

Introdúxion

For centüriys, thēr has bīn a mūvmēt to refórm the spelling of the Inglish langwaġ. It sīks to câng Inglish òrthographiy sô that it is môr consistēt, maçes pronúnciãcion better, and follows the alphabétic principul. Common môtivs for spelling refórm inclūd qwicker lerning, cêper lerning, and mâking Inglish môr üsful as an internácional áxíliariy langwaġ.

Refórm propōzals vâriy in terms of the depth of the lingwístic cânges and bý their implementãcions. In terms of wrítting systems, môst spelling refórm propōzals ar moderat; they üz the tradícional Inglish alphabèt, trÿ to meintéin the famíliar shâps of wurd, and trÿ to meintéin common convénsions (suc as sílent e). Môr radical propōzals invól v adding or remüving letters or symbols, or êven crêãting nü alphabèts. Sum refórmers prefér a gradüal câng implemented in stâges, whíl udhers fâvur an immēdiat and tōtal refórm for ál.

Sum spelling refórm propōzals hav bīn adópted parcialiy or temporãriliy. Meniy of the spellings prefér'd bý Nôah Webster hav becúm standard in the Ünited Stãts, but hav not bīn adópted elçwhēr (sī Américan and British Inglish spelling differences). Harriy Lindgren's propōzal, SR1, was wunç popülar in Åstrãlia.

Historiy

Modern Inglish spelling devélop'd from abüt 1350 onwards, when - after thrī centüriys of Norman Frenç rül - Inglish gradüaliy becãm the offícial langwaġ of Ingland agén, álthóugh veriy different from beför 1066, having incórpóratēd meniy wurd of Frenç origin (battul, bīf, button, etc.). Erliy wrítters of this nü Inglish, suc as Ġeffriy Câcer, gâv it a feirliy consistēt spelling system, but this was sūn dílütēd bý Cânceriý clerks hū rēspéll'd wurd bãs'd on Frenç òrthographiy. Inglish spelling consistēnciy was delt a furdher blow when William Caxton brōght the printing press to Lunden in 1476. Having liv'd in mein-land Ürop for the precēding 30 yêrs, his grasp of the Inglish spelling system had becúm ùncertan. The Belgían assístants hūm hē brōght to help him set up his bizness had an êven pûrer commánd of it.

As printing devélop'd, printers begán to devélop individüal preferences or "hūs stÿls". Furdhermôr, tÿp-setters wer pey'd bý the lín and wer fond of mâking wurd longer. Húéver, the biggest câng in Inglish spelling consistēnciy occúr'd betwĳn 1525, when William Tyndál first trãnzlãtēd the Nü Testament, and 1539, when King Henriy VIII lêgalíz'd the printing of Inglish Bĳbul in Ingland. The meniy edícions of thēz Bĳbul wer ál printed útsĳd Ingland bý pēpul hū spök littul or nô Inglish. They often câng'd spellings to maç their Duc òrthographiy. Exámpuls inclūd the sílent *h* in *ghost* (to maç Duc *gheest*, whic lâter becãm *geest*), *aghost*, *ghastly*, and *gherkin*. The sílent *h* in udher wurd - suc as *ghospel*, *ghossip*, and *ghizzard* - was lâter remüv'd.

Thêr hav bīn tū pêriods when spelling refórm of the Inglish langwag has attrácted partícular interest.

16th and 17th centüriys

The first of thêz pêriods wos from the middul of the 16th to the middul of the 17th centüriys AD, when a number of publicãcions ûtlīning propōzals for refórm wer publish'd. Thêz propōzals ġeneraliy did not attráct sêrius considérãcion becáz they wer tū radical or wer bâs'd on an insufficient understánding of the phonólogiy of Inglish. Hûéver, môr consêrvatív propōzals wer môr succéssful. Ġâms Hûel in his *Grammar* of 1662 recomméded mīnor cânges to spelling, suc as cânging *logique* to *logic*, *warre* to *war*, *sinne* to *sin*, *towne* to *town*, and *tru* to *true*. Meniy of thêz spellings ar nû in ġeneral üs.

From the 16th centüriy onward, Inglish wrīters hū wer scolars of Grīk and Latin literatür trÿ'd to link Inglish wurds to their Grecô-Latin cūnter-parts. They did this bÿ adding sīlent letters to mâk the rêal or imágin'd links môr obvīus. Thus *det* becãm *debt* (to link it to Latin *debitum*), *dout* becãm *doubt* (to link it to Latin *dubitare*), *sissors* becãm *scissors* and *sithe* becãm *scythe* (as they wer wrongliy thōght to cum from Latin *scindere*), *iland* becãm *island* (as it wos wrongliy thōght to cum from Latin *insula*), *ake* becãm *ache* (as it wos wrongliy thōght to cum from Grīk *akhos*), and sô forth.

William Shâkspêr satirīz'd the dispáritiy betwīn Inglish spelling and pronúnciãcion. In his pley *Luv's Lâbur's Lost*, the character Holoferns is a "pedant" hū insísts that pronúnciãcion shûd câng to mać spelling, rãdher than simpliy cânging spelling to mać pronúnciãcion. For exámpul, Holoferns insísts that evriy-wun shûd pronũç the unhistorícal B in wurds līk *doubt* and *debt*.

19th centüriy

The second pêriod started in the 19th centüriy and appêrs to cōincīd with the devélopment of phonétics as a scīenç. In 1806, Nôah Webster publish'd his first dixionariy, *A Compéndiūs Dixionariy of the Inglish Langwag*. It inclűded an essey on the odditiys of modern òrthographiy and his propōzals for refórm. Meniy of the spellings hê üz'd, suc as *color* and *center* wűd becúm hãl-marks of Américan Inglish. In 1807, Webster begán compīling an expãded dixionariy. It wos publish'd in 1828 as *An Américan Dixionariy of the Inglish Langwag*. Álthóugh it drū sum prôtèst, the refórm'd spellings wer gradüaliy adópted thrūghūt the Ünīted Stãts.

In 1837, Îzàc Pitman publish'd his system of phonétic short-hand, whīl in 1848 Alexánder Ġohn Ellis publish'd *A Plê for Phonétic Spelling*. Thêz wer propōzals for a nū phonétic alphabèt. Álthóugh unsuccéssful, they drū wīd-spred interest.

Bÿ the 1870s, the philológical sociētiys of Grēt Britan and América cōz to considér the matter. After the “Internácional Convénsion for the Améndment of Inglish Òrthographiy” that was held in Philadélphīa in Ågust 1876, sociētiys wer fûnded suc̄ as the Inglish Spelling Refórm Assõciãcion and Américan Spelling Refórm Assõciãcion. That yêr, the Américan Philológical Sociētiy adópted a list of éléven refórméd spellings for immēdiāt üs. Thêz wer *are*→*ar*, *give*→*giv*, *have*→*hav*, *live*→*liv*, *though*→*tho*, *through*→*thru*, *guard*→*gard*, *catalogue*→*catalog*, *(in)definite*→*(in)definit*, *wished*→*wisht*. Wun mâgôr Américan nüspâper that begán üzing refórm’d spellings was the *Chicãgô Tribün*, hÿz editor and owner, Gôseph Medill, sat on the Cûncil of the Spelling Refórm Assõciãcion. In 1883, the Américan Philológical Sociētiy and Américan Philológical Assõciãcion wurk’d togédher to produç 24 spelling refórm rûls, whic̄ wer publish’d that yêr. In 1898, the Américan Nacional Educãcional Assõciãcion adópted its own list of 12 wurds to bê üz’d in ål wrítings: *tho*, *altho*, *thoro*, *thorofare*, *thru*, *thruout*, *catalog*, *decalog*, *demagog*, *pedagog*, *prolog*, *program*.

20th centüriy onward

The Simplify’d Spelling Bôrd was fûnded in the Ünited Ståts in 1906. The SSB’s oríginal 30 members consistéd of åthors, proféssors, and dixionariy editors. Andrū Carnegiy, a fûnding member, suppórted the SSB widh yêrliy beqwést of môr than US\$300,000. In Åpril 1906, it publish’d a list of 300 wurds, whic̄ inclüded 157 spellings that wer ålrēdiy in common üs in Américan Inglish. In Ågust 1906, the SSB wurd list was adópted bÿ Thêodôr Rûzevèlt, hÿ order’d the Guvernment Printing Offiç to start üzing them immēdiãtliy. Hûéver, in Decémber 1906, the U.S. Congrèss pass’d a rezolücion and the ôld spellings wer rēintroduç’d. Nevertheléss, sum of the spellings surviv’d and ar commonliy üz’d in Américan Inglish todéy, suc̄ as *anaemia/anæmia*→*anemia* and *mould*→*mold*. Udhers suc̄ as *mixed*→*mixt* and *scythe*→*sithe* did not surviv. In 1920, the SSB publish’d its *Handbûk of Simplify’d Spelling*, whic̄ set forth ôver 25 spelling refórm rûls. The handbûk nôted that evriy refórm’d spelling nû in gēneral üs was oríginaliy the ôvért act of a lõn wríter, hÿ was follow’d at first bÿ a mînóritiy. Thus, it encúrag’d pêpul to “point the wey” and “set the exámpul” bÿ üzing the refórm’d spellings whènever they cûd. Hûéver, widh its mein sourç of funds cut off, the SSB disbãnded lâter that yêr.

In Britan, spelling refórm was promôted from 1908 bÿ the Simplify’d Spelling Sociētiy and attrãcted a number of prominent suppórters. Wun of thêz was Gôrg Bernard Shå (åthor of *Pygmãlīon*) and muç of his considérabul will was left to the cãz. Amúng members of the sociētiy, the condicions of his will gâv rîz to mâgôr disagr̄ments, whic̄ hinder’d the devélopment of a singul nü system.

Betwīn 1934 and 1975, the *Chicãgô Tribün*, then Chicãgô’s biggest nüspâper, üz’d a number of refórm’d spellings. Ôver a tÿ-munth spell in 1934, it introduç’d 80 rêspéll’d wurds, inclüding *tho*, *thru*, *thoro*, *agast*, *burocrat*, *frate*, *harth*, *herse*, *iland*, *rime*, *staf*, and *telegraf*. A Marc̄ 1934 editõriãl repórted that tÿ-thirds of rêders préfér’d the refórm’d spellings. Anúdhër cleim’d that “preçudiç

and competicion” was preventing dictionariy mâkers from listing suç spellings. Ôver the next 40 yêrs, hûéver, the nûspâper gradüaliy phâz’d üt the rêspéll’d wurd. Untíl the 1950s, Funk & Wagnals dictionariys listed meni refórm’d spellings, inclüding the SSB’s 300, alónsîd the convénsional spellings.

In 1949, a Lâbur MP, Dr. Mont Follick, introdúç’d a prîvat member’s bill in the Hûs of Commons, whic feil’d at the second rêding. In 1953, hê agén had the oportúnitiy, and this tîm it pass’d the second rêding bý 65 vôtis to 53. Becáz of ànticipâted oppozícion from the Hûs of Lords, the bill was widhrán after assúrances from the Minister of Educãcion that rêsèrc wûd bê undertãken into imprüving spelling educãcion. In 1961, this led to Gâms Pitman’s Inícial Têcing Alphabèt, introdúç’d into meni British scûls in an attémpt to imprüv çíld literaci. Álthóugh it succided in its own terms, the advántages wer lost when çíldren trànsfer’d to convénsional spelling. After several decãds, the expérimint was discontinü’d.

In his 1969 bûk *Spelling Refórm: A Nû Apprôç*, the Ástrãlian lingwist Harriy Lindgren propôz’d a step-bý-step refórm. The first, *Spelling Refórm step 1* (SR1), cãl’d for the short /ɛ/ sînd (as in *bet*) to álways bê spell’d widh ⟨e⟩ (for exámpul *friend*→*frend*, *head*→*hed*). This refórm had sum popüláritiy in Ástrãlia.

In 2013, Ünivérsitiy of Oxford Proféssor of Inglish Sîmon Horobin propôz’d that varîetiy in spelling bê accéptabul. For exámpul, hê belívs that it dus not matter whedher wurd suç as *accommodate* and *tomorrow* ar spell’d widh dubbul letters. This propôzal dus not fit widhín the definícion of spelling refórm üz’d bý, for exámpul, *Random Hûs Dictionariy*.

Argüments for Refórm

It is argü’d that spelling refórm wûd mâk it êziyer to lern to rêd (dêcôd), to spell, and to pronüç, mâking it môr üsul for internãcion commúnicãcion, redúcing educãcion buçets (redúcing literaci têçers), remèdiãcion costs, and literaci prôgrãms) and/or enãbling têçers and lerners to spend môr tîm on môr impórtant subgècts or expãnding subgècts.

Anúdher argüment is the shîr amñnt of rêsources that ar wosted üzing the current spelling. For exámpul, Cut Spelling can redúç spelling up to 15%. Accórding to that figur, for evriy 100 letters bêing üz’d on a deiliy bâsis thêr ar 15 letters bêing üz’d ùnnecessãriliy. That amñnts to 15 pâges for evriy 100 pâges of a bûk, or abüt 1 in 7 trís. This applÿs to ál aspècts of deiliy living inclüding shopping recíts, offiç docüments, nûspâpers and magazýns, and internèt traffic. This is taxing on tîm, energi, munniy, and udher rêsources.

Advocats nôt that spelling refórms hav tâken plâç álrédiy, gúst slowli and often not in an organîz’d wey. Thêr ar meni wurd that wer wunç spell’d unphonéticali but hav sinç bîn refórm’d. For exámpul, *music* was spell’d *musick* until the 1880s, and *fantasy* was spell’d *phantasy* until the

1920s. For a tîm, âlmôst âl wurds widh the *-or* ending (suc as error) wer wunç spell'd *-our* (*errour*), and âlmôst âl wurds widh the *-er* ending (suc as member) wer wunç spell'd *-re* (*membre*). In Américan spelling, môst of them nû üs *-or* and *-er*, but in British spelling, ônlîy sum hav bîn refórm'd.

In the last 250 yêrs, sinç Samüel Gohnson prescrib'd hû wurds ôght to bê spell'd, pronúnciãcions of hundreds of wurds (as extrápolâted from Masha Bell's rêsèrc on 7000 common wurds) hav gradüaliy câng'd, and the alphabétic principul in English has gradüaliy bîn corrúpted. Advocats argü that if wê wish to kîp English spelling regulár, then spelling nîds to bê aménded to accũnt for the cânges.

Redúç'd spelling is currentliy practiç'd on infórmal internèt platfòrms and is common in text messagîng.

The wey vûel letters ar üz'd in English spelling vastliy contradíct their üzüal mênings. For exámpul, ⟨o⟩, expécted to reprézént [o], mey stand for [u], whîl ⟨u⟩, expécted to reprézént [u], mey reprézént [e]. This mâks English spelling êven less intúitiv for forin lerners than it is for nâtiv spêkers, whîch is of impórtanç for an internácional âxíliariy langwaç.

Ambigüitiy

Unlík meniý udher langwaçes, English spelling has never bîn systemáticaliy updâted and thus todéy ônlîy partliý hólts to the alphabétic principul. As an ûtcùm, English spelling is a system of wêk rûls widh meniý excépsions and ambigüitiys.

Môst phônêms in English can bê spell'd in môr than wun wey. E.g. the wurds *fear* (*fêr*) and *peer* (*pîr*) contéin the sâm sûnd in different spellings. Lîkwîz, meniý graphêms in English hav multipul pronúnciãcions and dêcõdings, suc as *ough* in wurds lîk *through* (*thrūgh*), *though* (*though*), *thought* (*thōght*), *thorough* (*thurough*), *tough* (*tuph*), *trough* (*troph*), *plough* (*plūgh*), and *cough* (*coph*). Thêr ar 13 weys of spelling the schwā (the môst common of âl phônêms in English), 12 weys to spell /ei/ and 11 weys to spell /ɛ/. Thêz kînds of incôhêrences can bê fûnd thrūghût the English lexicòn and they êven vâriy betwîn dîalèct. Masha Bell has analýz'd 7000 common wurds and fûnd that abût ½ câz spelling and pronúnciãcion difficultiys and abût ⅓ câz dêcõding difficultiys. Suc ambigüitiy is partícularliý problemátic in the câs of heteronyms (homogràphs widh different pronúnciãcions that vâriy widh mênîng), suc as *bow/bû*, *dezert/dezért*, *liv/lîv*, *red/rêd*, *têr/têr*, *wind/wînd*, and *wûnd/wûnd*. In rêding suc wurds wun must considér the contèxt in whîch they ar üz'd, and this incrêses the difficultiy of lernîng to rêd and pronũç English.

A clôser relâcionship betwîn phônêms and spellings wûd elíminât meniý excépsions and ambigüitiys, mâking the langwaç êziyer and faster to master.

Ùndūing the cânges

Sum propõz'd simplifÿ'd spellings ålrēdiy exist as standard or vārīant spellings in ôld literatūr. As nôted erliyer, in the 16th centūriy, sum scholars of Grīk and Latin literatūr trÿ'd to mâk Inglish wurdz lûk môr līk their Grecô-Latin cūnter-parts, at tīms êven errõnêusliy. Sum spelling refõrmers propõz ùndūing thêz cânges. Udher exámpuls of ôlder spellings that ar môr phonétic inclūd *frend* for *friend* (as on Shâkspêr's grâv), *agenst* for *against*, *yeeld* for *yield*, *bild* for *build*, *cort* for *court*, *sted* for *stead*, *delite* for *delight*, *entise* for *entice*, *gost* for *ghost*, *harth* for *hearth*, *rime* for *rhyme*, *sum* for *some*, *tung* for *tongue*, and meni y udhers. It wos ålsô wunç common to üz *-t* for the ending *-ed* whêr it is pronũnç'd as suç (for exámpul *dropt* for *dropped*). Sum of the Inglish langwaç's môst celebrâted wřiters and pôets hav üz'd thêz spellings and udhers propõz'd bÿ todéy's spelling refõrmers. Edmund Spenser, for exámpul, üz'd spellings suç as *rize*, *wize*, and *advize* in his fâmus pôem *The Faerie Queene*, publish'd in the 1590s.

Redúndant letters

The Inglish alphabèt ålrēdiy has several letters hÿz característic sũnds ar ålrēdiy reprezénted elçwhêr in the alphabèt. Thêz inclūd X, whiç can bê réaliz'd as “ks”, “gz”, or “z”; soft G (/dʒ/), whiç can bê réaliz'd as J (Ĝ); hard C (/k/), whiç can bê réaliz'd as K; soft C (/s/), whiç can bê réaliz'd as S; and Q (“qu”, /kw/, or /k/), whiç can bê réaliz'd as “kw” (or simpliy K in sum câses). Hûéver, thêz spellings ar üzüaliy retéin'd to refléct their often-Latin rÿts.

Argüments agénst refórm

Spelling refórm fâces meni argüments agénst the devélopment and implementãcion of a refórm'd òrthographiy for Inglish. Public accéptanç to spelling refórm has bīn consistently low, at lêst sinç the erliy 19th centūriy, when spelling wos cõdifÿ'd bÿ the inflüencial Inglish dixonariys of Samüel Ĝohnson (1755) and Nôah Webster (1806). The irrégular spelling of veriy common wurdz, suç as *is*, *are*, *have*, *done*, and *of* mâks it veriy difficult to fix them widhÿt introdúcing a nôtiçabul câng to the appẽranç of Inglish text.

Inglish is the ônliy wun of the top ten mâçor langwaçes widh nô assõciâted wurldwřid regulatōriy bodiy widh the pûer to promulgât spelling cânges.

Inglish is a West Ĝermánic langwaç that has borrow'd meni wurdz from non-Ĝermánic langwaçes, and the spelling of a wurd often refléct's its orígin. This sumtīms givs a clÿ as to the mēning of the wurd. Êven if their pronúnciãcion has strey'd from the oríginál pronúnciãcion, the spelling is a

record of the phoneme. The same is true for words of Germanic origin whose current spelling still resembles their cognates in other Germanic languages. Examples include *light*, German *licht*; *knight*, German *Knecht*; *ocean*, French *océan*; *occasion*, French *occasion*. Critics argue that respelling such words could hide those links, although not all spelling reforms necessarily require significantly respelling them.

Another criticism is that a reform may favor one dialect or pronunciation over others, creating a standard language. Some words may have more than one acceptable pronunciation, regardless of dialect (e.g. *economic/économique*, *idher/îdher*). Some distinctions in regional accents are still marked in spelling. Examples include the distinguishing of *fern*, *fir*, and *fur* that is maintained in Irish and Scottish English or the distinction between *toe* and *tow* that is maintained in a few regional dialects in England and Wales. However, dialectal accents exist even in languages whose spelling is called phonemic, such as Spanish. Some letters have allophonic variation, such as the letter *a* in *bath* currently stands for both /æ/ and /ɑ/ and speakers pronounce it as per their dialect.

Some words are distinguished only by non-phonetic spelling (as in *knight* and *night*).

Spelling reform proposals

Most spelling reforms attempt to improve phonemic representation, but some attempt genuine phonetic spelling, usually by changing the basic English alphabet or making a new one. All spelling reforms aim for greater regularity in spelling.

Reform proposals that use the basic English alphabet include Cut Spelling, *Handbûk of Simplify'd Spelling*, SûndSpel, Spelling Reform 1 (SR1), and Wijk's Regularized English.

Other proposals extend or replace the basic English alphabet. These proposals seek to eliminate the extensive use of digraphs (such as "ch", "gh", "kn-", "-ng", "ph", "qu", "sh", voiced and voiceless "th" and "wh-") by introducing new letters and/or diacritics. Each letter would then represent a single sound. In a digraph, the two letters represent not their individual sounds but instead an entirely different and discrete sound, which can lengthen words and lead to mis-haps in pronunciation. Notable proposals include Benjamin Franklin's phonetic alphabet, Dezeret alphabet, *Interspel*, Shavian alphabet (revised version: *Quikscript*), *SaypU* (Spell As You Pronounce Universality), *Simpel-Fonetik Method of Writing*, and *Unifon*.