)

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