Why does English have such a Funny Spelling English DUDEN Reform Awaiting?

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Abstract: Today's spelling of English is the result of complex processes occurring throughout the history of the English language. The main problem of English spelling is that the way words are spelled does not reflect the way they are pronounced. Reasons for this divergence are, for example, the influence of Norman French, the Great Vowel Shift and the etymological respelling during the Renaissance period. These and other factors together produced the writing system we have to work with today and which is thought to be too complicated. Therefore, there have been many attempts to reform this spelling system, but up to now none of them has been successful.

1. Introduction

Today's English spelling is quite funny. Why do we talk about /ˈnaɪthʊd/ and write complicated letter combinations like 'k-n-i-g-h-t-h-o-o-d'? Obviously there are major differences between English pronunciation and English spelling.

The main reason for this is that every language is like a living organism that is influenced by various factors and therefore undergoes constant change. In order to understand our present system we have to look at the history of the English Language. There are several important turning points: the introduction of the Roman alphabet in the Old English period, the Norman conquest in 1066 AD, the Great Vowel Shift, the introduction of the printing press and the influence of the Renaissance. Moreover, there was constant integration of foreign words into the English language.

This process of constant alteration is ongoing and mainly influenced by people who use English in their everyday lives and simplify it for easier use. In addition to this, there are several reform proposals which try to change English spelling in a systematic way.

2. The History of English Spelling

2.1. Old English

Old English was mostly based on the Latin alphabet. How did that happen? Of course, England had been a Roman colony for quite a long time and, at first sight, one could assume that it was by this direct influence that the originally Celtic languages spoken on the island were latinised. The Romans certainly stayed in England for a period long enough to have some linguistic impact on the locals. They came in 43 BC and left only about 400 years from then, that is at around 400 AD, when the Roman armies were needed on the Continent to fight the "barbarians" who threatened to cross the *limes*[1] and, later, even the Alps. However, despite their long rule of the island, the Romans were not able to impose their language on the Britons and the other Celtic tribes.

So, if not from the Romans, where does the Latin alphabet used in Old English come from? The alphabet and the Latin language came to England only after the Roman colonisers had already left. The conveyors of the new language were also the missionaries of a new religion. From around the year 400 AD, but especially in the sixth century, England was little by little christianised. The missionaries came from two different directions, from the European Continent and from Ireland.

Ireland had been christianised before England and it was from there that monks came over to Britain. The most important of them was St. Columba, who crossed the Irish Sea in 563 AD. Only a little later, in 597 AD, Pope Gregory sent the missionary St. Augustine to England. Through him, King Ethelbert's Kent and, in particular, Canterbury, became the bridgehead for knowledge of Latin (Janson 2002: 140).

The arrival of the Latin alphabet caused the first problem of English spelling. There were not enough letters to represent all the phonemes of Old English; only 23 letters had to represent approximately 35 speech sounds. The Anglo-Saxon scribes tried to ease the problem by including some letters of the runic alphabet. Nonetheless, it was necessary to introduce letter combinations (such as <sc> for Modern English <sh>) in order to be able to represent all speech sounds.

A change with a greater impact on spelling than the one brought about by Christian missionaries happened after England had been conquered by the Normans. The Normans were Scandinavians who had settled in what is today called Normandy and

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[1] Roman wall between the Danube and the Rhine.

who had adopted the French language. Before the Norman king William "the Conqueror" had invaded Britain, Old English (that is, the West Saxon dialect) had been standardised and was used in all parts of the island inhabited by the Anglo-Saxons.

However, with the Norman Conquest in 1066, this Old English standard language vanished. The official languages of church and court were now Latin and French respectively, the Normans managing to dominate the country and its peoples much better than, for example, the Romans had done. The influence of the Normans on the language of the local population hence was considerable and long lasting: Even after the Normans had left, and English regained its status as the official language, it was not as it had been before the conquest.

The changes in spelling, which occurred under Norman influence, were numerous and important. Several rules of Old English were adapted "to suit French spelling conventions." Above all, French letter combinations were introduced. They replaced either Old English letter combinations (<qu> replaces Old English <cw>) or single letters (Old English <h> becomes <gh>). The greatest change concerning vowels is found in long vowels that were replaced by double letters (Old English *fōd* is written as *food*). There were many alterations that were caused by Norman French, and quite a few of the rules established at that time are still valid today.

While the Norman Conquest is an important mark in the development from Old English to Modern English, the Great Vowel Shift marks the beginning of Early Modern English.

2.2. The Great Vowel Shift

During the Middle English and Early Modern English period, the pronunciation of the long vowels changed. The reasons for this change are not clearly known; one hypothesis says that the changes were due to social stratification.

People started to pronounce the long vowels with "a greater elevation of the tongue and a closing of the mouth" (Baugh et al 1993: 233.). So, in the vowel chart the long vowels shifted upwards and the two close vowels became diphthongs. This system of shifts is called chain shift, because the vowels moved from one position to another and caused other vowels to move into the newly available positions and so on. These shifts did not occur chronologically. "The 'chain' aspect is the systematic interconnection: it does not imply that one change preceded another directly (in time),

but that there is a system-wide coordinated movement in which each chain triggers or implies another." (Fennel 2001: 159).
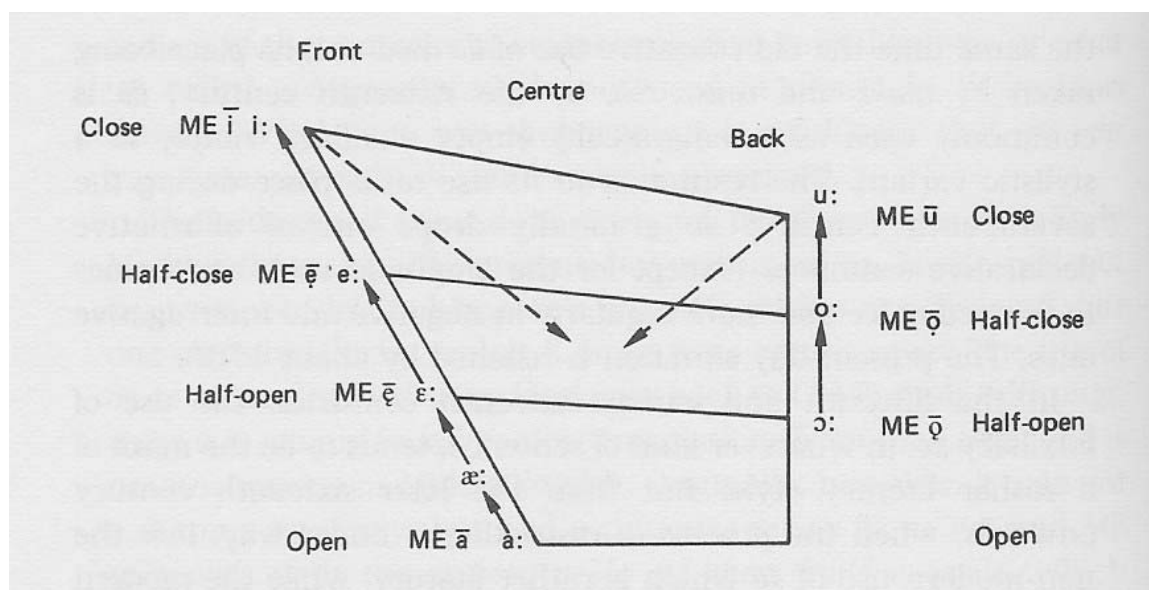

Table 1: Vowel Chart

The Great Vowel Shift started with the diphthongization of the two close vowels /i:/ and /u:/. The Middle English long vowel /u:/ (often spelt <ou>, <ow>) was diphthongized. In Shakespeare's time it was pronounced [əu] and reached today's pronunciation in the seventeenth century. ME /i:/ shifted to a diphthong and eventually became /aɪ/.

In the fifteenth century, ME /o:/ (like in food) moved to /u:/, when ME /u:/ was diphthongized. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the ME vowel /ɔ:/ (*boat, hope*) shifted to /o:/, in 1800 it shifted to /ou/.
Similar changes happened with the front vowels: when ME /i:/ moved, ME /e:/ shifted to /i:/. ME /ɛ:/ (used in words like *meat* and *complete*) moved to /e:/.

ME /a:/ shifted to /æ:/ to /ɛ:/ during the sixteenth century and it moved to /e:/ in the seventeenth century. At that time the ME vowel /ɛ:/ was also pronounced [e:]; the two vowels merged, so that ME /ɛ:/ and /a:/ became identical. In the nineteenth century, there was a diphthongization of the /e:/ from the ME /a:/ and it became [eɪ] like in *break* and *great*) (Barber 1993: 192). The Great Vowel Shift is represented in table 1 (Barber 1993: 192). The Great Vowel Shift began in the fifteenth century and lasted until the seventeenth century – over 200 years.

2.3. The Introduction of the Printing Press

Right at the beginning of the Great Vowel Shift, in 1476, William Caxton set up the first printing press in England. At that time, a great diversity of spelling conventions had been in use all over the country representing the different dialects. As there was no sense in printing all manuscripts in these different conventions, one spelling convention had to be chosen as standard for the sake of general intelligibility.

William Caxton decided on the London dialect as standard for printing. This decision was due to the fact that London as the capital was the most important area in England, politically as well as economically. Another reason was that a Midlands dialect, such as the London dialect, was more likely to be intelligible to all people throughout the country than a northern dialect would have been.

Unfortunately, the standardization of the English spelling through printing occurred while the Great Vowel Shift was still ongoing. Why the printers did not include these changes is not clear. But it is a fact that after this time, the spelling of the vowels did not reflect their pronunciation. This can be seen in the many vowels in English which are spelled as monophthongs, even though they are pronounced as diphthongs and vice versa, as the vowel in the word *name*.

Another example of differences in spelling and pronunciation occurring during the Great Vowel Shift are the so-called "silent letters" in words today. In the word *knight*, the letter <k> had usually been pronounced, but after the Great Vowel Shift people ceased to do so. Still, as the spelling standard had been set up according to the old pronunciation conventions, the <k> was preserved in the word, even though it was no longer pronounced by the speakers.

The differences between spelling and pronunciation was further increased by the printers themselves. As a lot of the printers were Dutch, they had been trained to print in Dutch spelling and some influences of the Dutch spelling conventions sneaked into the English printing. The effects of this can be seen in words like *ghost*, which in Old English was spelled *gast*, but which nowadays has an added <h> after the <g>, just as in the Dutch word *gheest*. Another change in spelling which had been brought about by the Dutch printers was the elimination of non-Latin letters like the runic letter "thorn". This was due to the fact that the printers only used continental characters in printing and therefore could not represent non-Latin letters. The letter "thorn" was replaced by <y>, which has over the years been replaced by <th>.

Although a spelling standard had been established with the introduction of the printing press, it was not as rigid as it is nowadays. For aesthetic reasons printers would sometimes also add superfluous letters to words in order to have one line match the length of the other lines.

2.4. Loan Words

When William Caxton introduced the printing press in England, he saw himself confronted with many words of foreign origins. These so-called loan words made up a considerable portion of the English vocabulary and made spelling a difficult matter. Today, words from foreign languages still enter the English language and continue to shape the image of English as an "amalgam of several traditions" (Crystal 1995: 274-277).

Even before the Anglo-Saxons first trod on English ground, there were some Latin loanwords in Pre-English. The Celtic had picked up Latin during the Roman occupation. Nevertheless, Old English was very Germanic in its character and only featured some 3% Latin and Celtic loanwords (ModE.: 70% loanwords!). Latin loanwords, which the Anglo-Saxons themselves also brought along, were mostly related to Christianity. Traces of Celtic loanwords appear in place names: *London, Cornwall, Dover, Carlisle,* and many more.

Viking tribes, mostly Danes and Norwegians, emerged in Britain in 793AD. Their language was very similar to the one the Anglo-Saxons spoke, which made the adoption of foreign words very easy. Words stemming from Scandinavian often begin with <sk>, as for instance in *sky, skill, skirt,* and *skin.*

The beginning of the Middle English period is usually seen as 1150, but already the Norman Conquest in 1066 brought significant changes to the English language. The latter brought French to England of which over 10,000 words became part of English during the Middle English period. At first, French was the language of the aristocracy and royalty, and many words related to the nobility and the government found their way into English, for instance: *baron, noble, dame, servant,* and *messenger.* The French traces we find in English today come from two different dialects, the Norman (then spoken in England) and the Central French (spoken in Paris, later standard French). Words of the two dialects often developed differently, for instance: Norman French kept <w>, but elsewhere it became <gw> and then <g> (thus we get pairs like *wage-gage* and *warranty-guarantee*).

After 1250 AD the situation changed, and also members of the ruling class started to speak English. Having a French background, they often introduced French words into English, which we can still see in words concerned with administration, the church and the law. Although Latin was still the language of the educated, the image of the English language began to grow. As before, the common and the illiterate spoke English, but in addition to this, English versions of famous texts (for example the Bible) started to appear. By the end of the Middle English period, English was used for many records, the main exceptions being legal and scientific documents which were still written in Latin. Nevertheless, we may say that English was moving towards becoming the standard language.

With the Renaissance a new interest in the classical languages emerged. Besides borrowing words from Latin and Greek, many words from Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese became part of the English vocabulary. Thus the English lexicon was greatly enriched during the Early Modern English period (1500-1700). Because of alien spellings that made learning and writing difficult, the first written dictionaries emerged at this time. As we can see in the so-called *Inkhorn Controversy*[2]*,* the wave of new words was not always welcomed.

Through trade, exploration, and colonization, more loanwords have become part of the English vocabulary. As said before, the borrowing of words from foreign languages into English is still ongoing. Today, we also find words from Irish and Scottish Gaelic, from High and Low German, from Arabian, from African languages, from Hungarian, and from many other languages in English dictionaries.

As we will see in the following chapters, various attempts were undertaken to simplify the difficult spelling of English.

2.5. Etymological respelling

The origin of etymological respelling (Culpeper 1997: 19) is found in the sixteenth-century Renaissance. As the name indicates, it was the era of the 're-naissance' (re-birth) of the classical period which brought along an eager interest in Latin and Greek. In consequence, there was a heightened awareness of the Latin and Greek origins of many English words. This leads to an attempt by sixteenth-century scholars to indicate the etymology of a word in its spelling.

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[2] A debate about the advantages and disadvantages of loan words that took place in the 17th century.

Arguments for and against such spellings were much debated at the time. Some scholars insisted that an indication of etymology was highly desirable; others that it was wholly irrelevant, since it did not represent the sounds (pronunciation) but made orthography more complicated. Nevertheless, quite a few etymologically altered versions of words have survived. They can be arranged into two groups: words whose etymological respelling did not influence their pronunciation (also included in this group are the words that have been remodelled on the base of false etymologies), and words whose pronunciation as well as orthography have been influenced.

Words that were altered according to their etymology but nevertheless kept their former pronunciation, are for example *debt* and *doubt* which had formerly been written as *dette* and *doute*. The letter <b> was inserted to indicate that the words originated from the Latin *'debitum / dubitare'*. The same is true for the <p> in the word *receipt* and the <c> in *indict* (from Latin *'recipere'* and *'indictio'*). Furthermore, there were some cases in which scholars got their etymology wrong. The most famous example is the insertion of <s> in the word *island* (ME *iland*) which is not, as it was wrongly interpreted, derived from Latin *'insula'* but from OE *igland.*

The respelled words of the second group are significant as they show a change in their pronunciation. What was formerly written and pronounced as *aventure* was, after the etymological respelling, written and pronounced *adventure*. The same happened with *assault* (formerly *assaut*), *describe* (formerly *descrive*) and *verdict* (formerly *verdit*) (Barber 1993: 180-181).

The main problem arising from the remodelling of English words by indicating their historical origins is the increase of 'silent letters'. Since the Renaissance, Latin and Greek have suffered from a devaluation in terms of prestige in society. Today the majority of people is not educated in either Latin or in Greek and thus is not able to trace back the origins of the words. Hence silent letters became to most people an oddity without real justification. Even highly educated people would not immediately recognise the origins of the respelled words, since most of them did not include the etymology in their pronunciation.

Etymological respelling can be seen as a step backward in language development. The pronunciation of certain words derived from Latin or Greek was 'anglicised', because the English were hardly able to pronounce certain consonant clusters as for example <-pt-> in *receipt*. Etymological respelling, however, has altered the spelling of words, although English speakers have difficulties to pronounce the altered versions.

3. Spelling today and its reform

3.1. Spelling today

During the last centuries, English has become the probably most widely spread language in the world. So the question arises if this could really have happened to a language that is said to be so very complicated. According to Edith Crowell Trager, the difficulty of English spelling is just "a favorite bit of folklore". She refers to the work of Mr. Flesch, who states that "87% of the English vocabulary is spelled regularly" (Crowell Trager 1957: 27).

Cornell Kimball has studied spelling in Usenet discussion groups. The result was a list of the most commonly misspelled words. At the top were words like millennium, embarrassment, occurrence, accommodate, perseverance and supersede (Kimball 2004: 1). Not quite words we use in our everyday language. So it may just be that the famous difficulty of English spelling is a myth. The exceptions to the rules might be the only real problem.

English spelling is said to have been rather fixed since around 1800 AD and no reform plan has been successful – English spelling is not up to date. Nevertheless, we can observe constant change. Especially in the last years with, for example, the rapid development of text messaging, English spelling has acquired many forms that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. In this new writing style, abbreviations like *4 u*, *Xmas* or *ped X-ing* are quite acceptable.

3.2. Introduction to Spelling Reform

A spelling reform is a long and difficult process. This can be observed in Germany - many people believed that the actual system could not be so wrong, as it had always been like that. And really, if they themselves were able to learn it, why should others not do the same? Despite these difficulties, in 1996 a spelling reform was implemented (the so-called Duden reform).

In the English-speaking world, the situation is less favourable towards a possible reform. Since around Shakespeare's time, there have been attempts to reform the spelling system, but these ideas mostly came from individuals and were not generally accepted. In 1879, the British Spelling Reform Association was founded, and in 1908 the Simplified Spelling Society was formed by academics. But reforming the English

Spelling is slow work. In no English-speaking country have substantial changes been implemented.

In 1969, Australia took the lead with its Spelling Reform Nr.1. This spelling reform had just one rule: the phoneme /ɛ/ was always written as <e>, e.g. *hed*, *lepard*, *frend*, *gess* (Sampson 1985: 197). Unfortunately, as soon as a new government was established, this reform was abandoned.

Around the same time, some English schools started to teach their pupils to read and write with the initial teaching alphabet (see chapter 3.5). Even though this method was successful and had many advantages, it could not establish itself firmly.

In the US, no reform has been officially implemented, but nevertheless, spelling is not as rigid as it is in England. Abbreviations and "incorrect" forms such as *thru* (instead of *through*) are widely used. Moreover, the US are the international top-users of acronyms: *FBI*, *CIA*, *NASA* etc.

There are many different proposals for reforming the English spelling. They range in scope from the radical to the barely noticeable. But all of them essentially try to do two things: Getting rid of all the exceptions to the rules of spelling, and to close the gap between how the words are spelled and how they are pronounced. Many proposals additionally aim for economy of writing; this means that new word forms should be shorter. In the following, only four methods will be presented, but these should be sufficient to gain an idea of what a simpler spelling could look like.

3.3. Cut Spelling

Cut Spelling is one of the methods that work with our existing alphabet, and do not add any new forms. It was first published in 1998 by the Simplified Spelling Society. As the name suggests, Cut Spelling cuts - namely superfluous letters. There are four kinds of cuts: Redundant letters, unstressed vowels before l,m,n and r, vowels in regular endings and most double consonants. There is also some substitution: <gh> <ph> are written as <f>, <ig> as <y>, etc. Only proper names begin with a capital letter (Upward 2004: 4). As can be seen in the following example, once one has gotten over the first shock, it is quite easy to read.

> *It is not hard to read, even without noing its rules, and with practis we read*
> *it as esily as traditionl spelng. Most words ar unchanjed (over 3/4 in th*

*previus sentnce), and we hav th impression not of a totaly new riting systm,
but of norml script with letrs misng here and ther* (Upward 2004: 2).

This method is not only easy to read and write but very economical as well. To make
the introduction of this method easier, the Simplified Spelling Society has produced a
spelling converter which translates traditional texts into this new form.

3.4. New Spelling 90

New Spelling 90 was developed in the early years of the 20th century, published in
1940 and revised in 1991. Just like Cut Spelling, it uses the existing alphabet but only
23 of its letters (c, q and x are not needed anymore). New Spelling 90 is a complete
and consistent system. The graphic below shows the rules of NS 90 (Fennelly,
1992: 2).

new spelling	example	translated example	new spelling	example	translated example
a	fat, father	fat, father	b	bib	bib
ae	maed	made	c	*see k, s*	not used
e	set	set	ch	cherch	church
ee	feet	feet	d	dog	dog
i	fit, piti	fit, pity	f	fat, foto	fat, photo
y	buy, byt	by, bite	g	got	got
o	lot	lot	h	hat	hat
oe	hoe, roep	hoe, rope	j	job, aej, brij	age, bridge
u	but, muther	but, mother	k	kik	kick
ue	nue	new	l	lip	lip
oo	good, moon	good, moon	m	man	man
au	lau, taut	law, taut	n	nod	nod
ou	out, hous	out, house	ng	singer, finger	singer, finger
oi	oil, boi	oil, boy	p	pot	pot
er	merjer, tern	merger, turn	qu	kwik	quick
or	stori	story	r	run	run
			s	see, faes	see, face
obscure vowel			sh	shiver, naeshun	shiver, nation
- see book			t	top	top
			th	thin, then	thin, then

new spelling	example	translated example	new spelling	example	translated example
Word Signs			v	vat	vat
the			w	wil, kwaent	will, quaint
be			wh	wich *or* which	which
he, she, me, we			x	fiks	fix
so			y	yung, yoo	young, you
to			z	zip, vizit	zip, visit
			zh	vizhen	vision

Table 2: New Spelling 90 – rules

It woz on the ferst dae ov the nue yeer that the anounsment woz maed, aulmoest simultaeneusli from three obzervatoris, that the moeshen ov the planet Neptune, the outermoest ov aul the planets that w(h)eel about the sun, had bekum veri eratik. A retardaeshen in its velositi had been suspected in Desember. Then a faent, remoet spek ov lyt woz diskuverd in the reejen ov the perterbd planet. At ferst this did not kauz eni veri graet eksytment. Syentifik peepl, houever, found the intelijens remarkabl enuf, eeven befor it bekaem noen that the nue bodi woz rapidli groeing larjer and bryter, and that its moeshen woz kwyt diferent from the orderli proegres ov the planets (Fennelly 1992: 3).

This passage from H.G. Well's *The Star* shows New Spelling 90 at work. Compared to Cut Spelling, more changes have been made. This might make it less likely to succeed as an official spelling reform, because – as was seen in the German spelling reform – a big and radical reform proposal is less likely to win the race than one that proceeds in small steps.

3.5. Initial teaching alphabet

The i.t.a (initial teaching alphabet) was invented by Sir James Pitman not as a general spelling reform but as an easier way for children to learn to read and write. I.t.a is a compromise between the phonemic principle and traditional spelling. It is made up of 42 letters - 24 of the letters from our alphabet and 18 new signs. Each letter represents a single phoneme. The first graphic below shows which sign belongs to which phoneme (Ager 2004). The second graphic is an excerpt in i.t.a (Cook 2004).

b	c	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	m	n
bed	cat	dog	fish	goat	hat	jug	key	lion	man	nest

p	r	s	t	v	w	y	z	a	e	i
pet	rock	sun	table	voice	win	yet	zip	apple	engine	insect

o	u	æ	ee	ie	œ	ue	wh	ch	ſh	th
hot	umbrella	angel	eel	ice	oat	uniform	wheel	chair	shoe	thumb

th	au	oi	ou	ŋ	ʒ	ʒ	ɼ	a	ꞷ	ꞷ
that	auto	oil	owl	ring	dogs	garage	bird	father	book	moon

Table 3: I.t.a symbols

From M. Harrison, *Instant Reading*, p. 104.

a spesimen ov i.t.a. printiŋ

ie hav just cum from a scꞷl whær ſhe nue reediŋ iz taut.
ie met ſhær a littl girl ov siks. ſhee is ſhe œldest ov a larj
family liviŋ on an œldham housiŋ estæt. tꞷ yeers agœ ſhee
wos a ſhie nervus chield, tꞷ frietend tꞷ tauk. ſhee has wun
priezd personal posseſhon—a dog-eerd antholojy ov vers,
given tꞷ her bie an œlder chield. ſhat littl girl ov siks has
just red tꞷ mee very buetifꞷlly wurdswurth's daffodils. ie
askt her whie ſhee chœs ſhat pœem. ſhee replied ſhat ſhee
luvd daffodils.

Table 4: I.t.a example

3.6. Shavian alphabet

The Shavian alphabet was invented by Kingsley Read in 1959. It is the result of a competition held to fulfil the terms of George Bernard Shaw's will. George Bernard Shaw seems to have been rather critical of the present spelling system, it was he who came up with the famous alternative spelling for *fish – ghoti*. The Shavian alphabet consists of a set of 48 new graphemes. In the following graphic you can see that as in the Roman alphabet, there are three types of letters, those that go up like <b> or <d>, those that go down like <g> and <j> and those that have a uniform height like <c> or <a>. In the Shavian alphabet there are no capital letters; proper names are marked with a dot (Ager 2004). The following graphic shows the Shavian letters (Ager 2004).

peep	bib	tot	dead	kick	gag	thigh	they	fee	vow	so	zoo
[p]	[b]	[t]	[d]	[k]	[g]	[θ]	[ð]	[f]	[v]	[s]	[z]
sure	measure	church	judge	yea	woe	hung	ha-ha	loll	roar	mime	nun
[ʃ]	[ʒ]	[ʧ]	[ʤ]	[j]	[w]	[ŋ]	[h]	[l]	[r]	[m]	[n]
if	eat	egg	age	ash	ice	ado	up	on	oak	wool	ooze
[ɪ]	[iː]	[e]	[eɪ]	[æ]	[aɪ]	[ə]	[ʌ]	[ɒ]	[əʊ]	[ʊ]	[uː]
out	oil	ah	awe	are	or	air	err	array	ear	ian	yew
[aʊ]	[ɔɪ]	[ɑː]	[ɔː]	[ɑːr]	[ɔːr]	[ɛə]	[ɜːr]	[ər]	[ɪər]	[ɪə]	[juː]

Table 5: Shavian symbols

This graphic makes clear how radical this proposal is. Learning to read and to write with this system would mean to start from scratch for everyone. This means that the Shavian alphabet does not really stand any chance as a reform proposal.

4. Conclusion

The development of English spelling has been a very long and complex process that started with the beginning of writing and is still going on. The many changes have led to a breach between spelling and pronunciation. Hence that the main point of any reform should be to make pronunciation visible in spelling.

Only through a systematic change will a substantial and coherent improvement be possible. But the size of the undertaking alone - English is a World Language - makes the introduction of a new spelling system rather difficult. Moreover, there are several, even contradictory, opinions on whether such a reform is necessary and, if yes, how far it should go. Hence, for the near future, pupils will have to keep fighting with all the oddities in English spelling, and foreign language learners will continue struggling with silent letters, diphthongs and other difficulties in spelling and pronunciation.

But on the other hand, the English language continues to develop and we, the users of English, are changing the language as we work with it.

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