

SS14.

simpl speling March 2001

newsletter of the simplified spelling society

Editor: Alan Campbell

Society founded 1908

Working for planned change in English spelling for the benefit of learners and users everywhere

Web: www.spellingsociety.org

Change for SS

There will be a change the publishing schedule of *Simpl Speling*. The July issue is being brought forward to June to allow quicker reporting of the AGM. In August the July meeting minutes will be sent to members. March and November issues are unaffected.

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1. Seeking a strategy for success

A brainstorming session under the guidance of new member Jack Bovill at its January meeting led the Society committee to decide to trial a strategy for implementing spelling change.

After suggesting barriers to reform, members found 'drivers' to overcome these barriers. These were gathered into themes, headings attached, and then listed according to their influence. Cost was rated highest, followed by communicating, benefits, awareness/education, international and authorities.

Groups, each of no more than five interested email members, were to be set up under each of these headings to work at their particular topic.

Jack will liaise with group leaders to help them, and he will report progress to the committee.

Jack believes if members use these findings to focus their activities, there is more likelihood of a needed 'critical mass' support being achieved.

The committee agreed to act on the proposals with a pilot project and willing email members. This will run for a year, with the committee reviewing it after six months from inception.

[Further details in Members Supplement](#)

No recommendation on spelling change

There was little for Society members to cheer about in the House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment's report on early years education, released in January.

The 55 recommendations dealt with organization, the place of parents in education, the allocation of resources, teacher training, and the like.

The topic seized on by most national media was a warning about not starting children's formal education too soon, or the recommendation on smacking children. Generally, the report did not arouse much media interest.

Society secretary Masha Bell, initiator and compiler of the Society's submission to the committee (included in an appendix to the report), commented: 'Many of the committee's recommendation are good, but costly and not easy to implement. They would entail sustained annual higher spending. There is a cheaper, simpler, longer-lasting and certain way to raise educational achievement from infant to university level.'

[The report can be found under 'First report'](#)

SSS AGM Saturday, April 28, 2001. 10:45am.

A committee meeting, open to all members, follows. All members are invited to attend.

Widening of committee membership is signaled

A widening of representation on the Society's committee was foreshadowed at the committee's January meeting.

It was accepted that membership is open to all members of the Society, irrespective of whether they can attend meetings in London, provided they have access to email.

But officers, as specified in the constitution, or as agreed at a designated meeting, would be expected to be able to attend meetings.

Nominations for the committee (proposed and seconded) need to be received by the secretary by March 29. Further details in [Members Supplement](#)

2. This 'n' that from here 'n' there

Settled out of court

Jean Wilkinson, USA

In July 1999 *Simpl Spelling* I reported a class action taken against the Boards of Education of the State of Oregon and of Portland City schools. A group of parents, mostly of dyslexic children, claimed a national Certificate of Initial Mastery test, which included spelling, was discriminatory, as their children were neurologically incapable of correct spelling.

The lawsuit has been settled out of court. The settlement terms have been kept confidential. Hmmm!

I read about the third-grade Initial Mastery Test in a local school that has 50%-60% of Spanish background pupils. The article said 35 of 64 third-graders took the standard reading portion of the state test and 52 took the standard math test. The remainder were either exempted from the tests or were given extra help during testing. The latter scores were not included in the school's report to the state. Hence the school's comparative rating went from 'low' to 'exceptional' in one year! Students with certain disabilities were also exempted.

Fans care to a 't'

A letter writer in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* comments: In the bold headline to your review of Thursday's Moffatts concert, *Rockin' Moffatts A Sight To See*, there was a spelling error. The family name is spelled *Moffatt*.

In paragraph three of the article, the title of their song was written as *I Don't Want You To Want Me*. The correct spelling on the back of their CD *Submodalities* is *I Dont't Want You To Want Me*.

In a recent interview they said they put the extra 't' in *Dont't* because they wanted people to remember that their last name is spelled with two 't's.' Please try to be more accurate in future. Fans care about these small details.

A second language for all

Education minister Jack Lang announced recently that in two years all French children from 5 upwards will begin learning a foreign language.

He is anxious to encourage diversity in the languages they will learn. At present English is taught in nine out of every 10 language classes.

Spelling change myths

In the Society's email group members listed the following 'myths' and misconceptions that opponents of change sometimes put forward.

1. Phonetic spelling is the aim.
2. Changing spelling is changing the language. Regularized spelling will not look like English.
3. English has too many accents to consider change as other languages do.
4. Traditional spelling is widely standardized, and so it is too late to let spell' evolve like speech.
5. Regularized spelling makes important documents obsolete or ambiguous, requiring huge reprinting and legal costs, law reform and extra learning burdens for those who need to read old spellings and write new spellings

Romanizing Thai

Society member **Ian Martin** spoke to the 21st annual Thailand TESOL Conference on *The work of Daniel Jones: Phonetics, spelling reform, and the classroom*. He dealt with Nue Spelling, and Jones's involvement in the Society.

In the ensuing discussion Thai teachers spoke of Thai romanization. There is no standard way of writing Thai script in roman letters; eg, the Thai word *Rachadamri* can also be written *Rajdamri* or *Rachadumri*.

Snippets

- Immersion classes in English for preschoolers is a growth industry in Taiwan. Children as young as 3 spend weekdays in expensive language classes learning English because their parents believe proficiency in the language is necessary for them to compete in the outside world.
- A Japanese Government panel has recommended an end to a double standard for Japanese names. In Japan, names are listed with the family name first and the given name last. In most other countries, Japanese have reversed the order to reflect the traditions in many parts of the world. The panel wants Japanese to use the same order at home and abroad, with the family name first in foreign languages. Chinese, South Koreans and North Koreans do not change when overseas.
- The Queen no longer speaks the Queen's English, as her vowels drift down market towards the speech patterns of her subjects. Australian phonetic specialists say analysis of her Christmas broadcasts between the 1950s and 1980s has demonstrated the change. The Queen now speaks in a way 'more typically associated with speakers who are younger and lower in the social hierarchy', the Australian analysts, from Macquarie University, write in *Nature*.
- The Ibeju-Lekki chapter of the Nigerian New Era Foundation has organized an 'Inter-School Spell' Beez Quiz competition' for primary schools to encourage pupils to embrace education. The foundation coordinator, Alhaja Saidat Kasali said the competition was to instil in pupils, particularly those from rural areas, a sense of discipline and commitment to academic life. The prize for finalists is a trip to Finland.

3. What one member has been doing Into the lion's den

How do children respond to a logical notation?

Ian Ascott, New Zealand, a past member of the Society, reports on what happened when he was invited to teach his SoundSpel to a group of children at a local school.

There was no going back: the head teacher led me to a large room containing three children.

In an earlier discussion, when I went over my material with him, I had asked for nine-year-olds of average intelligence, but I was given what were certainly the three brightest 12-year-olds in the school. Oh well, cut one's cloth ...

I gave them each a SoundSpel chart illustrating the 30 elementary, or basic sounds from RP English, and took them thru, first, the consonants, which were very simple and easy to understand, and lastly, the vowels and diphthongs far and away the most difficult part of the Language.

My greatest problem was that my pupils absorbed and understood every point I gave them ... as quickly as I could explain! They were right up alongside me in the speed of their understanding, and I learned very fast to regard them as intellectual equals ... because early on, I saw the glint of impatience in their eyes if they thought I was patronizing them. I returned twice at their request.

I told them to ask any questions at anytime, and they responded with a series of penetrating queries that filled my old heart with joy and challenged me as a fonetician has rarely been challenged before ... and sensibly!

I began with the preconception that my IanSpel (SoundSpel) is as clear, stark and logical as is humanly possible and I found no reason to change that opinion. I have shown IanSpel to academic native English-speakers, and generally they are dubious, but if I explain it to Dutch or German linguists, they understand immediately and are apt to query where the problems are. My pupils were the same as these latter, ie, they have had no time to acquire prejudiced minds.

Thank u, Kate, Tom and Helen for the lessons u taught me.

4. Talking with journalists from publishing houses

An interesting evening, even if unlikely to produce new members!

This was how Society chair **Chris Jolly** summed up his presentation to a meeting of the book publishing section of the UK National Union of Journalists.

"The bulk of the meeting was quite mind-numbing, as the, father of the chapel tried to find members to elect to various subcommittees and union charities," Chris said. "There were just 10 people there.

'I had about half an hour, perched at a corner of the long table, before everyone got thrown out by the caretaker at 8pm. The members present listened politely.

'There was just one question, on dialects, before the will of the caretaker prevailed.

'I gave copies of the correspondence in The Press (New Zealand), along with a copy each of our Principles and Practicalities.

'After the meeting most of us retired to the pub around the corner and managed to keep up a conversation in competition with the big-screen live football match.

'In general, they were quite intrigued by the concept of spelling reform, and I had comments about the material I had left them.

'One lady said that when everyone else had reformed their spelling, she would want to be using the old spellings as a mark of personal idiosyncrasy.

'It led to an interesting conversation about how each of us might use reformed spellings and traditional spellings at different times with the reformed spellings used in more informal writing,' Chris said.

5. Letters

Enuf is surely enuff?

Ted Relton, England.

If we press for improvement to the very worst spelling horrors. I hope we can all agree that the new spelling for *enough* (TO) will be *enuf*. We have quite *enuff* superfluous letters as it is, and surely *enuf* is enuff - and not *enuff* as appeared several times in *Simpl Speling*, November 2000 issue.

Styles change. *Enuff* has now replaced *enuf* in *Simpl Speling* style, to match *bluff*, *staff*, *rebuff*, etc.
- Editor

Comics at the leading edge?

Jean Wilkinson, USA

Who sez Americans are resistant to updates in spelling?

Enclosed are excerpts from one day's comic strips (nationally syndicated) from *The Oregonian*, with spellings to match slang pronunciations: *kinda*, *gotcha!*, *fella*, *yeah*, *ol' (old)*, *Grampa*, *an' (and)*, *ya (will ya, before ya)*, *goin*, *o' (of)*, *I wanna go*, and possibly *Ruff* - a dog's name. (Onomatopoeitic? Or short for *ruffian*? Or respelling of *rough*? We also use *Tuffy* for a dog, but *toughie* for a person or problem.)

That's at least ten updates in respellings in one day's comic strips, two being used in different strips (*yeah*, and *ya* for you). Interesting: Six of the ten involve schwas.

Is this happening outside the US too?

Start chang'n it!

Peter Gilet, Australia.

I have been a member of the Society for some years now and have come to the conclusion that the only way our spell'n is go'n to re-form is when we, the peple, start chang'n it. The momentum of common usage is enormous, and any reforms from on top alone, or the side, will do noth'n. I suggest therefore that we all simply start us'n some of the mor urgent reforms in our daily writing, as in this letr. I do this especially with letrs to friends.

My udda inspiration: dat we use a simplified form ob gramma an pronunciation as a base fo our reforms, again, to a partial extent ob corse, as in dis letta. P'raps a kine ob jamaican english, combin'd wit cut spel'n or spanglish'? You myt say dat well, we don't say da words dat way, but so wat is da difrense wit da spel'n we use now? Our mispronunciat'n wd at least be consistent.

Ultimately we might consider the use of Chinese ideograms to write a basic hundred concepts, thus escaping many of the problems of spelling altogether. We could use speedwords as a base for this.

Three-stage policy

Robert Craig, England

Some years ago I conducted a one-person campaign to persuade newspapers to adopt the spelling *jail* (for *gaol*) by targeting letters at the keepers of the style books. Whether or not as a result of my efforts, this has happened.

This Society, should adopt a policy, based on three stages:

1) short-term aims; 2) medium-term aims; 3) long-term aims.

At any time members should be aware of what these aims are, so that we are all singing from the same hymn sheet.

As a medium-term aim I suggest acceptance of the so-called 'American' spellings. The short-term aim should be to tackle the prejudice against 'American' spellings. So, a short-term objective should be to persuade dictionaries to remove the label 'American' from spellings like color, catalog, center, etc. I don't think that that would really be that difficult to achieve, since lexicographers are, on the whole, sensible liberal people.

On the medium-term aims, the group which needs to be targeted is the newspapers. All else will follow from that. Once anti-American feelings are overcome, there are benefits for newspapers in adopting color, etc. They know that, but they are worried that they might offend their readerships.

The long-term aim? Of course, the complete reform of English spelling.

Spelling reform in the UK is crucial to what happens elsewhere, since there is still a feeling around the world that British English is the 'proper' form of the language, and therefore the spellings labeled 'British' are the only correct ones.

Call for correspondents

Ms Mary Tyler, USA

Due to the many commitments of a very ripe old age, I have decided not to renew my subscription to the Society. However, I include a donation of £15.

Despite not being able to continue being a member, I will keep rereading the material on the SSS I've received over the years. If anyone in the SSS wants to communicate with me I would appreciate hearing from them. My particular interest is E2L.

'Free spirits in the hills'

Valerie Yule, Australia

If there was an International English Spelling Committee, rather like the Club of Rome, that was unilaterally declared and had the primary aims of 1) opening the way for an International English Spelling Commission supported by governments, and 2) promoting world-wide awareness that English spelling could be improved, then it need not even have constitutions and need not have lots of rules and need not have money. In fact, it should not have a constitution or rules of procedure or formal legal existence.

Its members could discuss and differ among themselves but only have a rule that a majority (or a certain number) agrees about press releases and publicity, or else whatever is put out under its name can bear a proviso that many magazines have, taking no responsibility for the views expressed by its members - simply facilitating their expression. And it could have honorary officials, including a membership secretary to keep track of who was on it. And it could put pressure on UNESCO and the British Council and any organization that opened its mouth about literacy. It would not mention simplified spelling in its name but would be linked to SSS and other spelling reform organizations in different countries. They will be like the formal armies: the IESC will be like the ... free spirits in the hills.

The committee could aim in the first instance to have a representative from as many countries and states as possible, non-English as well as English-speaking, since all countries today have an interest in improved written English for communication.

How much reform?

Chris Kiwi, New Zealand

How much reform - spelling and otherwise - can society cope with?

My grandparents, who grew up a century ago, were in the 1960s still listening to the wireless, going to the lavatory, doing their laundry 'in the 'washhouse' (even if indoor), and having their little car filled with benzine. Their children and grandchildren learned new words for those things.

The 1960s also had the reforming zeal which saw decimal currency and metrication proposed or introduced to some English-speaking countries. Residents of Australia and New Zealand rapidly found 'pounds' twice redundant.

New Zealand had a further reform of finding new names for fruits known as 'tree tomato' and 'Chinese gooseberry'. After much discussion the authorities settled on 'tamarillo' and 'kiwifruit'. All these reforms were well accepted.

However, by 1975 when gallons were going to liters and miles kilometers, the reform drive seemed to have evaporated.

I think the public's capacity for reform in vocabulary is far from filled; especially now a quarter of a century has passed.

'Electrocide'

Professor J. Churton Collins wrote to *The Times* (March 29, 1906): ... may I venture in your columns to enter a protest against the latest hideous importation from American journalism'? The monstrous word 'electrocute' for kill by electricity, is now of regular occurrence, and bids fair to become part of our language. When we have the legitimately formed 'electrocide' at our service why should it not be adopted and so detestable a solecism as the word referred to be repudiated'?

Blimpishness

Doug Everingham, Australia (with help from other members)

They'll demand an 'i' in 'frendly' when it's gone,
Yes, they'll want 'p-h' in 'sulfur' to stay on.
Well, they'll stick an 'h' in 'corus'
And an 'o-u-s' in 'porus'
And they'll fume that simpler spelling is a 'con'.

When our logic meets with homely common sense
Some illiteracy shrinkage will commence.
Scoffers' affectation mirthless
And their erudition worthless
Will seem much less enlightened - rather dense.

They'll warn that spell-updating puts us back,
Weep for spelling by the book that 'out of wak'.
They will ridicule beginners,
Claiming gridders can't be winners,
Tho testing round the world shows we're on track.

(Can be sung to the tune *She'll be comin' round the mountain*)

6. ISD 2000 on the net

Valerie Yule, Australia

International Spelling Day 2000, like its predecessors, has not brought a great response so far. But I did get some interesting responses when I sent 'Happy International Spelling Day' as a message round the world on email (this may be a way to go). They included:

1. I didnt even no it was internashunel spalling day.

2. Begone, you literary wowser - who would reform our language!
Deny the richness of our subtle terms? Have us bereft of innuendo?
What if we march to double-beat, and proliferate our vowels?
And stiffen prose with consonants: why should this cause you anguish?
But what seems clumsy overuse of letters and of verbiage
Serves a purpose of a sort, unsubtle and unintended:
The Sandgropers over to our west distinguish in an instant
The foreigner newly from the east when speaking of their landscapes.
It's AL-bany, not ALL-banv as every local knows.
How better to sort out the herd, than such subtle little ways'?
If spelling were to be reformed, they'd never know the difference.
But my spelling day was on weekend.
This often is my practice. I dreamt of spelling
On the beach, watching gentle breakers
Rolling on the sandy shaw while I perambulated.
And thus I worked, footsteps in beet to
Thumping, dumping wave fronts.
Thoughts of werk were overwhelmed
By ocean smel and seenery; the water's grean;
Its pewrity, and kleen; and passing berds
Above me. For more than this I could not wish.
But Spelling's International Day came on like clouds
My thorts to badly dampen. Its worldly spread
brought on the dread of how to treat 'Gut morgen'.
Or should we divest 'Bonjourno'? It's all too much.
And so to you I sav fare well- and also fond a dew.

3. Spare me!

4. Thank you. We had a lovely international spelling day.

That's more like it!

7. Jean Wilkinson, USA, writes: Who stole the 'r' in 'colonel'?

'Hey, dumbhead, KFC was not started by *Kernel* Sanders. Don't you know how to spell?'

'How do you spell it?'

'Well, c-o-l-o-n-e-l, of course, just like everybody else. Except you!'

'Why do you spell it that way?'

'I just told you, fleabrain. Everybody spells it that way, the dictionary spells it that way, it's the right way!! What are you, an idiot or something?'

'My dictionary doesn't say it's the right way.'

'Oh, you have your own special dictionary? What does your dictionary say?'

It says, on page xix of the introduction [1]

"Lexicographers do not make laws about what is right and wrong . . ." and

"Dictionaries do not tell people how they ought to speak and write . . ., but only about how they can do so . . ."

'Oh, aren't you smart! Then why is it always spelled *colonel* when you look it up?'

'Well, it explains it right there. It says it used to be spelled coronel, from the French language, where it is spelled both ways. Originally it was colonna, a Roman military column. Along the way, somebody switched our spelling back to the original l, but whoever it was couldn't persuade us to say it that way too. So we ended up with one pronunciation and another spelling.'

'Okay, wise guy, then answer me this: How come nobody has ever put the *r* back in?'

*'The dictionary will put it in when enuff people put it in. While we are waiting for the dictionary to change, the dictionary is waiting for us to change. It's already listing *tho* and *thru*, and for fun I just looked up the word *humongous*. It's there!'*

'All right, you win. But you don't get your Brownie button till we get to *Kernel* Sanders. Or would you prefer *Krnl*?'

[1] Webster's *New World Dictionary, Third College Edition*, 1988

[2] It also warns us, on the same page, to be prepared for *horselaffs* if we get too far afield.

8. Technology to the rescue

A new internet software program promises to make acquaintance with improved, logical spelling easier and painless.

Ed Rondthaler, USA, explains

English-speaking children have less chance of becoming literate adults than do children of other countries with good schooling. Many fail. So it is no surprise that surveys of developed countries rank English speaking nations in the lowest quartile. *

But today new hope to change this comes from an unexpected source. Can the emails scurrying back and forth between computers provide the magic that finally lifts us out of our wretched bottom status?

Yes.

That 'yes' takes advantage of computers, the internet, and the multimillions of avant-garde email users who unruffled by innovation, regard new solutions to old problems as normal. Never has our literacy dilemma been attacked by such a powerful combination.

Software that automatically translates ordinary typing into logical spelling is now available on the internet.

The form of the internet program is tutorial and limited, but could be revised and expanded promptly to serve the email millions.

It is based on 'General American' pronunciation, a merger of local US dialects brought about by TV, radio, telephone, travel, cinema, and song, that is spoken by more than half of those whose mother tongue is English. It uses a notation based on New Spelling, proposed by the British in 1910 and slightly modified in the US.

When it is fully readied for email use the sender, after typing a message in normal spelling or an approximation thereof, will have the choice of three ways to and send it out. (Spellchecking will be unnecessary since the program automatically corrects errors as they are typed-)

- To dispatch the message in normal spelling the sender simply presses the 'send' button.
- To send it in simplified only, the sender will press the 'send simplified' button.
- But, as an ideal means of introducing the recipient to logical spelling, the sender will press the send 'dual' button

- and the message will be transmitted automatically in parallel lines of normal and simplified. The receiver will see, on screen, words that are currently important to him or her displayed in a format that is easily grasped, that account for every sound and syllable, and give the reader a chance to judge how preposterous is our spelling's match to sound.

- and the mesej wil be transmited automatically in parralel liens of normal and simplified, as seen heer. The receever wil see, on screen, werds that ar curently important to him or her displaed in a format that is eezily graspt, that acounts for evry sound and silabl, and givs the reeder a chans to juj how is our speling's mach to sound.

The basic technology for 'send dual', making simplified spelling painless and palatable, is now available. Adapting it to email use and enlarging the vocabulary can be undertaken once the concept's merit is recognized. Then the end of our frustrating struggle with English illiteracy and its socio-economic problems will be a foreseeable reality.

'Send dual' can launch us on our way to lifting the English-speaking world from the bottom quartile of literacy to the top.

* OECD (Organization for Cooperation and Development, Paris) statistics 1997

9. US boros and boroughs

Cornell Kimball, USA

The United States has at least 85 place names that end in *-boro*.

Many are in North Carolina, which has the largest city named this way, Greensboro. There are more from there up into Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and a few in Vermont and New Hampshire.

There are some in Georgia and Illinois. and also in Kentucky, where we find the second largest *-boro* city; Owensboro.

There are just a few west of these states, and I've found one each in Arkansas, Missouri. and Oregon.

I've come across 13 names with *-borough* on the end, eight of them in New Hampshire.

The largest *-boro*, Greensboro, has about 185,000 people (1990 census). The two largest *-boroughs*. Groton Borough, Connecticut, and Hillsborough, California, each have about 10,000.

The most common *-boro* is Hillsboro (at least seven). The largest is in Oregon (about 38,000). There are four or more Greensboros, and three Jonesboros.

Names range from Tarboro, Vanceboro, and Roxboro in North Carolina to Hatboro and Danboro in Pennsylvania.

Virginia gives us Villboro and Figsboro, and New Jersey Willingboro, Evesboro, and Marksboro. Hillsboro, NH, is in Hillsborough County. There are three towns near it, each of which has Hillsborough as part of its name.

In this same county, we find a town named Lyndeborough, and near it is South Lyndeboro.

10. Spelling on the net with Steve Bett, USA

Activity on spelling boards

What started out as one discussion group several years ago has now expanded to three. One of the splinter groups, saundspel, had over 800 messages exchanged in January compared to an average of 80 messages during the previous four months.

The egroup software, now owned by Yahoo, archives and threads all discussions and provides a simple automatic way to subscribe and unsubscribe. U can subscribe without overloading your mailbox by changing your profile to read No mail. This means that u have to go the website to follow the discussions. Other services include automated polling of members and file storage.

January 2001 data:	members	messages
saundspel	21	921
RITEspel	14	235
ssslist	16	138

Augmented alfabet and special fonts

The unifon server [no longer available] makes a few freeware extended fonts available for download. These include Unifon, Symbol (Greek), Shavian, Cyrillic, and Croatian.
[URL no longer available]

The Unicode IPA font is available on the Microsoft website. We have been unable to locate a digital font for Goody's SSA and Pitman's ita or Augmented Roman. So far the effort to convert these true type files (.ttf) for Windows to a Mac-compatible format has not been very successful.

John Wells' SAMPA site

<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/sampa/unicodetest.htm> and
<http://www.phon.ucl.ac.uk/home/wells/ipa-unicode.htm>

tests a new font which displays IPA characters.

The SAMPA notation was developed years ago to transcribe IPA characters into ASCII or keyboard-compatible characters. Now the technology has caught up with the need. It is still difficult to use IPA characters in email but they can be viewed without downloading fonts by those with browsers 4.0 and above.

Dictionary resources improve

On-line dictionaries have improved considerably in the past six months. Many of the old dictionary sites have been reworked to be even better.

The top five sites are listed below along with their key feature. The URLs can be found at
[URL no longer available]
by using a search engine.

Your Dictionary clean, uncluttered, and quick. Uses the Merriam-Webster (m-w) search engine www.yourdictionary.com

Cambridge Dictionary - pronunciation guide uses IPA symbols

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/help/phonetics.html>

Merriam-Webster Dictionary - locates misspelled words, accepts fonetic spelling

www.m-w.com

Encarta Talking Dictionary - over 70,000 words in the database with audiofiles

[URL no longer available]

One Look Dictionary and *All Dictionaries* - do simultaneous searches.

<http://afen.onelook.com> and

www.alldictionaries.com

Have a question about linguistics?

Several places on the net enable u to talk to or argue with a linguist. Saundspel is one. Another is *Ask a Linguist*, operated by Eastern Michigan and Wayne State U.

[URL not available]

The best spelling sites on the net

Altho not called the top ten spelling reform sites, the SSS website has listed most of the best places to go for information on spelling and spelling reform:

One of the links listed is to the spelling reform ring

[URL no longer available.] .

RITE rules

The RITEspel egroup has completed a set of 45 rules for the stage 1 reform recommendations. Stage 1 changes an estimated 38% of TS. A strictly fonemic reform would respell over 60% of the words. Truespel, for instance, respells over 90%.

Systems such as ALC fonetic and Anglic have fewer respellings because they accept quite a few irregular high frequency words. RITE also includes a small set of sight words.

The RITE reform will greatly improve the chances that a person can correctly spell words as they are pronounced. Zé do Rock says, 'The user will get it rite in 93% of cases.'

[URL no longer available]

Talepeace

George W Bush is at lunch with Al Gore. He asks for a 'quickie'. This frightens the waitress, and prompts Gore to lean across the table and whisper: 'Q-u-i-c-h-e is pronounced k-eesh'.

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Pluralism - but qualified

After discussing the membership ballot of July/ August 2000 the committee has decided that the Society should continue with its pluralistic policy but that it should be particularly influenced by option 2.

This option, which proposed a pragmatic, agreed set of suggestions for reform to be used in promoting change, was the most favored one.

It had received slightly less than half of all votes returned, 35 of 82, but the membership had expressed preferences for a wide range of options: 13 for option 3 (agreed complete scheme); 20 for option 4 (range of solutions). Thirteen members had suggested other ideas.

Congress call 'to be encouraged'

A call by an American member, Timothy Travis, for an 'International English Spelling Congress' (IESC) was to be encouraged, the committee felt. However, it could not organize or finance it.

If Timothy could do so, preferably in the US, the Society would give it its blessing.

Timothy said a congress would be an opportunity to achieve the goal of spelling reform, and it was important that it succeed.

Organizing and managing it would be a huge job, he added, and would need to be done by professionals.

He suggested the SSS and American Literacy Council host TESC. They should appoint an executive committee comprising people who could meet face to face regularly, rather than people connected only by the internet.

The executive committee would be authorized to hire consultants to advise on how to proceed. This would probably lead to the forming of a staff to organize and manage the congress.

The consultants would be expected to advise on how the staff and other expenses could be paid. Grants would be needed to cover these expenses and, therefore, a grant writer would have to be hired.

He said these types of issues needed to be decided, but everyone needed to be thinking about them and discussing them.

Helping the SSS in seeking 'critical mass'

Jack Bovill outlines his aims for the presentation he made to the committee in January. A report on the presentation follows.

My aim was to present, interactively with those present, two features:

A: Whatever is the SSS's final view of simplifying spelling will receive my support throughout the process of implementation.

B: Implementation is on a gradual (ie, every year) basis of the three (or thereabouts) most important simplifications which have a phonetic basis.

I suggested there were barriers to this and invited suggestions, adding mine as we went.

I suggested that for every barrier, there is an opposite, a driver for change. We listed these and then prioritized them in order of influence.

We had then mapped out the areas of influence that affect the outcome of a simplifying spelling campaign. It may seem a gigantic task. However, in my experience, there is a thing called 'critical mass' at which point the switch takes place from, 'no this cannot be done' to 'this is the thing to do'. Decimalization is an example.

To achieve critical mass requires knowing where to apply one's energy. Without mapping the barriers to change and the drivers to change, we are at risk of not proceeding at all.

My suggestion to the committee was we invite all members to target the various areas listed both as barriers and complementary drivers, allocating to themselves one area on which they could seek guidance from me on how to go about their future work, with me always reporting to the committee on what advice I am giving as they go along.

I do not expect many members to join an active group. Small societies such as ours usually depend on the committee to do the work, while taking an interest in progress.

There will need to be easy communication, hence only those on email should put themselves forward. The groups need to be small - no more than four or five. They each need to know what success looks like and what the milestones on the way look like. They need only report back on two things: stasis (inactivity) and milestones achieved. In the position of stasis, they need help to move on; milestones mean they are getting somewhere.

At some point, critical mass will emerge. At this stage, the committee should have agreed on most of its recommendations, as these will be copyrightable and therefore of monetary value.

Forming a strategy for introducing simplified spelling

[An edited report of Jack Bovill's presentation to committee members at their January meeting]

Jack began his presentation with an example of change in the commercial aircraft 'industry, where all the critical aspects had to come together before success was achieved. Was the same true of spelling change, and what were the critical aspects likely to be'?

He said he felt the Society needed a strategy, and quoted John Reilly's final words in an article in JSSS 28: 'all that is lacking is a strategy'.

Using a board, and yellow and pink *Post-it* notes and marker pens, he invited committee members to brainstorm the Barriers to introducing simplified spelling. That brainstorm completed, he asked the participants to call out in a similar manner the Drivers for change, those aspects that would help introduce spelling reform. When that was finished he suggested that the opposite of the Barriers were the same or similar Drivers for change.

Using all the Post-it notes, members were invited to group the notes as best they could by connected themes or words duplicating where required. After this, the committee gave each group a Heading, which was written on a master sheet and circled. Jack asked which group influenced which other group, and a line and arrowhead was drawn showing the connection. Each Heading then exhibited a number of lines of influence, either going out or coming in. These were prioritized according to the Heading which gave the highest influence down to the one most influenced. The result came as some surprise to all present as the priority became clear.

Committee members found that the area of highest influence was Cost - saving of, and the least influential, was Authorities. The complete list was: Cost 5/0. Communicating 4/1, Benefits 2/3. Awareness/ Education 2/3, International 2/3, and Authorities 0/5, where the first figure is the number of influences affecting other areas, and the second figure shows the times this area is influenced by other areas.

At this stage Chris Upward pointed out that greater definition was required. It was noted that Cost was in the sense of saving and Communicating was in the sense of media of various kinds.

Jack proposed that the committee register their support for two, possibly three, subgroups of members who select themselves, but who must be on email to facilitate communication between themselves and the committee. These groups would work on the top two or three Headings and be assisted by Jack to work on each of their sub-categories. They would use the committee brainstorm notes as a starting point, looking for ways to affect areas within their spheres of influence and report back on what works and what appears not to work. There would be a number of rules to assist them.

They would develop greater definition, moving the number of high-level abstractions of the committee work and their own work down to 'what does this mean in practise?'

Jack closed by referring to the five critical developments that had resulted in the successful start of economically and aerodynamically safe commercial aircraft. What might be the necessary critical developments needed to bring about simplified spelling? The internet? The higher awareness of the costs of not implementing it? Having a strategy? By involving the membership, might we be adding a critical development?

The committee endorsed Jack's proposals, and he is now working with Jean Hutchins and Allan Campbell both to report back to the membership and also to assist in setting up the subgroups, each of no more than five people with a close interest in the Heading, with a reserve sixth member. The time frame for the groups is not more than one year. There would be a review six months after they became active.

The review was to see if progress had been made, both at subgroup level and at Society level. For this to happen, at each level markers would need to be put down which were considered to represent progress: Membership levels and membership inquiries would be two relevant

measurements at Society, level. Being asked to speak at a local level by interested parties could be a measurement for the subgroups. It was too early to say what measurements would be decided on. The leader of each subgroup would liaise with Jack for help, with Jack reporting to the committee on all aspects of his work with the subgroups.

The full list of Drivers follows, with an asterisk indicating the following ones which were originally Barriers to the introduction of simplified spelling.

Cost - saving

Economy of effort, Learner time, User time, Economics, Economy of space and money, * User advantages (disbenefits), Long-term reduction in cost (short-term cost) .

Communicating

Newspapers, Computers, Text messaging, Global communications, Emails, *Sales - advantages for publishers - profits for publishers (implications for publishing), Official bodies (Hansard), Computers require more accurate spelling - search engines (computer spelling will make it irrelevant).

Benefits

Literacy problems, Collapse of present system, Higher potential rates of literacy, Faster literacy acquisition, *Reform will also be part of English uniqueness (spelling is part of English uniqueness), Learning present spelling confuses the mind (learning present spelling is good training for the mind), Caring about children now makes it easier for the next generation (selfishness - 'we had to learn to spell'), Parents are keen for children to be literate earlier (parents are not able to help children with spelling).

Awareness, information, education

Laziness, Mobilized SSS membership, Public awareness, *Appreciate change (fear of change), Readiness to modernize - the future (break with the past), Present options and a sensible scheme (lack of a sensible scheme), Inclusive change (not invented here), Public support and understanding (public prejudice), Public awareness (public ignorance), Being aware of the difficulties of spelling (ignorance of the difficulties of spelling), Emotional commitment (evidence and data), Public enthusiasm (public apathy).

International

International body for science and vocabulary, etc. Reforms in other languages, Anglo-American differences, Greater worldwide use of English. *Unification and preservation of international language (fragmentation of international language), Compromise (fear of different orthography for dialects), Presenting English as a world language - empire (international implications).

Authorities

Dictionaries, Fashion, Somebody famous recommending it, If NZ did it and it worked, Appointment of a body (eg, Académie Française), International body for science, vocabulary, etc, *University support (exam bodies), Electronic dictionaries (dictionaries), Government need to raise literacy standards (governmental fear of upsetting the status quo), Political will (lack of political will). Seducing the relevant authority (persuading the relevant authority).

Comment (by Jack): While the above brainstorm made a lot of sense to the participants, the results may not be immediately comprehensible to anyone else. These categories can be expanded with other examples and unpicked by those working on the relevant subcommittee.

Postscript: I would like it noted that the work I suggest should be done in the context of 'Standard English' as this eliminates controversy over dialects. Standard English is a kind of convenient fiction and is therefore useful.

Implementation

Members who are interested in participating in developing one of the top three Headings - 1 Cost, the savings, 2 Communicating, media of various kinds, 3 Benefits - and having read the brainstormed results, should email Jean Hutchins. Because we wish to run this pilot with five members per team only and with a back-up sixth member, can u let Jean know your first, second, and final preference? This will enable us to sort out teams. U should include your fone number, so that the individual details can be discussed with me. I will report back to Jean.

The following series of questions should help to indicate your suitability to join a team.

1. Do u enjoy the idea of expanding the ground work on introducing spelling reform, affecting:
 - a) The Costs, the saving of the same, or
 - b) Communicating, media of various kinds, or
 - c) The Benefits of introducing spelling reforms?
2. In which order would u rate your interest?
3. Do u have email?
4. Would u feel comfortable being part of a team. whom u may never see, but with whom u are in regular contact on a subject of common interest?
5. Can u undertake to report back on limited assignments that test the validity or otherwise of ideas generated by your team?
6. Would u feel ready to be a leader of a small group who have selected themselves, supporting them as necessary and leading them as required?
7. Have u worked collaboratively in small teams which have a limited life span?

A positive answer to 1 and 2. and any one of 4 to 7 would be grounds for membership of a team. Question 2 is to help us allocate u to a team.

When u have thought about these questions, can u contact Jean Hutchins and let her know that u wish to participate? I will then telephone u in order to establish who the leader of your group will be.

Your initial work will be to expand on and bring definition to the initial work done by the committee. U will then be asked to test in your separate sferes of influence how people u know react to ideas implicit in the Heading with which your team is concerned.

There will be conversations u have which will win people over and some that do not. Any problems should be raised with your fellow members and the leader of your team. They will be able to raise these with me, and I in turn with the committee.

It will be helpful for your team to confer and come up with changes u would look for over time as signs that your efforts are leading to desirable changes. The committee will keep u posted on changes that they observe over time, which might be attributed to your team's work. (I cannot at this point, say what those things are that u expect to see. I will of course help u where I can. When foning, please try my mobile first).

Committee open to all

The committee has ruled that election to it is open to all members of the Society, whether they can attend meetings in London or not, provided that those who cannot attend meetings have access to email. But officers, as specified in the constitution, or as agreed at a designated meeting, would normally be expected to be able to attend meetings.

Nominations for the committee (proposed and seconded, and with no more than 30 words about the nominee's SSS activities) need to be received by the secretary by March 29; that is, 30 days before the annual meeting. They can be received by post or email.

Members will then be notified of the nominations and can vote by post before the AGM for email-only, and ordinary (fysical) committee members, the maximum number of committee members being 8. The votes will need to be received by the secretary, by April 26, two days before the meeting.

From the minutes

Committee meeting dates set

Dates for future meetings are: July 14, October 13, 2001, January 26 and AGM April 27, 2002.

Agenda items 5 (annual audit of progress), 8 (appointment of publicity officer), 9 (simplified introductory leaflet to the SSS), and 10 (documentation for new members) were postponed.

Chair Chris Jolly pointed out the wording of items 1 - 7 in the October meeting minutes was the correct rendering. Any impression that the secretary's activities had been suppressed must be rectified.

Thanks to member Michael Bell, the Mensa newsletter *Lingua Signal* 40, winter 2000, has reprinted an article on Welsh literacy from *JSSS* 26.

The secretary/treasurer should record exactly how much time she spent on those duties and invoice the Society accordingly. This should not exceed 48 hours in any four-week period.

The committee conveyed its best wishes to Ken Spencer for his research project, but regretted it could not help him with his grant application. His choice of spelling scheme for the project could create conflict within the Society, since it might give the impression that the Society has a preferred scheme.

Membership for life is to be made available for 10 times the annual membership fee. Currently this would be £150 or \$US300.

Chris Upward had not yet drafted responses to various spelling announcements (from DFEE, QCA, Estelle Morris, etc) that had appeared during the later months of 2000. He intends to do so.

Chris Upward has suggested some issues which should receive SSS attention include 'miscue analysis' and 'txt msgng'.

No schemes in pipeline

No further schemes have been received or are being prepared for publication beyond the eleven already published, the Personal Views editor, Paul Fletcher, told the meeting.

The summary of the existing schemes on computer broadsheets was still with Pete Boardman, who had volunteered to do this work. The draft he produced before Christmas omitted some published schemes, included some which had initially been sent but were not resubmitted in publishable form when that invitation was sent out, and some which had never been sent to the Society. Some corrections also were needed. Pete was asked to make further amendments and a reply was awaited.

Following the committee's wishes. it was not proposed to publish any more schemes, except any extracts which might be innovative. However, to highlight trends and preferred solutions, it is proposed to add to the statistics by summarizing for the broadsheets any further schemes which may be submitted by members.

Information on members' schemes as Personal Views is available from Paul Fletcher.

Membership secretary John Gledhill reported that on January 24 the Society had 94 paid members; 3 life members, one of whom has paid membership subscription; 46 potential renewals to come. Eight people or organizations receive complimentary copies of *Simpl Speling*; 30 receive copies of the Journal - either complimentary or by subscription (four receive both). Changes since October included three new members and two having left (one sending a donation).

Editor-in-chief Chris Upward said the copyright statement in JSSS 28 has been revised with the advice of American editor John Reilly. He said the feature in *Simpl Speling*, 'What one member is doing', was running out of steam. Allan Campbell would like to hear from 'doers' in the Society. The NZ English teachers journal *English in Aotearoa* December 2000 carried an article from Chris: *Should we teach American spellings?* The Italian journal *Linguistica e Filologia II*, 2000 had an article by Michael Lahey titled *The reform of English spelling from the beginnings to the Simplified Spelling Society and 'Cut Spelling* which concludes 'CS is the best system of reform to have emerged so far.' The next issue will contain a follow-up article by Chris.

Attendance: Chris Jolly (chair), Jean Hutchins, Masha Bell (minutes), Paul Fletcher, John Gledhill. Gerald Palmer, Gwenllian Thorstad, Chris Upward, Leo Chapman (afternoon).

Members: Lewis Bell, Jack Bovill.

Apologies: Tony Burns, Nicholas Kerr