

English • Spelling • Society

Personal View

2

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for Society members

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The Author

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YUROSPEL (1992)

by Paul Fletcher

This pamphlet explores the thesis that in the last resort, utter regularity in a spelling system at the expense of greater change is more acceptable because rules and exceptions can thereby be reduced to the minimum. It is no good devising a system based on the received knowledge of existing speakers because, to quote Maynard Keynes, "In the long run -- we shall all be dead".

From this perspective there is no point in distorting a system to allow the maximum number of existing spellings to remain undisturbed. At the basis of the proposal is the West European alphabet and the common vowel system derived from it. These form a unifying influence in a world which, because of the vast spread of trade, travel and communications, is becoming increasingly unified.

The Simplified Spelling Society

The aim of the society is to bring about a reform of the spelling of English in the interests of ease of learning and economy in writing.

To this end, it:

- encourages the idea that reform is possible;
- fosters debate on reform methods;
- devises, publishes and promotes potential reform schemes;
- persuades and campaigns
- has a role as an expert organisation on the subject;
- aims to be of benefit to future generations by introducing a consistent spelling.

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[A New System](#)

[New Vowel System](#)

[Consonants](#)

[Inflections and Word Formations](#)

[Foreign Loan Words](#)

[Place Names](#)

[Homonyms](#)

[Stress](#)

[Colloquial Speech](#)

[Hi Staer](#)

[Varied Pronunciation of English Vowels](#)

[The most mis-spelt words in English](#)

INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet is one of a series of publications by the Simplified Spelling Society (SSS) on ways to improve the spelling of English. It is intended mainly for those who are already convinced of the pressing need for some kind of reform.

It is helpful though to remind ourselves of the reasons for reform:

- a) For various reasons---the British Commonwealth, American commercial and political dominance, the structural flexibility and simplicity of the language --- English has become the paramount world language. The demise of communism and the Soviet hegemony can only reinforce that trend. Despite elaborate and expensive translation arrangements, it is the dominant language in the European Community;
- b) apart from Gaelic and Irish, which are minority cults, and Japanese, English has of the major world languages, easily the most difficult and irregular spelling systems;
- c) learning to read and write English is consequently very time consuming and costly. This is especially important for the millions of people who have English as a secondary official language or who are learning it as a foreign language at school or for business or pleasure;
- d) spelling reform would immeasurably reduce this protracted learning task. The more radical the reforms, the greater the benefits;
- e) no worthwhile reforms have occurred to date because of the lack of authoritative will and the sheer weight of tradition, notably the mistaken belief that reform would alter the language, whereas in fact a language exists primarily in its spoken form and no one is suggesting trying to alter that;
- f) other barriers to reform are the sheer cost of altering printed matter --- which must be small compared with the cost of inculcating the present system --- and what might be called the fagging or army recruit syndrome: "If I went through it and survived, so can you". This is an essentially reactionary argument, unfortunately spreading with wider literacy.

The days of Shakespeare, when you could spell as you liked, are gone. Today, rightly or wrongly, people expect correct spelling. The British Government at least recognises that in its stress on correct spelling in the National Curriculum.

What new system should a reformer choose? How far should we go? The pamphlet *Spelling Reform in Context*, published by the SSS in 1991, explains the various possible approaches to reform.

One approach is to make small incremental changes which can be implemented quickly. Many European countries have had a more or less regular or "phonetic" spelling system for centuries. Their need for reform was limited, so changes could be and are implemented without repercussion upon the rest of the system. Thus in German, hard initial c has been changed to k (Coeln, Coblenz > Koeln, Koblenz) and superfluous h after t has been cut out (That, Thugend > Tat, Tugend).

Such small scale changes could be made in English. Ph could be changed to f (sulfur, foto) and silent initial consonants could be dropped (nife, onour, sychiatry). Such changes are very worthwhile. Change on that scale is all that has been needed in many languages. But they would only scratch the surface of the immense spelling problems under which English labours. The problems are caused by:

- a) the absence of an overall consistent set of rules;
- b) a multiplicity of rules, mostly only of partial application;
- c) many rules contradict one another;
- d) all the rules have numerous exceptions.

Faced with impossible spelling (we cannot grace it with the label “system”), and indifference and outright hostility to reform, the Simplified Spelling Society recognises that it must consider various strategies to achieve reform.

Strategies so far explored can be classified as follows:

- a) small self-contained changes as described above;
- b) pruning surplus letters while retaining the existing “system”, as exemplified in the Society’s publication *Cut Spelling*, March 1992;
- c) various regular systems.

Strategy a) could eventually succeed but is impossibly modest and gradual for the urgent problems of English. Strategy b) as exemplified by *Cut Spelling* is easily read by existing English speakers, but does not rationalise the system. It can be viewed as either an end in itself or a stepping stone to wholesale reform. Strategy c) must be the ultimate solution. In the past, the SSS endorsed only its own reformed system, republished in 1991 as *New Spelling 90*. It is based essentially on rationalising the existing system and like most proposals assumes that the more words that are left unchanged the more acceptable it will be.

This pamphlet explores the thesis that in the last resort, utter regularity in a spelling system at the expense of greater change is more acceptable because rules and exceptions can thereby be reduced to the minimum. It is no good devising a system based on the received knowledge of existing speakers because, to quote Maynard Keynes, “In the long run -- we shall all be dead”. We must cater for all learners of English, comprising the three main groups, first language speakers, second language speakers and those learning it as a foreign language. Clearly, existing speakers are only a part of the “market”, one which is replaced every generation.

From this perspective there is no point in distorting a system to allow the maximum number of existing spellings to remain undisturbed. It is temptingly easy to lapse into a sort of shorthand which presupposes knowledge of existing spelling.

The test of a system must therefore be: how easy is it for children and non-English speakers to learn it? NOT: how easy is it for existing speakers to adapt to it?

The main problem with English spelling is the vowels. Firstly there are far more sounds than the alphabet can cope with. But this is a feature of other languages too, and they have dealt with it. English spelling of vowel sounds is irregular and contradictory and various consonantal devices (e.g. doubles and silent medials) are used to eke them out. By contrast the consonants cause little trouble. Indeed most are pronounced the same way in many European languages as well as in the countless other tongues which have transcribed into the Roman (West European) alphabet.

The West European alphabet and the common vowel system derived from it are a unifying influence in a world which, because of the vast spread of trade, travel and communications, is becoming increasingly unified. Whenever a new language is discovered or is written down for the first time, it is written in our alphabet as a matter of course. The only notable exceptions are some Asiatic tongues which were transcribed into Cyrillic because their speakers were subjects of the Soviet Union, and some tongues in Islamic countries which are written in Arabic. On the other hand there is a move in India to transcribe many tongues into the Roman alphabet because that would be a unifying influence.

Such transcriptions and those of foreign place names follow the overwhelming pattern of European languages, apart from English in employing Latin vowel values: Ah, eh, ieh, oh, ooh, instead of aih, ee, eye, oh, you. It would be of enormous benefit, not only to English but to mutual comprehension if we adopted this vowel system used by most of Europe, Central and South America, Malaysia, Indonesia, and countless speakers of African and Polynesian languages including Maori, not to mention the romanised transcriptions of Chinese and Japanese. Present day English spelling is the odd-man-out in this world wide system. As a result, when it came to naming a new invention like

radio, English speakers were influenced by a common pronunciation of the first letter in English, so that we say “raydioh” while the rest of the world says ‘rahdioh”.

When we come to consider the individual vowel sounds below it will become apparent how much English differs from the common Latinised pattern.

When it comes to consonants, it will be seen from the table below that there are various ways of conveying some of them, particularly those that require two letters in many European languages. Here there is no consensus for many sounds. But it will be noted that the renderings which receive almost universal acceptance whenever the Latin alphabet is used to transcribe names for international usage, are derived from English. In nearly all cases, consonants follow English usage and the vowels have the common European, but un-English, values which we have adopted for foreign names.

For comparison, we show how these place names would be transcribed according to the rules of some other languages:

Standard	Italian	Spanish	German	French
Aswan	Assuan	Asuan	Assuan	Assouan
Tokio	Tocchio	Toquio	Tokio	Teauquieau
Jakarta	Giaccarta	Dyacarta	Dschakarta	Djakarta
Mogadishu	Mogadiscio	Mogadisu	Mogadischu	Mogadichou

A NEW SYSTEM

First some general principles:

a) We are agreed within the SSS that we should stick to the existing 26 letter alphabet, because it reduces the scope for unfamiliarity and avoids the expense of changing type faces. Also of course it maintains the world wide links described above.

b) We are also agreed in the SSS that diacritics and written accents are a nuisance, difficult to remember accurately and also open to the typeface objection, so best avoided if possible.

c) For regularity, one sound should always be written the same way and one letter or group of letters should always produce the same sound for a particular speaker. In other words sound and symbol should correspond to each other. This should not need stating --- it is taken for granted in most languages.

d) Although one pronunciation cannot be imposed on all 1,000 million English speakers/users, the system should cater for as many regular variations of accent as possible, but not to the point of merging sounds which have regular variants (see table). The system should cater for the full pronunciation of words all of which may not be distinguished by particular accents. Thus in southern English *flaw* and *floor* are pronounced the same way, and in Scotland *tot* and *taught* sound roughly the same. Where some accents distinguish between vowels and others do not, it should be the majority or standard English which sets the tone. Where two different accents pronounce a word quite differently, variant spellings should be tolerated. These will often be local peculiarities which have nothing to do with the local accent. Compare the two versions of *often* and the British and American variants for *fertile*, *missile*, *potato*, *tomato* and *harass*. No system with pretensions to regularity could absorb such differences without resorting to variant spellings. Some variants are recognised by TO already: *bath/bathe*, *clean/cleanse*.

e) No one letter should influence the pronunciation of another. Particular culprits are: the magic e (fat, fate), w (tan, wan) and l (pal/ palm, bat/ ball, moll/ mole), and of course the double consonant (tinny, tiny). Letter r is a particular trap and examples are given with each vowel below.

- f) Double letters should not be used except where they genuinely represent the same sound pronounced twice, e.g. rat-trap, bookcase, meanness, though practice appears to vary with the -ness words.
- g) Long vowels should clearly derive from their short version and diphthongs should clearly derive from their components. Why should doubling the o in *hot* lead to the sound of *hoot*? Again, the au in German is clearly derived from a as in *Hahn* and u as in *Stuttgart*. The similar English ou as in *house* is clearly not an *amalgam* of o as in *hop* or *hope* and u as in *us*, *put* or *use*. This is important for learning and the integrity of the system.
- h) Every syllable should contain a vowel, again for the avoidance of doubt, particularly among learners. Compare *prism* and *prison*, which both have two syllables. This is an issue we have wrestled with in the SSS in dealing with Cut Spelling. Omitting unaccented syllables presumes a knowledge of the existing spelling. This system does not. Existing English speakers pronounce *rhyth-um* and *rhyth-mic* but the foreign learner could be forgiven for saying *rhyth-um-ic* for the latter word. So for clarity and regularity, the consonant-only syllable is avoided.
- i) This leads to the next rule, which is again for clarity and regularity: no consonant should be used as a vowel and no vowel should be used as a consonant. Compare TO: *rye*, *yes*; *wan*, *howl*.
- j) lastly, spelling should be based on the full (citation) pronunciation of a word. Syllables which have not yet been eroded need to be conveyed faithfully. Usage and dictionaries must be our guide here. Forms will need to be chosen realistically. Thus we cannot pretend that *issue* is still pronounced *issyue* when everyone says *ishue*. Similarly *tortoise* and *porpoise* which could be conveyed in TO as *tortus* and *porpus*. This last point is important for the public because under a phonetic system people will expect sound to correspond to symbol and received spellings will tend to fix the pronunciation.

New Vowel System

Let us start with those troublesome vowels. The short version of the English vowels often adheres to the European norm already: pat, pet, pit, pot, put

A

Short a can be pronounced in varying ways depending on accent, so we will use A for the sound CAT.

Most accents distinguish a long a as in *father*, *bath*, *lath*. This needs a separate symbol, so I propose AE, BAETH. Northerners will have to get used to a separate symbol for what is to them the same sound. It would certainly be convenient for the absorption of foreign words to write A every time --- Bata, Kalmata, Khishasa --- but there would be confusion with ar since we are no longer relying on double letters to determine the length of the preceding vowel, a device which is not employed regularly in TO in any case:

short A		long a (AE)	
embarrass	EMBARUS	barber	BAERBUR
Harry	HARI	Hari	HAERI
carrot	CARUT	harvest	HAERVIST
Tarring (Sussex)	TARING	tarring	TAERING

E

Again short e presents no problem. Short e as in *bed* and all other spellings can follow the same pattern: HEVI, BRETH.

The long version of e is a diphthong in standard English, often written ei, so we standardise on EI as in VEIL, so: FREIT, BIHEIV, MEIL, CONVEI.

Many accents (eg Yorkshire, Caribbean) will continue to pronounce a pure long e sound.

I

Short as in *pin*, again presents no problem: PIN, SIV, GIV, ANGRI. In English it is vital to distinguish the short i from the long, even though in many languages little or no distinction is made (Tbilisi, Mitsubishi) e.g. slip/ sleep, dip/ deep, filled/ field. For lack of a separate letter we must have recourse to a digraph. IE is suggested which exists already in *field*, *grieve*, etc:

SLIP, SLIEP, DIP, DIEP, FILD, FIELD, BEILIF, BILIEF.

In compound words there is an i which, while not short is nearer to I than to IE, so we will use that: *busy* > BIZI, *BADLI*, but *repeat* > RIPIET, *delete* > DILJET.

O

Short o as in *hot* follows the European pattern, HOT. The long o sound varies considerably in pronunciation and there is no one convenient digraph. I propose OE as in *hoe* as the model: HOE, GOET, MOET OETMIEL.

Old fashioned RP also uses the RP version of this sound before l, but for most accents and for most such words the o is diphthongised. Compare *holy* and *wholly*. For this sound I propose ou which accurately comprises it for most accents. Thus HOELI GOEST, HOULI BAD, SOUL, MOUL, GOUL, TOULD (which we may wish to distinguish from TOLD):

THI VICUR TOULD THI SECSTUN AND THI SECSTUN TOLD THI BEL.

Another variant or o is oa as in *broad* and *oar*. This spelling again roughly shows the pronunciation, oh plus ah, so we can standardise on that: BROAD, OAR, OA, LOA AND OARDUR, FOECLOAR, FOAN.

Note the two versions OA/OAR, which sound the same for Southern English speakers, but not for people who sound their r's. It should be noted that OR is always short, on the principle that r cannot influence a previous vowel, see rule (c) above: FLORIN, FORIN (foreign), FLORID, HISTORIC, HORID, TORID, HORID STOARI, FLORID TOARI.

U

Letter u is difficult because it has four regular sounds in English: *put/ soot*, *gut*, *due/ use*, *zoo/sue/ route*.

For the short u in *put/ soot* we standardise on u to follow the international pattern: PUT, FUT, SPUTNIK. For the longer version of this sound we must again have recourse to adding an e, as in *sue*: SUE, ZUEM, RUET. For u as in *due* and *use*, we write it as it actually sounds, y plus u, yu. Since it is almost always long it does not need an e as well: YU-TRIE, YU, YUS, DYU, FYU, BYUTIFUL.

The short southern English u sound as in *cup* has no counterpart in other accents except Australasia. Northern English does not distinguish the u in *cup* and the oo in *foot*. But for most accents there is a distinction. Perhaps the commonest rendering is a short er sound much like the French *eu* as in *feu* or *milieu*. I propose to standardise on that, particularly as it allows a regular combination with r and absorbs many French borrowings easily: SEUP, MILIEU, MEUR (myrrh), FEUR, SEURLI, GREUF.

SCHWA

This leaves the commonest pure vowel sound in the English language, the unaccented oblique grunt, which is spelt countless different ways according to the original pronunciation. We shall use short U to convey this sound, schwa to the linguists, because it is nearest to the pronunciation, and apply it regularly

open	OEPUN	doctor	DOCTUR
Indian	INDIUN	singer	SINGUR
woollen	WULUN	pewterer	PYUTURUR
wooden	WUDUN	prosperous	PROSPURUS
bargain	BAERGUN	phosphorus	FOSFURUS
fulcrum	FULCRUM	terror	TERUR
fulsome	FULSUM	terrier	TERIUR
litmus	LITMUS	interior	INTIERIEUR
regular	REGYULUR		

It is also added in those rare cases where an unaccented syllable has no vowel in TO, as mentioned for rule i) above:

prism	PRIZUM	rhythm	RITHUM
(cf: prison	PRIZUN)	chasm	CAZUM

This regular spelling for schwa removes many confusing spellings in TO: -ence/ ance/ ause, - ant/ ent, -able /ible, -ary/ ory/ ery:

dependable	DIPENDUBUL	sensory	SENSURI
fable	FEIBUL	gallant	GALUNT
credible	CREDEBUL	vagary	VEIGURI
credence	CRIEDUNS	blatant	BLEITUNT
repentance	RIPENTUNS	winery	WAINURI
attendance	ATENDUNS	latent	LEITUNT

Other examples of schwa:

treacle	TRIECUL	tricolour	TRICULUR
gambol,	GAMBUL	burgle	BEURGUL
gamble		trickler	TRICLUR
trickle	TRICUL	burglar	BEURGLUR
regal	RIEGUL		

DIPHTHONGS

I/BITE

Following rule (f) (transparency of diphthongs) we convey the long i sound of TO as in *bite*, by its constituent parts, ah plus eeh as in *aisle* AIL. So: BAIT, BAIL, HAIT (height). This follows the international transcription of names: Shanghai, Cairo, Hawaii.

OU/HOUSE

This is made up of a as in *cat* and u as in *put* or o as in *pot*. It should therefore be written AU or AO. International examples are the Hausa tribe, Macau. AU seems to be the better solution, but AO bears discussion as an alternative: HAU NAU BRAUN CAU, HAO NAO BRAON CAO, PAOLO

OI

TO serves us well here so oi remains unchanged, though oy becomes OI also: BOI, BOIL,

CONSECUTIVE VOWELS PRONOUNCED SEPARATELY

Because we are reduced by the shortcomings of the alphabet to use two letters for some vowel sounds, some difficult letter combinations can arise where two consecutive vowels are pronounced separately. Some compromises and extra rules are needed for clarity and to avoid misreading.

IE-EL, IE-EU

This can occur in words like *create*. For simplicity we make the e serve both sounds: CRIEIT. Similarly *vehicle* becomes VIEUCUL, not VIEUCUL.

U-I, O-I

Ue as in *flue* FLUE plus i as in *id* gives FLUEID, which must be read as FLUE-ID and not FLU-EID. Similarly HEROEIN must be read as HEROEIN. (*hero* becomes HIEROE).

YU-U

This will occur frequently. Both u's must be written because the sounds belong to two syllables:

vacuous	VAC-YU-US	you'll	YU'UL
dual, duel	DYU-UL		

Other vowel combinations should be written in full:

chaos	CEIOS	milieu	MILIEU
co-op	COEOP	Mayo	MEIOE
Creole	CRIEOL		

CONSONANTS

The consonants are much less troublesome because

- 1) they are internationally much more standardised,
- 2) they vary less within English accents and
- 3) the alphabet more nearly provides all the sounds needed.

We can dismiss the following right away because they will be written as in TO:
B,D,F,H,J,L,M,N,P,R,T,W,Y and Z.

C

C in English follows (with the sole exceptions of *sceptic* and often *Celtic*) the Latin language pattern of being pronounced as s before e and i: cod, cant, cent, civet. A reluctance to pronounce

it "hard", like a k, can also be seen in other European languages. In German e and i can appear only before a k or ck, a spelling which also exists in English of course. In other languages c is pronounced as ts (Hungarian, Serbo-Croat) or j (Turkish). Plainly any regular spelling system must do away with the silly soft c rule. Whenever it is soft we should write s:

receive	RISIEV	cent, scent	SENT
Sicily	SISILI	civet	SIVIT

For the hard c sound we should standardise on either c, as in Welsh (Cefn), or k which is the internationally accepted norm: Kikuyu, Kinshasa, Fukuyama, Waikiki.

Personally, I find k offensive and would prefer c everywhere as in Welsh:

CIC THI WICID COCURUL, CEVIN

but, in the face of world wide usage, must admit to being defeated by my own logic:
KIK THI WIKID KOKURUL, KEVIN

G,J

The Romance language rule that g is “soft”- pronounced like a j before e and i, is much less rigidly applied in TO: *general, gibbet* but *give, get*. We can therefore make it a rule that g will always be hard, and soft g becomes j:

JENURUL, JIBIT, GIV, GET, JINJUR, JOARJ, MANIJ.

A hard g before e or i is not unknown in international spellings: Gethsemane, Gettysburg, Geysir, Gifu.

Q

This letter is redundant in any rationalised spelling system and is substituted by C or K, or for qu by CW or KW:

antic	ANTIC	ANTIK	quin	CWIN	KWIN
antique	ANTIEC	ANTIEK	queen	CWIEN	KWIEN
queue,cue	CYU	KYU			

More examples: CWORUL, CWIBUL, CWONTITI. The alternatives with K: KWORULSUM, KWIK, ANTIKWEITID

K would remain in common use only in the digraph KH to denote the guttural sound of Scottish and foreign words, where it is often used already: LOKH LOKHI, OKHTURMUKHTI, KHAMSIN, KHONMEINI, KHACHATURIAN.

S

S always conveys the sound s, not z as is so common in TO in a medial or final position:

raise, raze	REIZ	refuse bin	REFYUS BIN
bosom	BUZUM	refuse to	RIFYUZ TU

Y,W

These are always consonants, never vowels following rule (i) above:

type	TAIP	idyll	IDIL
happy	HAPI	blow	BLOE
guy	GAI	idle	AIDUL
new	NYU		

SH, CH, ZH

We need these three digraphs as well. The first two are as in TO: SHOP, SHISH, CHOP, CHIBA. ZH is not just for foreign names like BREZHNEV and ZHIVKOV but is a surprisingly common sound in English:

pleasure	PLEZHUR	manege	MANEZH
fusion	FYUZHUN	bijou	BIZHUE

X

Finally, x like q is redundant, because it is shorthand for cs, cz or gz and is in any case not consistently used in TO:

connexion, connection	CONECSHUN	pox, pockmarked	POCS, POCMAERCT
Dickson, Dixon	DICSUN	exact	ECZACT
Backster, Baxter	BACSTUR	except	ECSEPT
cox, cocks	COCS		

INFLECTIONS AND WORD FORMATIONS

We add s in TO for the third person singular of a verb, the plural of a noun and to denote possession. But the sound is actually a z sound after a vowel or a voiced consonant and should be written thus. Since this change merely follows pronunciation it should cause no problem in practice:

Unvoiced	Voiced	LOPS	LOBZ
BITS	BIDZ	JAC'S	FRED'Z
PIES	PIEZ	HEURS	HEURZ
PAIS	PAIZ	GRIETS	GRIEVZ
RATS	REIDZ	HIETS	HIEDZ

Something similar happens in the past tense to t and d. Again pronunciation is the guide:

Unvoiced	Voiced	LIEPS	LEIBULD
LAEFT	LIEVURD	CRIEST	CONVEID
LOPT	LOBD	COEALEST	
BEUTRIST	CREIZD		

Contrary to the complicated and irregularly applied rules in TO, additions for inflections or word formation are bolted onto the basic word without any need for consequential changes, providing the sound of the basic stem does not alter:

vary	VEIRI	drop	DROP
various	VEIRI+US	dropped	DROP+T
varied	VEIRI+D	dropping	DROP+ING
varying	VEIRI+ING		
variation	VEIRI+EISHUN		
target	TARGIT		
targeted, targetted	TARGIT+ID		

In TO you may have to change y to i, drop a magic e or double a consonant, when forming a derivative word. All these rules will go and there will be no doubt which is the correct form -- look at target(t)ed above.

In some cases where the pronunciation changes, the stemword will change where it does not in TO. But as ever pronunciation will be the guide:

sign	SAIN	reputation	REPYUTEISHUN
signal	SIGNUL	doubt	DAUT
severe	SIVIER	indubitably	INDYUBITIBLI
severity	SIVERITI	phlegm	FLEM
reputedly	RIPYUTIDLI	phlegmatic	FLEGMATIC

FOREIGN LOAN WORDS

It is suggested that those words which are generally recognised as naturalised should follow the new system: BUFE, DEBRI, BALE, RESTURUNT, CREISH, CONUSEUR, RINASUNS, RONDEIVUE, DOSIYE, GROETESC, BEURLESC, VOADUVIL.

Generally a regular spelling system is less tolerant of alien spellings and either alters the pronunciation in line with the spelling or more usually alters the spelling to accord with the system:

for example, *restorang* (Swedish) to convey the French nasal sound; *bisuteria*, jewellery (Spanish) because the j of *bijou* (ZH) has no counterpart in Spanish; *kelner* -- the second l of German *Kellner* (waiter) drops out in Serbo-Croat which has no double letters.

PLACE NAMES

The British, more particularly the English, take a perverse delight in trapping the unwary foreigner with place and family names whose pronunciation bears little relation to the spelling. The spelling of family names must be left to the owners, but for place names it is to be hoped that tradition and sentiment will be cast aside in favour of rational spellings. A sample of such horrors is below.

Foreigners are more logical. The Italian version of Florence first changed the l to i as in common for that language; and because the o was not accentuated it also dropped out. The result, Firenze, has no apparent connection with the flowery original name, Florentia. Yet no one doubts Florence is a beautiful and romantic city.

Similarly Adrianopolis in Turkey is now Edirne, giving no clue to its Graeco-Roman name. In England we try to retain the Roman connection (caster, cester), in place names which have lost it in pronunciation. So let's bring the spelling up to date:

Bicester	BISTUR	Towcester	TOESTUR
Gloucester	GLOSTUR		

Other names which reveal their pronunciation in revised spelling:

Trottescliffe	TROZLI	Whitwell	WITUL
Glamis	GLAEMS	Haverhill	HEIVRUL
Kirkcudbright	CEURCUEBRI	Thurles	THEURLIS
Mildenhall, Wilts	MAINUL	Naas	NEIS
Mildenhall, Suffolk	MILDUNHOAL	Athy	ATHAI
Happisburgh	HEEZBRU	Langbaurgh	LANGBAERF
Ewell	YUUL	Dolomite	DOLOMAIT
Wavedon	WAVUNDUN	Yosemite	YOSEMITI
not	WEIVUNDUN		

HOMONYMS

TO already contains many words which look the same and have different meanings. Such words (homonyms) worry many people because they fear that they are a cause of misunderstanding and they believe that efforts should be made to reduce them. However, they are of no account, really, because words are used only in context. Their numbers would need to be vastly higher before they gave rise to misunderstanding.

Homonyms are deliberately placed side by side only to create effect or make a pun: The sound of a sound man in his boat sounding the depth of the sound - includes all the meanings of sound. There are also many words which sound the same but are spelt differently. Regular spelling does not of course alter the spoken language, but it will cause many pairs of words at present spelt differently but pronounced the same to be written the same as well:

wrapped, rapt	RAPT	would, wood	WUD
missed, mist	MIST	reined, rained	REIN-D
weight, wait	WEIT	guessed, guest	GEST
weighed, wade	WEID		

Thus the number of homonyms will be increased. No problem is caused in practice: we often say homonyms in the same sentence without realising it:

TU BIE OR NOT TU BIE
SHI LEFT AT TEN TU TUE
(There will still be two versions of TUE: TUE BAD, TUE MEN, but not three)

TUE FOR TIE
A TEIBUL FOR FOAR

AI NOE THUT MAI RIDIEMUR CEUMITH
HI SEZ THUT THAT MAN DID IT

WEUN OR TUE
WUD YU LAIC PADULZ OR OARZ WITH YOAR BOET, SEUR?

Colloquial speech

A whole new range of unstressed words will be available for writers of colloquial speech:

THIS IZ MAI CAER, NOT YOARZ
WEIR'Z YUR CAER, THEN?
AI'V LOST MI HAT.

GWEN'Z LOST HUR BAG AGEN.
THEIR'Z MI WAIF'S.
THAT'S HEUR HANDBAG, NOT GWEN'Z.

THI STAER

bai H G Wells

It woz on thi feurst dei ov thi nyu yier thut thi anaunsmunt woz meid, oalmoest simulteiniusli from thrie obzeurvutriz, thut thi moeshun ov thi planit Neptyun, thi auturmoest ov oal thi planits that wiel about thi seun, had biceum veri iratic. A ritaerdeishun in its velositi had bien suspectid in Disembur. Then a feint rimoet spec ov lait woz disceuvurd in thi riejun ov thi purteurbd planit. At feurst this did not coaz eni greit ecsaitmunt. Saiuntific piepul, hauevur, faund thi intelijuns rimaercubul ineuf, ievun bifoar it biceim noen thut thi nyu bodi woz rapidli groeing laerjur and braitur, and thut its moeshun woz cwait difrunt from thi oardurli proegres ov thi planits.

On thi theurd dei ov thi nyu yier thi nyuzpeipur riedurz ov tue hemisfierz weur meid aweir ov thi rieul impoartuns ov this eunyuzhul aparishun in thi hevunz. A Planitri Colizhun weun Leundun peipur hedid thi nyuz, and procleimd thut thi streinj planit wud probubli colaid with Neptyun. Thie liedur raiturz enlaerjd upon thi topic. Soe thut in moest ov thi capitulz ov thi weurld, on Janyuuri thi theurd, their woz an ecspecteishun, hauevur veig, ov seum imununt finomunun in thi scai; and az thi nait foloed thi seunset raund thi gloeb, thauzundz ov men teurnd their aiz scaiwurd tu sie thi ould familiur staerz az thei had oalweiz bien.

Euntil it woz doan in Leundun and thi staerz oevurhed had groen peil. Thi wintur'z doan it woz, a sicali filturing acyumyuleishun ov deilait, and thi lait ov gas and candulz shon yeloe in thi windoez tu shoe weir piepul weur asteur. Beut thi yoaning puliesmun soa thi thing, thi bizi craudz in thi maercit stopt ageip, weurcmen goeing tu their weurc bitaimz, milcmen. Disipeishun goeing hoem jeidid and peil, hoemlis wondururz, and in thi ceuntri, leibururz treujing afield, poechurz slincing hoem, and oevur thi deusti cwicuning ceuntri it cud bi sien, and aut at sie bai siemen woching for thi dei, a greit wait staer, cuem seudunli intu thi westurn scai!

Varied Pronunciation of English Vowels.

Vowel	Vowel +r	BBC/ RP	Eng S	Eng R	Eng Mid	Eng N	Wales	Scot land	UI- ster	S Ire	USA, Can	W Ind	SA Au	NZ	Ind, Afr	Yuro spel
mat	marry	æe	æ	ɑ	ɑ	ɑ	ɑ	ɑ	ɑ/æ	ɑ	æ	ɑ	e	æ	e	ɑ
alms	tarry (road)	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	æ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɑ:	o:	ɑ:	ɑ:	AE
far	arm															
met	merry	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	i	i	i	e
weight	wary	ei	ei/	ei/	ei/	e:	e:	e:	ei	ei	ei	e:	ei	ei/	ei	e
wait	their		ai	ai	e:									ai		
sin	syrup	i	i	i	i	i	i	ʌ	ʌ	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
	cirrus															
field	fierce	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i:	i
see	geared															IE
hot	sorry	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	ʌ	ʌ	o	o	o	o
moat	lowering	əʊ	əʊ	oʊ	oʊ	o:	o:	o:	oə	o:	oʌ/	o:	əʊ	æʊ/	əʊ	o/
											əʊ		əʊ	əʊ	o:	
soul		əʊ	oʊ	oʊ	o:	o:	o:	o:	o:	o:	oʊ	oʊ	o:	oʊ	oʊ	o/
hole																o:
maul	gory	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	ɑ:	ɑ:	ɔ	ɔ	ɔ	o:
cut	hurry	ʌ	ʌ	ʌ	ɜ	ʊ	ɜ/ʊ	ɜ	o	o	ɜ	o	ɜ	ʌ	ʌ	o
d'oevre	firm	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:/e	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:	ɜ:/
	curt															ʌ
foot	fuller	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	y	y	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ	ʊ
woolen																U
coot	Jewry	u	u	u	u	u	u	y	y	u	u	u	y	u	u	u
cute	fury	ju	ju	ju	ju	ju	ju	y	y	ju	u/ju	ju	y	ju	ju	u:
how	cowrie	əʊ	əʊ	eʊ	əʊ	əʊ	əʊ	eʊ/	eʊ	eʊ	əʊ	əʊ	eʊ	eʊ	eʊ	əʊ
								əʊ								
fine	fire	ai	ai	oi/	ai	ai	ai	ei/	oi	oi	ai/	ai	ai	ai	ai	ai
				ai				ai			oi					
oil	Moira	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi	oi

Note: Eng S R= England South Rural.
 Symbols used are International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

THE MOST MIS-SPELT WORDS IN ENGLISH

(ALBSU/Gallup Poll Nov. 11, 1992)

Accommodation	ACOMOEDEISHUN
Separate	SEPURUT SEPUREIT
Necessary	NESISERI
Sincerely	SINSIERLI
Business	BIZNIS
Height	HAIT
Diarrhoea	DAIURIEA

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