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Simpel- Fonetik by Allan Kiisk

The Author

Allan Kiisk, has been involved in linguistics since his early childhood. His mother tongue is Estonian, but his parents also spoke Russian at home and they were fluent in German. He graduated from an Estonian secondary school where he studied four years of Latin in addition to Estonian, German, and English languages. He served in the US Army in Germany as an interpreter and translator. He obtained a master of science degree from Stanford University and served as a professor of engineering at the University of Redlands. His specialty was electrical communications, which included the technical analysis and processing of sounds, including spoken sounds.

Professor Kiisk has travelled in nearly all European countries and has become familiar with many other languages, including Finnish, Russian, and Spanish. His familiarity with the Estonian and Finnish languages, the languages with the best phonetic writing method, motivated him to study how to improve the English spelling. His book *Simple Phonetic English Spelling* derives and describes the ideal solution to English spelling problems. His second book *Simpel-Fonetik Dictionary* helps to implement that greatly simplified method of writing in English.

The English Spelling Society

The object of the Society is to raise awareness of the problems caused by the irregularity of English spelling; and to promote remedies to improve literacy, including spelling reform.

This article describes the simplest, the most logical method of spelling words in English, the **single-sound-per-letter method**, also known as the **Simpel-Fonetik** writing method. This method was devised for use as an alternate, easy-to-learn **international version of writing in English**.

It was intended to be used also as a **simplified version of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)** for showing how English words, and foreign words and names, should be pronounced.

The Simpel-Fonetik method was derived on the basis of a methodical, letter-by-letter analysis of the present English alphabet and sounds. In the selection of single sounds for each letter, the international use of English and blending in with other languages were important considerations.

Languages with the simplest and most logical writing methods, such as Finnish and Estonian, were used for guidance. They also served as experimental validations, or proofs, of the advantages of Simpel-Fonetik writing method.

Contents

- [A. Introduction](#)
- [B. Answers to Standard Questions](#)
- [C. Essential principles](#)
- [D. The Principles Elaborated](#)
- [Appendix 1. Standard Texts](#)
- [Appendix 2. Word List](#)

A. Introduction

What is Sempel-Fonetik?

It is a new, simple and easy-to-learn method of writing in English. It is described in the books titled *Simple Phonetic English Spelling – Introduction to Sempel-Fonetik*, *the Single-Sound-per-Letter Writing Method*, and the *Sempel-Fonetik Dictionary – For International Version of Writing in English*, both authored by Allan Kiisk. See www.simpelfonetik.com.

What motivated you, Allan, to develop the Sempel-Fonetik?

When I was learning English as my third language, I was frustrated by the complex and arbitrary English spelling and pronunciation. For example, I could not believe that *you* and *ewe* were pronounced the same way. Because English is becoming a global language, millions of people are learning English. They are experiencing the same frustrations. I have great empathy for them. I want to make it easier for them to learn English. I support global use of English.

What is wrong with the present spelling?

The main problem is that letters, especially the vowels, can have many different sounds. Just look at the words *cough*, *rough*, *through*, *though* and *plough* and pronounce them as you are supposed to. The *ou* has a different sound in each of those words. The *gh* is used for the *f* sound, but in the last three words the *gh* has no sound at all.

Just visualize a foreigner, who has never heard those words before, trying to read and pronounce them. Let's suppose that someone told him that *through* is pronounced as *thru*. Then, based on logic and common sense, he would assume that *ough* stands for the *u* sound, and he will pronounce *cough* as *ku*, *rough* as *ru*, *though* as *thu*, and *plough* as *plu*. Can you visualize his frustration when he finds out that *ough* is pronounced differently in each of those words, and that he will have to memorize each of those spellings and pronunciations.

Another cause of problems is the present alphabet. The sounds associated with the alphabet do not include the sounds Λ as in *cup* (the strange single letters are from the International Phonetic Alphabet), æ as in *and*, *e* as in *end*, ə as in *ago*, *u* as in *put*, *g* as in *go*, and *j* as in *yes*. They are left out when we memorize and recite the alphabet. The vowels A, I, O and U are recited as diphthongs, as a combination of two sounds.

How do you intend to improve the present spelling?

In science and engineering we base our improvements and advancements on what has been shown to work well, or what has been established as the best method. I use the same approach in trying to improve the English spelling.

There are languages that have excellent writing methods that are logical, simple, easy to learn and to use. Best examples are the Finnish and Estonian languages. In those languages the alphabet serves as the basis for pronouncing and writing words. Every letter has only one sound. Two letters are used for longer or stronger sounds. Vowels are recited with single sounds, not as diphthongs. Once the children learn what sound—a single sound—goes with each letter in the alphabet, they know how to read, pronounce and write words. Most children learn to read in about a month or two. Sempel-Fonetik method is based on the same principles.

B. Answers to Specific Questions Required for Personal View Publications

(This Section B consisting of 12 questions was inserted in the article by the reviewers at the ESS. The author provided the answers.)

1. Is this a new original idea or is it adapted from one developed by the writer or someone else?

The Simpel-Fonetik writing method was developed by the writer/author as described in the book *Simpel-Fonetik English Spelling*. The recently published *Simpel-Fonetik Dictionary*, also authored by Allan Kiisk, provides further guidance and details for world-wide use of the new writing method.

2. Is it an initial scheme for learning literacy, as a step to TS, or is it for permanent adult use?

It is intended and designed for improving literacy, for permanent use by children and adults, and for making it easier to communicate in English by native as well as foreign users of English. It was designed with idea of making English more acceptable as a global language. The Simpel-Fonetik spelling method can be applied to other languages.

3. Are there any supplementary rules? If so, please detail.

The basic rules are: (1) a single sound per letter, (2) each sound is represented by a letter in the alphabet, and (3) double letters are used for longer vowels and stronger consonants.

4. Does your system cater for schwa and stress?

Yes, as much as feasible. Schwa sound is represented in the Simple-Fonetik writing by the letter ö. Because the present writing does not have rules defining where the schwa sound substitutes for other letter sounds, the use of the letter ö in Simpel-Fonetik writing calls for good judgment and the adherence to the established conversion guidance principles. See section D.13.

Stress usually coincides with and is indicated by the use of double letters.

5. If this is a phonemic system, which accent of English is it based on? Would you cater for other accents of English? How?

It is a phonemic/phonetic system. The Simpel-Fonetik writing method can be used to represent any accent.

No specific accent was chosen as a standard. The preferred pronunciations were derived in accordance with the conversion guidelines given in this article and in the *Simpel-Fonetik Dictionary*. The *Simpel-Fonetik Dictionary* shows the selected preferred pronunciations for world-wide usage. The Microsoft Encarta College Dictionary was the most frequently used pronunciations guide.

6. Is the scheme based on an assumed knowledge of English / TS or is it independent, that is could people who had learned the spelling rules pronounce a text correctly even though they had no knowledge of English?

The Simpel-Fonetik method does not require previous knowledge of English. New learners of English, especially those who are used to pronouncing every letter in a word, actually have an advantage over native English speakers in using the Simpel-Fonetik method and pronouncing words correctly.

7. How does the running text in the scheme compare in length with TS, (ie how many characters compared with TS)?

Simpel-Fonetik text in most writings is slightly shorter than the TS text. Please refer to section **D.14** and **Appendix 1: Sample Texts** for comparisons.

8. How big is the change from TS? To what extent does the scheme defer to the appearance of TS? Give an estimate of the percentage of words that would need to be changed from TS.

Most words have minor changes. The first and the most important Simpel-Fonetik conversion guideline is to strive for similarity with present spelling. The people who learn English based on Simpel-Fonetik writing are expected to be able to read and understand also the traditional TS writings. See the sample writings in the article, section D.14, and the word conversions in Appendixes 1 and 2.

9. Outline how the author envisages the scheme being used. How would it be introduced and existing publications be dealt with?

It appears that the native English speakers and linguists have great difficulties in coming to an agreement on spelling reform. Therefore, at least initially, the emphasis will be on introducing the use of Simpel-Fonetik primarily in international dealings and writings. Foreigners, especially people who are used to phonetic or nearly phonetic spellings, support the use of simplified, phonetically written English.

Schools and dictionaries are expected to start using the Simpel-Fonetik writing in pronunciation guidance.

A computer program for converting the present spelling to Simpel-Fonetik spelling is being developed. A textbook for teaching Simpel-Fonetik writing method is under preparation.

The Simpel-Fonetik Organiseihon has been established to promote and provide assistance in implementing the Simpel-Fonetik English spelling.

10. Do you regard homophones as a problem and does your system indicate them in any way?

Conversion guidelines do consider the problem of homophones and suggest improvements whenever reasonably feasible by creating slight pronunciation differences. See conversion guideline number three in section D.13.

11. Could the system be used easily on most computers and word processors?

Yes. Only two new letters are involved, the ä and ö. But those letters are used in many other languages and are available for use on various keyboard layouts. Those languages and keyboards can be accessed and changed back and forth by just touching two keys, such as Ctrl and Shift. The two dots can also be added just by extra keystrokes. That is especially easy when using the US-International keyboard layout. Eventually, when the English language becomes the official international language, the English keyboards are expected to include those two letters plus, most likely, the letter ü.

12. Is the system used in everyday life by yourself or anyone else?

A nearly identical writing method is used in Estonia and Finland, and very similar ones in Germany, Italy, Spain and some other countries. I use Estonian and German writing methods in my everyday life, in addition to English.

At this point in time, the Simpel-Fonetik writing method is not being used routinely as a standard practice.

(End of the ESS insertion).

C. Essential Principles

1. What are the basic principles for Simpel-Fonetik?

- Each letter represents only one spoken sound.
- Double letters—two identical letters—are used for longer vowels and stronger consonants.
- There is a letter in the alphabet for each basic English language sound.

2. What does the Simpel-Fonetik alphabet look like?

The Simpel-Fonetik writing is based on the single-sound-per-letter alphabet of 24 letters. That is what children need to learn for reading and writing in English.

The Simpel-Fonetik alphabet is shown below. There are seven vowels and seventeen consonants. The vowel letters are shown in italic (slanted) print.

Aa Ää Bb Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Öö Pp Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Zz

3. New letters: Ä,ä, Ö,ö. They correspond to the International Phonetic Alphabet's (IPA) letters æ and ø/ɜ. Ä is used as in words *häpi* (*happy*) and *ripäär* (*repair*). Ö is used as in words *öbaut* (*about*), *pörtein* (*pertain*) and *ritöörn* (*return*).

All other letters (lowercase letters) correspond to those used in the IPA, except that the more commonly used Latin letters a, i, u, th, tsh and dsh are used in place of IPA's ʌ, ɪ, ʊ, θ/ð, tʃ and dʃ/dʒ letters.

4. Letters not used: Cc, Qq, Xx, Yy.

These letters are not needed for the **basic** Simpel-Fonetik English alphabet. But the present writing (spelling) of English is expected to be around for a long time. Therefore, we need to maintain familiarity with these letters and retain them on keyboards. This requires keeping these four letters in an **expanded** alphabet of twenty-eight (28) letters.

For international use of English, additional letters such as the vowels Ü,ü and Ö,ö, which correspond to IPA letters y and ɤ, may need to be added. The expanded version of the English alphabet will then have thirty (30) letters.

5. What sound goes with each letter? Please provide words as examples.

Shown below are sample words that show the sound of each letter. Also shown are samples for the use of double letters for longer vowels and stronger consonants. For some consonants there are no double letter samples shown because in phonetic spelling double letters are not used with those consonants; the second letter does not help produce a stronger consonant. For some consonants, double letters are seen only when some words are joined.

A – kap (cup), haart (heart), aardvark; **Ä** – hät (hat), dimäänd (demand); **B** – big; **D** – dog, middei (midday); **E** – end, dsheneerik (generic), melee; **F** – left, offend; **G** – go; **H** – hotel; **I** – fjt, fjtit (feet); **J** – jes (yes); **K** – kilo, bukkeis (bookcase); **L** – leg, illiigal (illegal); **M** – lemon, lemming; **N** – tenant, tennis; **O** – off, door; **Ö** – pörtein (pertain), ritöörn (return); **P** – pet, lämpoust; **R** – risk, irregular; **S** – son, lesson; **T** – rät (rat), rätträp (rattrap); **U** – fut (foot), fuud (food); **V** – vim; **W** – win; **Z** – Zulu.

D. The Principles Elaborated

1. Why did you pick the letter A for the a as in art sound?

The letter A,a in present English is used to represent more than eleven different sounds. Examples: *art*, *and*, *ago*, *all*, *make*, *head*, *read*, *foam*, *fear*, *pair*, *earn*. I had to make a choice: Which single sound should the letter a represent? I chose it to represent the a sound that is in *cup* and *art*, for two reasons: (1) other languages use the letter a for that sound, and (2) that sound occurs more often than the ä, or æ, as in *and* sound—this is revealed when one uses the phonetic, single-sound-per-letter writing.

In present spelling, many different letters are used for the a sound, e.g. *up* (*ap*), *my* (*mai*), *eye* (*ai*), *some* (*sam*) and *like* (*laik*). When those spellings are converted to phonetic writing such as Simpel-Fonetik, one can see that there are more a than ä sounds in English language. For example, in my book in the chapter titled Reading Practice, in the three pages of Simpel-Fonetik writing, there are 60 percent more a letters than ä letters. That finding provided an

additional reason to choose the simpler, the internationally used letter for the *a* as in *art* sound.

2. Why were the letters **Ä** and **Ö** picked as new letters?

After picking the letter *a* for the *art* sound, I had to decide what to do about those other sounds that the letter *a* was used for in present spelling. I found that other existing letters could be used for nearly all of them. For example, *all* could be spelled as *ool*, *make* as *meik*, *head* as *hed*, *read* as *riid*, *foam* as *foum*. But for two sounds, the *and* and *ago* sounds, which correspond to the IPA's *æ* and *ə* sounds, there were no existing letters in the present alphabet that could be used. The only solution was to add two new letters to the alphabet.

For the *and* sound and the same but longer sound as in *demand*, I had a choice of using the IPA's symbol *æ*, ASCII's *@*, or the letter *ä*. For the *ago*, *pertain* and the same but longer sound as in *return*, I had the choice of using the IPA's symbols *ə*, *ɜ*, *œ* or the letter *ö*.

I chose the letters *ä* and *ö* because they were already being used for those sounds in many other languages, including German, Swedish, Finnish and Estonian, and they were readily available on computer keyboards.

Did you know that the name of the country that the native English speakers call Austria is actually *Österreich*? That should show the prominence and popularity of the letter *ö*.

3. Don't you need more letters for vowels?

No. For converting English speech to writing, just seven single-sound vowels are needed. Additional vowels such as *Ü* and *Ö* would be needed for dealing with other languages or writing dialect expressions, but they are not needed for the basic English writing.

Remember that two *identical* letters are used for longer vowel sounds. This method of spelling seven additional sounds, the long vowel sounds, is simple and logical. It avoids adding additional letters to the alphabet. Many other languages use double letters for long vowels.

A child learning to read in a phonetically written language looks at a word and sounds it out letter by letter, using the sounds that go with each letter. Pronouncing two identical vowel letters one after another makes that vowel automatically sound longer. That is the logic behind the use of double letters for longer vowels. The same idea applies also to making consonants sound stronger.

Two *different* vowel letters are used for forming diphthongs (from Latin, meaning two sounds). The enunciation of the syllable will reveal the two sounds that form the diphthong.

Be aware that a combination of two different vowels can no longer be used for another vowel sound as, for example, the *au* is presently used in *pause* for the long *o* sound. The diphthong *au* will always be pronounced with distinct *a* and *u* sounds as in *house* – *haus*, *cow* – *kau* and *sauerkraut*. And *pause* will be spelled as *poos*.

4. The use of double letters and diphthongs.

The word *luck* is written as *lak* in Simpel-Fonetik (SF). There is a short *a* sound. In the word *lark*, however, there is a longer-sounding *a*. In SF it would be written as *laark*.

The word *fit* is a phonetically correctly written word. The letter *i* is pronounced as in other languages, as the *i* in *India*. The long version of the *i* can be heard in the word *feet*, but there the letters *ee* are used for the long *i* sound. In SF *feet* is spelled as *fiit*.

The word *off* has the short *o* sound. The word *door* has the long *o* sound. Two *o*'s are used for the long *o* sound. This shows that the concept of double letters for the longer sound is used even in present spelling. But the present spelling is inconsistent in the use of double letters. In the word *foot* the *oo* is used for the short *u* sound. It would be spelled *fut* in SF. In the word *food*, however, the *oo* is used for the long *u* sound. In SF it will be spelled *fuud*. Simpel-Fonetik brings consistency to the spelling of these words.

5. Diphthongs are made up of two vowel sounds. Each of the seven vowels in the Simpel-Fonetik alphabet can be combined with the other six vowels to form as many as 42 diphthongs. In the English language, the diphthongs *AI*, *AU*, *EI*, *IE*, *OI*, *OU*, *UI*, and the British versions *ÖU*, *EÖ*, and *IÖ* are most common. Here are some samples:

AI : *aisle* – *ail*, *time* – *taim*, *lye* – *lai*.

AU : *sauerkraut*, *sound* – *saund*, *now* – *nau*.

EI : *veil, rain – rein, fame – feim.*
IE : *lien, pier, skier*
OI : *toilet, toy – toi, royal – roial.*
OU : *soul, boat – bout, note – nout.*
UI : *ruin, doing – duing, suicide – suisaid.*

6. What are the replacements for the letters C, Q, X and Y?

In place of C use either S (cinder – sinder) or K (cold – kould).
In place of Q use KW (quick – kwik) or K (liquor – likör).
In place of X use KS (six – siks) or Z (xylophone – zailofon).
In place of Y use AI (type – taip), or I (typical – tipikal), or J (you – ju).

7. Why didn't you use the letter Y at all? Why did you substitute j for y?

The letter Y is used for at least four different sounds. In addition to the three sounds mentioned above, as in *type, typical* and *you*, other languages—Finnish, for example—use it for a quite different sound, for the original Greek Üpsilon sound, the ü sound that is in München and Olympia. That is the sound for which the IPA uses the letter y. But that sound is not used in the English language. To avoid conflicts in usage, I decided not to use the letter Y at all.

IPA uses the letter *j* for the sound of *y* in *yes* and *you*. A great majority of European languages use *j* for that sound. The "constructed" Esperanto language, for example, has the word *yes* and it is written as *jes*. The decision to use *j* also in Simpel-Fonetik was influenced by the desire to make English more compatible with other languages, and to make it more user-friendly for use by foreigners as an international language.

8. What are some of the other more significant changes?

Where PH or GH is used for the F sound, use F (photo – foto, rough – raf).
In place of CH use TSH (chop – tshop), or K (scheme – skiim), or SH (machine – mashiin), or KW (choir – kwair).
In place of J and G as in *job* and *gin* use DSH (job – dshob, gin – dshin).

9. Will SH be used as in present spelling?

Simpel-Fonetik spelling is based on global, international use of English. When foreign learners of English, especially those who are used to languages with phonetic spelling see *s* and *h*, they assume that *s* and *h* sounds go with those letters. When they see the word *harp*, they pronounce the *h*. When they see the letter *s* placed in front of *harp* to make the word *sharp*, they pronounce the *s*; they add it to the *harp* sounds. The outcome may not sound exactly as the natives pronounce the *sh* but it is close to it. And once the foreigners hear how most natives pronounce the word, they might modify their pronunciation slightly to sound more like the native pronunciation.

In the word *mishap*, for example, the foreigners pronounce the *s* and *h* letters. That, of course, is the way it should be pronounced. The natives, however, have the initial tendency to pronounce the *sh* the way they have become accustomed to, as in *bishop*.

Foreigners tend to use the *s* and *h* sounds also in *bishop*, whereas natives tend to use a different sound, a sound that is not in the English alphabet. They claim that the letters *sh* just represent that sound, whatever it is. In the Encarta College Dictionary pronunciation guidance it is shown as *sh*.

In Simpel-Fonetik the *s* and *h* sounds are intended to be present when *sh* is used. Therefore, the use of *sh* conforms with the single-sound-per-letter principle. That simplifies the use of English for non-natives. And continuing the present use of *sh* makes it easy for the natives.

Because the letter *s* has some variations in international usage, the combined *s* and *h* sounds may differ slightly as used by different people. But the use of *s* in combination with *h* is still the best choice for use in words like *mishäp* and *bishop*.

10. The use of TSH for CH, and DSH for G and J seems strange. How do you justify it?

In spelling textbooks and elsewhere, the CH sound is often referred to as the TSH sound. Maybe that is why most people don't have a problem with using TSH in words like *chop* – *tshop* and *chin* – *tshin*.

But my use of DSH has raised questions, especially from native English speakers. Some argue that the English *j* sound is a single sound and should not be represented by two or three letters. Here is my response:

I remember when I was learning English the *j* sound was described as the *dsh* sound. Foreign dictionaries use the letters *dsh*, *dzh*, *dʒ* or *dʒ* to represent the English *j* sound. There is always the letter *d* in front of one or two additional letters. This indicates that the *j* sound includes at least two different sounds: The *d* sound and an s-like hissing sound. Noah Webster in his American Spelling Book described the *j* as "a compound sound, or union of sounds."

From those different representations I chose the *dsh*. This choice avoids adding another letter such as the IPA's *ʃ* or *ʒ* to the Simpel-Fonetik alphabet. The use of the letters *sh* is already well established in the English language. The *sh* will continue to be used in Simpel-Fonetik writing. The use of *dsh* follows the natural progression: *him*, *shim*, *dshim* (Jim) and *hot*, *shot*, *dshot* (jot). Foreigners can learn the *j* sound just by reading.

The use of *dsh* follows the example of *tsh*. The use of *dsh* in place of *j* and *g* as in *job* – *dshob* and *gin* – *dshin* is very similar to the use of *tsh* for the *ch* sound in *chop* – *tshop* and *chin* – *tshin*. The *j* in *job* and *g* in *gin* sound softer, so the use of *d*, the softer version of *t*, is logical and appropriate.

Another justification for *dsh* is that in single-sound-per-letter writing, any letter, syllable or word that is joined with another letter, syllable or word should keep its sound, the same sound, even after joining. For example, when we add the words *end* and *shin* together, the combined word is *endshin*. Now pronounce *endshin*. Sounds like *engine*. So it is logical to use that spelling for *engine*. The *g* is replaced by *dsh* and the silent *e* is dropped off.

Another argument: In *handshake*, the *dshake* part sounds like the name *Jake*. If we want to retain *j* for *dsh*, then, for consistency, we would have to write *handshake* as *hånjeik*. We also would have to change *windshade* to *winjeid*, *friendship* to *frenjip* along with many other similar words. This shows that the use of *j* for the *dsh* sound is not acceptable in a phonetic, single-sound-per letter writing method. But *j* is well suited for use as the IPA's *j*, as in *jes*.

The present use of *j* and *g* and other letter combinations for the *dsh* sound tends to hide the fact that we are dealing with hissing sounds. That tends to promote the use of hissing sounds. I am hoping that by using *dsh* the use of those sounds will become less popular. The English language would sound better with fewer hissing sounds.

11. The TH sound—what problems did you have with it?

In the present, traditional English writing, *th* is used in words like *think* and *this* for the IPA's *θ* or *ð* sound, which is a dental fricative, somewhat like a lisp sound. The native English speakers have further classified this sound into two types: voiced and voiceless. Since both are spelled the same way, one has to look up in a dictionary which way each *th* should be pronounced. *This* is supposed to be voiced and *think* voiceless.

The Simpel-Fonetik writing avoids this complication. It retains the present spelling, the same spelling for both voiced and so-called voiceless *th*. It allows deviations in the placement of the tongue for the dental fricative *th* sound. It does not require memorizing in which word the *th* should be voiced or voiceless. Preferably, they all should be voiced, sounded out, so that a listener can hear and clearly understand the pronunciations.

I did consider adding the symbol/letter *θ* (*theta*) to the Simpel-Fonetik alphabet for the dental fricative *th* sound, but after some difficult pro and con analysis, decided against it for three reasons:

(1) An ideal new method of spelling should allow its users to read and understand also the old spelling without great difficulties. One should not need to transcribe all the old books and documents for use by future generations. Therefore, deviations should be kept to a reasonable minimum. The use of a new letter such as *θ* in place of *th* would amount to a major deviation from the present English writing.

(2) Adding the letter *θ* would cause a deviation from the way similar words are spelled in other languages. For example, *three* is written as *tre* in Swedish, *tre* in Danish, *drei* in German, *tre* in Italian, *tres* in Spanish, *tria* in Greek. If *th* is retained and *three* is written as *thri* there is still some similarity. But by doing away with the letter *t* and spelling it as *θri*, the similarity disappears. This problem extends to many other internationally used words such as *theater*, *theory*, *theology*, and *mathematics*. When spelled with *θ* they become *θeater*, *θeori*, *θeolodshi* and *måθemåtikis*.

(3) Many people, especially foreigners, have difficulties pronouncing the *th* as the θ (*theta*) sound. They tend to pronounce *th* as *d* or *t*, or phonetically as separate *t* and *h* sounds. The single-sound-per-letter principle applies to their pronunciation. That pronunciation should not be frowned on. We should accept it because it helps blend English with other European languages and makes it easier for foreigners to learn and use English as a global language.

There are a few words in English, and foreign words and names, where the *th* should be pronounced as individual *t* and *h* sounds. Examples: *anthill*, *pothole* and *Thomas*. In the first two examples a *th* has been created by joining two words. To avoid pronunciation problems, an obvious solution is to avoid joining the words, or use a dash between the words. Thus, *anthill* would be spelled as *ant hill* and *pothole* as *pot-houl*.

In foreign words the *t* and *h* are sounded out separately in nearly all instances. But when it comes to names, there will be cases where one needs to ask how to pronounce them.

12. Do you use Z in place of S in English plurals?

In Simpel-Fonetik, the letter *s* will continue to be used as in present spellings, in most cases. In *is* and *was* the *s* will not be replaced by *z*. And the letter *s* will continue to be used for plurals even where the dictionary pronunciation guides might show the letter *z*. *Z* will be used only where the *z* sound is absolutely called for. This decision is based on trying to maintain similarity between the old and new spellings of words, and the desire to make English easier to use by foreigners. The non-native English speakers and learners don't have problems with the letter *s* as it is used in present spellings. They would have problems using *z*'s in place of *s*'s. Most of them are used to pronouncing *z* with the *ts* or *tset* sound, as in *Nazi* (*Natsi*).

13. What are the guidelines for converting present spelling to Simpel-Fonetik?

In present English, the writing often does not tell you how to pronounce a word. That has resulted in different pronunciations in different regions and countries. The selection of letters for the Simpel-Fonetik writing depends on pronunciation. Each pronunciation results in a different spelling in Simpel-Fonetik. Which one should be used? Here are the guidelines for conversions:

(1) Strive to retain similarity with present spelling, so that far in the future when the new spelling has been well established, people can still read old books and documents.

(2) Strive for standardization and blending in with other languages. When selecting letters and pronunciations, keep the foreign speakers and learners of English in mind. Most foreigners have the tendency to pronounce words the way they are written. Their present pronunciations reflect that. When they see an *s* they pronounce it as an *s*, not as a *z*. And they don't convert various vowel sounds to the shwa (ə , ö) sound as often as most native speakers do. Strive to minimize changes to their present pronunciations. Strive to make English user-friendly for global use. Keep in mind that there are at least three times more foreign than native speakers of English.

(3) Strive to remedy situations in present spelling where words that are spelled differently are pronounced the same way. For example: *Sun* and *son* are usually pronounced alike as *san* (written in Simpel-Fonetik). To remedy this situation, convert *sun* to *san* but leave *son* as it is now, resulting in spelling and pronunciation which is similar to German, Dutch and other languages. Please note that Simpel-Fonetik automatically corrects the problem where different words are spelled the same way but are pronounced differently. Examples: *read*, becomes *riid* or *red*, *wind* becomes *wind* or *waind*.

(4) Visualize little children and foreigners learning to read and pronounce words. They look at a word and sound it out letter-by-letter. Make it easy for them. KEEP IT SIMPLE.

14. Give a sample of Simpel-Fonetik writing.

Here is one:

This is interesting: No federal government order or effort so far for ending the helter-skelter spelling. Don't beg or long for it. It's haard for the big gorilla tu start implementing spelling dogma. It wil linger, limp, loiter, swing from pillar tu poust . . .

As you may have noticed, in this sample only the words *hard*, *to*, *will* and *post* have changed, slightly. It illustrates that Simpel-Fonetik will not change the words that use letters consistently and in agreement with the sounds established for Simpel-Fonetik writing.

Here is another sample, shown first in present writing:

When you read Simpel-Fonetik words, you must pay attention to each letter. Remember: Each letter has always the same sound, the sound given in the Simpel-Fonetik alphabet, regardless what letter is next to it.

And here it is re-written in Simpel-Fonetik:

Wen ju riid Simpel-Fonetik wöörds, ju mast pei ätenshön tu iitsh leter. Rimember: iitsh leter häs olweis the seim saund, the saund given in the Simpel-Fonetik alfabet, rigaardles wat leter is nekst tu it.

The words *through*, *cough*, *rough*, *though* and *plough* that were mentioned earlier as examples of what is wrong with the present English spelling, would be written in Simpel-Fonetik as *thru*, *koof*, *raf*, *thou*, and *plau*.

15. Why is Simpel-Fonetik better than other proposed spelling improvements?

- (1) Other proposals are more complicated, difficult to learn, especially for children and foreigners. Nearly all other spelling methods that have been proposed, or are being used in dictionaries in native English-speaking countries, ignore the global use of English and blending in with other languages. For example, they use the letter *a* for the *ä* (IPA's *æ*) sound and *u* for the *a* (IPA's *ʌ*) sound, which is quite different from their use in other languages.
- (2) The letters and sounds used in Simpel-Fonetik conform with the International, or NATO, Alphabet (Alfa, Bravo...). They also conform with the International Phonetic Alphabet, except that the few uncommon symbols are replaced by commonly used Latin alphabet letters.
- (3) Simpel-Fonetik is based on the ***keep it simple*** principle. It uses only 24 letters.
- (4) The single-sound-per-letter idea has been supported by Ben Franklin, Noah Webster and others. Here is a quote from Webster's book *The American Spelling Book*, published in 1824: "*In a perfect language, every simple sound would be expressed by a distinct character; and no character would have more than one sound.*"
- (5) Single-sound-per-letter writing has been in use in Estonia since 1850's, and in Finland even before that. That method of writing has proven to be ideal. Estonians and Finns don't spend time learning spelling or pronunciation. After learning the sound of each letter, they know how to read, write and pronounce. They pronounce a word the way it is written and write it the way it should be pronounced. English-speakers can do it also, by using Simpel-Fonetik.

16. What possibilities do you visualize for spelling reform?

I visualize the international community, the non-native English speakers and learners, taking the lead in English spelling reform. Individual countries, or organizations such as United Nations and NATO, and perhaps even European Union, could take the initiative for implementing the Simpel-Fonetik as the international version of writing in English.

I don't expect enthusiastic support for Simpel-Fonetik spelling in native English-speaking countries, mainly because the native speakers have become used to present spelling, and also because they are not used to reading and sounding out every letter individually. And most of them can't visualize what a difference the single-sound-per-letter spelling can make.

But I feel that someday even the native speakers of English will realize that in the modern, technical, scientific, computer-oriented, competitive world the present English spelling places a heavy burden on its users. Tests and statistics indicate that students in English-speaking countries are not doing as well as students in countries that use phonetic, single-sound-per-letter writing method. Eventually, even the native English speakers will recognize that by fixing the spelling problem they will greatly help their children's learning process and their ability to compete with children of other countries.

As the first step in the improvement process, English teachers, schools and dictionary publishers should start using Simpel-Fonetik spelling for pronunciation guidance, as pronunciation key. Once people get used to seeing and reading English words in single-sound-per-letter writing, they will support the spelling reform.

Appendix 1: Sample Texts

(The sample texts shown below were provided by the Spelling Society reviewers. The writer of the article provided the Simpel-Fonetik versions).

The Star (H G Wells)

It was on the first day of the new year that the announcement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatories, that the motion of the planet Neptune, the outermost of all the planets that wheel about the sun, had become very erratic. A retardation in its velocity had been suspected in December. Then a faint, remote speck of light was discovered in the region of the perturbed planet. At first this did not cause any great excitement. Scientific people, however, found the intelligence remarkable enough even before it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larger and brighter, and that its motion was quite different from the orderly progress of the planets.

(Simpel-Fonetik)

It was on the först dei of the nuu jjiir thät thi ännauunsment was meid, olmost sailmulteiniosli from thri obsöörvatoris, thät the moushon of the plänet Neptune, thi autermoust of ool the plänets thät wiil öbaut the san, häd bikam veri erräätik. Ö retardeishon in its velossiti häd biin saspekted in Disember. Then ö feint, rimout spek of lait was diskaverd in the riidshon of the pörtöörbd plänet. Ät föörst this did not koos eni greit eksaitment. Saientifik piipl, hauever, faund the intelidhens rimaarkabl inaf iiven bifor it bikeim noun thät the nuu bodi was räpidli grouing laardsher änd braiter, änd thät its moushon was kwait different from thi oorderli progres of the plänets.

Britten when young (Frank Kermode)

We may nowadays be chary about using the word 'genius', but we still have a good idea what is meant by it. For example, there are great numbers of very gifted musicians who are admired but not called geniuses. But there are others, manifestly prodigious, performing often at extraordinary ages, a variety of feats so complex that the layman could hardly imagine, even with the most desperate labour, accomplishing any of them, while even musicians are astonished: and we then reach for the good, handy, vague, Enlightenment word and call them geniuses. The list includes Mozart and Mendelssohn; and despite all the limiting judgements, it includes Benjamin Britten.

(Simpel-Fonetik)

Wi mei nauödeis bi tshäri öbaut juusing the wörd 'dshiinius', bat wi stil häv ö gud aidiaa wat is ment bai it. For eksämpl, ther ar greit numbers of vshi gifted mjusishans hu ar ädmaird bat not koold dshiiniuses. Bat ther ar athers, mänifestli prodidshos, pörfoorming often ät ekstraordineri eidshes, ö väraieti of fiits so kompleks thät the leimän kud haardli imädshin, iiven with the moust desperat leibor, ökamplishing eni of them, wail iiven mjusishans ar ästonishd: änd then riitsh for the gud m händi, veig, Enlaitenment wörd änd kool them dshiiniuses. The list inkluuds Mozart änd Mendelssohn, änd dispait ool the limiting dshadshments, it inkluuds Benjamin Britten.

Ode to a nightingale (John Keats)

**Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being so happy in thine happiness.
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.**

(Simpel-Fonetik)

Tis not thru envi of thai häpi lot,
Bat biing so häpi in thain häpines.
Thät thou, lait-wingd Dryad of the triis.
In sam meloodios plot
Of biitshen griin, änd shädous
namberles,
Singest of sammer in ful-throated iis.

Fuzzy-opaque orthographical visions
(C Upward)

There was a poor boy couldn't spell
Half the words in our language too well.
His teachers thought: "Brain-sick!"
Mum and Dad hoped: "Dyslexic?"
Yet the child rashly jeered:
"What the hell!"

(Simpel-Fonetik)
 Ther was ö puur boi kudn't spell
 Hääf the wörds in aur längwidsh tuu well.
 His tiitshers thoot: "Brein-sik!"
 Mam änd Däd houpd: "Disleksik?"
 Jet the tshaild räshli dshiird:
 "Wat the hell!"

Appendix 2: ESS phoneme word list submitted with Personal View spelling schemes

The table below was added by the ESS reviewers. The Simpel-Fonetik spellings inserted into the table by the author are the preferred spellings (and pronunciations) shown in the *Simpel-Fonetik Dictionary for International Version of Writing in English*. The dictionary does show alternate spellings for many words -- spellings and pronunciations that were not selected as preferred. Please refer to the website www.simpelfonetik.com for more information on the dictionary.

In the table the words with no change in spelling are shown in **bold**.

TS	Simpel Fonetik	TS	Simpel Fonetik
pen, copy, happen	pen , kopi, häppen	lot, odd, wash	lot , od, wosh
back, bubble, job	bäk, babl, dshob	strut, bud, love	strat, bad, lav
tea, tight, button	tii, tait, batton	foot, good, put	fut, gud, put
city, better	siti, beter	fleece, day, streak	fliiss, dei, striik
day, ladder, odd	dei, läder, od	price, high, try	praiss, hai, trai
key, cock, school	kii, kok, skuul	choice, boy	tshoiss, boi
get, giggle, ghost	get , gigl, goust	goose, two, blue	guuss, tuu, bluu
church. match, nature	tshörtsh,mätsh,neitshör	goat, show, no, cold	gout, shou, no , kould
judge, age, soldier	dshadsh,eidsh,souldsher	mouth, now	mauth, nau
fat, coffee, rough, move	fät, kofi, raf, muuv	near, here, serious	niir, hier, siirios
thing, author, path	thing , oothor, päth	square, fair, various	skwär, fäär, värios
this, other, smooth	this , ather, smuuth	start, father	start , faather
soon, cease sister	suun, siiss, sister	thought, law	thoot, loo
zero, zone, roses	ziro, zoun, rouses	north, war	north , woor
ship, sure, station	ship , shuur, steishon	cure, poor, jury	kjuur, puur, dshuri
pleasure, vision	pleshör, vishon	nurse, stir	nöörs, stöör
hot, whole, behind	hot , houl, bihaind	courage	köridsh
more, hammer, some	mor, hämmer, sam	happy, radiation, glorious	häpi, reidieishon, glorios
nice, know, funny, sun	naiss, nou, fani, san	about, comma, common	öbaut, komma, kommon
ring, long, thanks, sung	ring , long , thänks, sang	influence, situation, annual	influens, sitshueishon, änjual
light, valley, feel	lait, välli, fiil	intend, basic	intend , beisik
yet, use, beauty	jet, juus (v) juuss (n) bjuuti	stimulus, educate	stimjulus, edjueit
wet, one, when, queen	wet , wan, wen, kwiin	kit, bid, hymn	kit , bid , himn
dress, bed	dress , bed	trap, bad	träp, bäd
total characters TS :	635	Total words:	146
total characters Simpel Fonetik	631	Total words changed:	126