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Chapter-Four

SPELLING REFORMS IN AMERICA

4.1 Introduction

The English language did not originate in Britain. It was carried to the island in the fifth century by the Anglo Saxon invaders, who spoke several West Germanic dialects. There it underwent the influence of more invaders and later was brought to America by the colonists. With the wars of Reformation and the accompanying persecutions many people left their British homes to seek freedom. English speaking colonies were established in North America at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The first English attempt at settlement in North America in 1584 proved a failure but in 1607 a second expedition established the colony of Jamestown in Virginia and was followed by many others, the most famous of which was the group on board the Mayflower known as the ‘Pilgrim Fathers’. They settled in Plymouth in Massachusetts in 1620. They brought with them the dialect of southern England with its broad a and softened terminal /r/ as in father, and its softened or abandoned /r/ before consonants as in lard. Within 20 years, a further 25,000 Europeans had migrated to that area. Gradually American English became differentiated from British English and was recognized as an independent variety. It is in this background that the researcher would like to present the development of American orthography, the changes that English orthography underwent in America, the effect and impact of those changes and various proposals for spelling reform.

In the early part of the seventeenth century English settlers began to bring their language to America and a series of changes began to take place in the language at all the linguistic levels. The settlers borrowed words from the ‘native’ Indian languages for strange trees and unfamiliar animals. Later they borrowed other words from settlers from other countries, for instance, prairie from the French and sleigh from the Dutch. They made new combinations of English words such as backwoods and bullfrog, or gave old English words, entirely new meanings, such as lumber and corn. Languages are always changing and American English
is no exception. The changes that occurred were in vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, intonation and spellings. The pioneer society in the New World was in a state of constant flux guaranteed that the American language would evolve rather than remain static. People moved about and mingled with others whose speech patterns differed from theirs. This cross fertilization of dialects eventually produced an American language that despite some variations in pronunciation can be understood all over the country.

American English has never been static. One reason for the growth of vocabulary is that many words from languages the American came into contact with were added to the language. Sometimes the original pronunciation and spelling of the foreign words were kept. For example, the original pronunciation with altered spelling (noodle, from German nudel); or the original spelling but Americanized pronunciation (sabotage which is French is accented on the last syllable). Spelling has not kept abreast with changes in pronunciation, particularly the pronunciation characteristic of informal speech, which is far removed from that used in formal situations.

The first English-speaking settlers were bound by few rules of orthography. The spelling of the language was often dictated by powerful and influential people. There were few dictionaries in those days that could serve as authoritative lexicons and people tended to spell words as they pronounced them. In 1798, Samuel Johnson, Jr. (an American clergyman and educator) published A School Dictionary, He, along with John Elliot also produced A Selected, Pronouncing and Accented Dictionary containing 10,000 words. The publication of Dr. Samuel Johnson’s A Dictionary of the English Language in England, was a monumental accomplishment which contributed to the stabilization of the English orthography both in England and in America. By the end of the 18th century spelling was virtually standardized in England but the same was not the case in America.

For Noah Webster the eminent dictionary writer and spelling reformer, America in 1783 was no longer a colony but it was not yet a nation. National unity had to
be worked for and he believed that a crucial arena for this was language. Even if American speech was diverse, linguistic uniformity could follow from a distinctive visual identity through spelling. During the last quarter of the 19th century the activities of the British and American spelling reform associations were mainly devoted to discussions of problems in the reform of spellings, and experimenting with different systems of orthography. It was also trying to make the general public aware of the defects of the existing system and of the necessity of spelling reform. Special journals were published to deal with the problem such as, The Spelling Experimenter (1889-1884) in Great Britain, and the Bulletins of the Spelling Reform Association (1877-1886) and Spelling (1887-1894) in America. Of special interest are early nineteenth century handbooks on elocution like Samuel Worcester's Third Book of Reading and Spelling (107th edition, Boston, 1848) and his Fourth Book of Lessons for Reading with Rules and Instructions (Boston 1847). Worcester objects not only to close (clothes), kiver (cover) but also to evry (every), sevral (several) and ware (were). For the correct pronunciation of -ture he advised everyone to pronounce creature, nature and posture so as to rhyme with heat your, hate your and cost your respectively (Fourth Book). Teachers enforced such precepts and several public speakers followed them in the name of correctness and distinctness of delivery.

The most intense period in the history of spelling reform in America began in 1906 when Andrew Carnegie offered to support the movement financially. From that year onwards till his death in 1919 he made annual grants amounting to nearly 300,000 dollars. Due to his support it became possible to organize really widespread and energetic propaganda for reform. The Simplified Spelling Board was set up to conduct the campaign and it set out to work issuing lists of recommended changes in spellings and distributing pamphlets and circulars in which the arguments for reform were set forth and objections to it were answered. In 1909 they began publishing a quarterly journal, the Simplified Spelling Bulletin which was to serve as a medium for discussion and propaganda.

Among the early publications of the Simplified Spelling Society in Britain, a booklet called Proposals for a Simplified Spelling of the English Language
written by Walt Ripman and William Archer containing a thorough and detailed plan for respelling of the English language generated a lot of interest among many people. But, the Simplified Spelling Board of America did not think it possible to persuade the general public to accept such a complete change of spelling as would be caused by the adoption of the Simplified Spelling Society's proposals and suggested instead that the spelling should be reformed gradually and progressively. It was decided to introduce limited lists of recommended changes in spellings by which the public would learn to appreciate the advantages of the new spellings and get familiar with the idea of a more thorough reform of the whole spelling system. In America another organization the Spelling Reform Association did not approve of either of these methods but insisted on a rigidly phonetic system of spelling, i.e., in which each particular speech sound is always represented by its own particular symbol. Such a system would require the addition of some 15 to 20 new letters to the present alphabet. Despite many futile attempts to reform the antiquated English spelling, there is still a wide gap between spelling and pronunciation.

American English differs from British English in terms of lexis, syntax, phonology, semantics, morphology and orthography. Although travel and modern communication have helped to level out the differences between British and American usage, there are still a few words which Englishmen tend to spell differently from Americans. The Americans have made several radical changes in the English language and despite many criticisms by native speakers of English they continue to use the language in a manner that is more suitable to the needs of the Americans who comprise of a varied race of people. Orthographical changes in fact have been made to a very large extent by the Americans and several people all over the world have accepted and adopted these spelling changes especially in the field of science and technology. Several orthographical reform proposals were suggested by spelling reformers. Prominent among these reformers were Noah Webster and Benjamin Franklin.

In America the early history of spelling reform is bound up with the name of Noah Webster. In 1789 he published proposals for a fairly extensive reform of
English spelling in the appendix to his *Dissertations on the English Language*. Many of these proposals were incorporated into his first comparatively small dictionary. But he had not worked out a complete plan for spelling reform and though many of his suggestions were valuable they only covered part of the field while still leaving the main body of irregular spellings intact.

In the appendix to *Dissertations on the English Language* (1789), Noah Webster expressed his views regarding reforms and the researcher believes that it is also applicable to the learners of English in the Indian sub-continent. Webster wrote,

> We are in a situation most favorable for great reforms, and the present time is always auspicious. The minds of our men have been awakened. New scenes have been for many years presenting new occasions for exertions. Unexpected distresses have called forth the powers of invention and the application of new expedients has demanded every possible exercise of wisdom and talent. Attention is roused, the mind expanded and the intellectual faculties invigorated. Now is the time and this the country in which we may expect success in attempting changes favorable to language science and government.

*Webster 1789:405-406*

In the 1930's the interest generated by several spelling reform proposals began to interest many educators who felt that the orthography of English had received too little attention for too long. Several spelling texts were published, the most popular being Webster's *A grammatical Institute of the English Language*. Evidence began to accumulate that children who can read cannot necessarily spell. Efforts were made to revive the spelling programme. During the next ten years the number of spelling texts burgeoned. But reports indicated that there was a lack of significant improvement in orthographic literacy. Inspite of all the efforts of spelling reformers the general public was not too keen on spelling reforms. It is only since the last decade that interest in spelling reforms in America underwent a revival.
4.2  The spelling reformers

America has had a vigorous and active history of attempts at spelling reforms. Support for a spelling reform movement has had a long precedent in the American tradition. Among its proponents have been men and organizations of considerable influence: Benjamin Franklin, Noah Webster, Melvil Dewey, Francis A March, William T Harris, Brandel Mathews, Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Twain, and The American Philological, Spelling Reforms and National Educational Associations, the Simplified Spelling Board and the Simpler Spelling Association.

After the establishment of the Simplified Spelling Board in New York, America, in 1906, there was a great deal of enthusiasm among academicians and scholars in America, to propose amendments in the English orthography. Many reformers tried to propose an orthography which according to them would not only be more phonetic, but also far more superior than the existing orthography. There was a patriotic fervour among them as the Americans were trying to establish an identity of their own. Benjamin Franklin and Noah Webster are the most well-known personalities who proposed several reforms in spellings. While Webster published several dictionaries and spellers, Franklin is quite well known in literary circles for the letter he wrote in reply to a lady who criticised his reforms in spellings. He defended the idea of spelling reforms and also replied to her objections to it in a very comprehensive manner.

4.2.1  Benjamin Franklin (1706 - 1790)

Benjamin Franklin was a writer and publisher and spelling reform was one of the innumerable things that he took interest in. He was the publisher for The Pennsylvania Gazette from 1729 to 1766. In 1768, he devised A Scheme for a New Alphabet and a Reformed Mode for Spelling and had a special font of type cut for the purpose of putting it into effect. It consisted of a new phonetic alphabet (fig. 4.1) that would fit pronunciation but like many other attempts by other reformers it had a very poor response. Dr. Franklin wished to reform the orthography of the English language by introducing new characters.
By 1789 Franklin's influence had begun to have its effect and he and Noah Webster later on began to believe that such a reformation was practicable and highly necessary. The most characteristic difference between British and American practice in spellings is owed to Franklin and Webster who worked on spelling reforms. Franklin experimented with letters and his extended alphabet was produced in 1768. Although Franklin's plan of adding six new characters to the alphabet to simplify spelling was too extreme a proposal even for Webster, Webster did propose an overhaul of the English language to make its orthography completely consistent.

Figure 4.1 A page in the extended alphabet of Benjamin Franklin, from Political, Miscellaneous and Philosophical Pieces. (Daniellson 1963: 218)
To a Miss MS of Kensington who criticized Franklin’s New Alphabet, Franklin wrote a letter defending his spelling reforms. He wrote,

The objection you make to rectifying our alphabet that it will be attended with inconveniences and difficulties is a natural one; for it always occurs when any reformation is proposed; ——The true question is then not whether there will be no difficulties or inconveniences; but whether the difficulties may not be surmounted; and whether the conveniences may not, on the whole, be greater than the inconveniences. In this case, the difficulties are only in the beginning of the practice: when they are once overcome, the advantages are lasting.

Tucker 1969: 116

The original letter was in Franklin’s proposed new alphabet, which attempts to distinguish voiced and voiceless sounds, length of vowels, when a digraph represents a single sound and when a single symbol represents a diphthong or an affricate. He accepted the fact that rectifying the English alphabet would be attended with “inconveniences and difficulties” but it was natural for this always occurs when any reformation is proposed. He believed that the difficulties were only in the beginning and once they are overcome the advantages are lasting. He accepted the fact that the difficulty of learning the new orthography may not be so difficult for those who spell well in the present mode. As to those who do not spell well, if the two difficulties were to be compared he was convinced that teaching them the new alphabet and new spelling would be by far better. In an essay titled ‘The case for spelling reform’ he wrote,

The difficulty of learning to spell well in the old way is so great that few attain it; thousands and thousands writing on to old age without ever being able to acquire it. ‘Tis, besides a difficulty continually increasing; as the sound varies more and more from the spelling: and to foreigners it makes the learning to pronounce our language, as written in our books, almost impossible.

Franklin in Webster 1789:408
Franklin refuted all criticism leveled against his proposals. He defended the fact that the etymology would be lost by saying that at present the etymology was very uncertain; but old books would still preserve them, and etymologists would find them there. To the second inconvenience that the distinction between words of different meaning and similar sound would be destroyed, he replied that the distinction was already destroyed in pronouncing them; and we rely on the sense alone of the sentence to ascertain, which of several words, similar in sound, we intend. And finally to the criticism that all books already written would be useless he replied that, that inconvenience would only come on gradually in a course of ages. The present generation would hardly forget the use of them and people would learn to read the old writing, though they practiced the new. He observed,

In short, whatever the difficulties, and inconveniences that existed would be more easily surmounted now, than hereafter, and some time or other, it must be done; or our writing would become the same with the Chinese, as to the difficulty of learning and using it. And it would already have been such, if we had continued the Saxon spelling and writing, used by our forefathers.

Franklin in Webster 1789:410

4.2.2 Noah Webster (1758-1843)

Noah Webster was a teacher, lawyer, educationist, lexicographer, writer and lobbyist. Born in 1758 on the outskirts of Hartford, Connecticut, he received his education at Yale and later undertook the practice of Law. But business in the legal profession was slow and he was forced for a livelihood to turn to teaching. The change determined his entire subsequent career. As a teacher he became dissatisfied with the available textbooks especially the lack of a distinct American perspective. Webster accordingly set about compiling three elementary books on English: a spelling book, a grammar and a reader. These he published in 1783, 1784 and 1785 under the high sounding title, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* often referred to as *The Blue-Back Speller* with an estimated sale of 70,000,000 in a century of publications.
These were the first books of their kind in the language to be published in this country. The success of the first part was unexpectedly great. It was soon re-issued under the title The American Spelling Book and in this form went through edition after edition. It is estimated that in a mere 100 years, more than 80 million copies of the book were sold. The influence of the book was immense and it was motivated by equal measures of patriotism and educational reform. It greatly contributed to lessen US dependence on British models of the standard language. He turned his attention to the question of language and devoted himself to a number of projects of a linguistic kind. According to him, one of the advantages of implementing his spelling reforms is economy in space and thus saving of cost. He wrote,

But a capital advantage of this reform would diminish the number of letters by about one fifteenth or eighteenth. This would save a page in eighteen and saving of an eighteenth in the expense of books is an advantage that shouldn't be overlooked.

Webster 1789: 397

In his essay ‘An Essay on the Necessity, Advantages and Practicability of Reforming the Mode of Spelling and of Rendering the Orthography of Words Correspondent to the Pronunciation’, he wrote that his spelling proposal was very different from the English orthography. He also believed that the future generations would prefer the American orthography. He believed that the Americans need not follow or implement the rules imposed by the British and amendments in the orthography ought to be made by removing the discrepancies and faults in the existing orthography. He wrote,

Ought the Americans to retain these faults which produce innumerable inconveniences in the acquisition and use of the language, or ought they at once to reform these abuses, and introduce order and regularity into the orthography of the AMERICAN TONGUE?

Webster 1789:393-394
In 1806 Webster published a small school dictionary called *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language*. This was a dictionary of the American-English language. It was specially recommended for Americans. It omitted many British-English words that Webster considered useless or inappropriate for American life. It also included words not found in Dr. Johnson's British dictionary and even new meanings for old words. But he had not worked out a complete plan for spelling reform and though most of his suggestions were valuable they covered a very small area. Most of the important areas including irregular spelling did not feature in his proposals. But in 1807, they began to reappear and were included in his *A Dictionary of the English Language Compiled for the Use of Common Schools in the United States*.

In 1828, the first edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* was published by Webster. It was in 2 volumes and contained 70,000 words. It made Webster a household name in America. His principles were adopted and carried over with some modifications and additions into his dictionary. Webster’s dictionary had the same status in America that Dr Johnson’s had in Britain. His dictionary was fiercely attacked in Britain for its spelling and usage. It gave to American English an identity. The principles behind Webster’s reforms were analogy, etymology and usage. He was concerned about superfluous letters and indeterminate sounds and characters. American English differs in some ways from that customary in England and most of these differences are believed to be due to Webster’s influence.

Webster did propose an overhaul of the English language to make its orthography completely consistent. Had he been given the support he wished for we might today be spelling the word *head* as *hed*, *friend* as *frend*, *give* as *giv*, *thumb* as *thum*, *bought* as *bot* and *calf* as *kaf*. A few examples of his spelling reforms were the use of *er* instead of *re* as in *metre* = *meter*, dropping final *e* as in *examine* = *examin*, dropping silent letters such as the letter *a* in *feather*, thus *feather* = *fether* and the use of a single instead of a doubled consonant as in *programme* = *program* etc.
New American words arose because the struggle to make a living in an undeveloped country produced new tools and new experiences. These words were not usually included in British dictionaries. Webster’s school dictionary gave a great boost to American literacy. Webster argued that American spellings ought to be given official recognition at the international level, to create a new identity for American English. He believed that there was ‘a necessity, advantage and practicability of reforming the mode of spellings and of rendering the orthography of words correspondent to pronunciation’.

According to him there are several irregularities in the present orthography because of progress in science and civilization and the mixture of different languages and words of foreign origin. The fact is that many words in English have their origin in foreign languages. Many foreign words result in an orthography very ill-suited to exhibit the different pronunciations. The Americans preferred to introduce reforms in the orthography, in order to introduce order and regularity. The British did try to reform the orthography but their attempts were unsuccessful due to various reasons. Most of the plans proposed were to throw out the superfluous and silent letters and introduce a number of new characters. In his dictionary Webster incorporated a few of the reformed spellings that he favoured.

He urged the omission of all superfluous or silent letters, such as the vowel letter a in bread and the letter e in give. He also suggested that the use of k for ch in some words which had a /k/ sound (character, chorus) had to be discontinued and a few other ‘necessary’ alterations had to be made in order to make the orthography of English more correspondent to spelling. The most important modifications he introduced were in the words music, physic and logic which he suggested should be spelled with a final ‘k’. He also suggested that the words sceptre, theatre and metre and the like should be spelled with er instead of re as scepter, theater and meter and the words honor, color and favor should be spelled without the letter u as in check, mask and risk instead of cheque, masque and risqué. He also suggested that defense, pretense, recompense and similar words should be spelled with s not a e and determine, examine, doctrine
and medicine without a final e. Not all the reformed spellings in his dictionary caught on- he included ake, crum, fether, ile, and spunge, for ache, crumb, feather, isle and sponge (Venezky 1980). But most of the now distinctly American spellings are Webster’s-theater, meter, honor, favor, defense, check and traveling. (source: Baugh and Cable 1978). Present day American spellings differ from British conspicuously and often but not in many fundamental ways. It largely differs due to the result of the few principles of reformed spelling that Webster and other reformers had proposed.

4.2.2.1 Webster’s reform proposals

The reforms proposed by Noah Webster are as follows:

i The omission of all superfluous and silent letters as the letter a in bread. Thus bread, head, breast, meant and realm would be spelt as bred, hed, brest, ment and relm respectively. Similarly, the letter i could be deleted from friend, the letter e from give and the letter u from built. These changes could in no way be inconvenient or expensive. On the contrary it would lessen the expense and make learning easier. The pronunciation would be uniform in different parts of the country as a result.

ii The substitution of a character that has a definite sound for one that is vague, rather ambiguous and indeterminate. Thus the letters ee could be used instead of ea or ie. Thus mean, near, speak, grieve and zeal would become meen, neer, speek, greev and zeel respectively. The letters ea and ie give many learners of the language a difficult time. The substitution of these letters by ee would simplify matters.

iii Webster suggested that rather than introducing new characters it would be preferable to make a small alteration in a character or the addition of a point. Thus different sounds could be distinguished. For example, a small stroke across th would distinguish the two sounds th as in thank and then. Other changes like a dot over the vowels could be used to denote length. The letters ow could be joined by a small stroke between o and w. The advantages from these changes would be numerous, great and permanent.
according to Webster. He also suggested replacing a few letters by others which would reduce the ambiguity and inconsistency of the English orthography. These letters are as follows:

a. the letters our by or
   The prevalent (and very economical and convenient) American practice is to write the letters or in all polysyllables. It is to be preferred in words like honor, labor, color, etc.

b. the letters re by er
   Webster prevailed on this change because of the force of the analogy of number, chamber and other words of French origin, which had long since taken on the er spelling. Thus the practice is to write meager, meter, center etc.

c. the letters ll by l
   The fairly simple and consistent rules about doubling, or not doubling a final consonant in forming derivatives (offered but referred, opened but penned) are made to include l as well as all other letters. Thus the British write levelled and fulfill, the Americans leveled and fulfill.

d. the letters ce by se
   This diversity shows itself in a few words like defence, offence, and pretence where the Americans prefer to use se instead of ce. Hence defense, offense and pretense.

e. the letters dge by dg
   This is another diversity affecting only a few words. All the common ones except fledgeling end in ment for example, judgement, acknowledgement, etc. Critics have pointed out that the omission of e may make the g hard. The omission could lead to the pronunciation of the word as fled-gling - /fledgliŋ/
f. the letters *exion* by ection
The nouns cognate with *connect*, *infect*, and *reflect* are almost universally spelt in America with the letters *ction* as against the *xion* usual in England.

g. the letters *oul* by *ol*
*Mould*, *moul* and *smoulder* and their derivatives are about the only words in which this question arises. Webster defended this spelling on the plea of simplicity and the analogy of *gold*. Thus these words would be spelled as *mold*, *molt* and *smolder*.

h. the ligature æ (ae) and the letters *oe* by *e*
The Encyclopædia Britannica and Encyclopedia Americana conveniently and appropriately typify the usual difference here. The general tendency in America is to prefer to use the letter *e* instead of æ or *oe*. When American printers do not print *e*, they are rather more likely to use separate letters instead of ligatures. All this applies only to the sequences *a, e* and *o, e* representing Latin or Greek diphthongs: eg. *co-efficient* and *aerial* are always so spelt.

i. the letters *em* by *im*, and *en* by *in*
There is a tendency or preference to use the letter *i* over *e*. Thus, *empanel = impanel*. Many Americans do use *e* in a good many words eg., *encourage*, *employ*.

j. the letters *ise* by *ize*
There is a general tendency to use the letters *-ize* instead of *-ise* in America. It is etymologically justifiable (i.e. the suffix goes back to Greek *-izein* or late Latin *-izare*). Lately *-ize* is being used by an increasing number of Britons perhaps because etymology makes a choice possible except in *chastise* and *exorcise*, where *z* is etymologically correct but *s* is universal for the first and commoner for the second.
Several changes have taken place in American English in pronunciation and these are reflected in the orthography of American English. From this point of view American English is more phonemic than British English and there is also a greater correspondence between phoneme and grapheme. A fair number of variant spellings remain that are not either easily or not at all classifiable according to orthographic principle but that can be more or less classified as given below according to currency:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>American</th>
<th>British</th>
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<tr>
<td>jail</td>
<td>gaol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ax</td>
<td>axe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gypsy</td>
<td>gipsy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woolen</td>
<td>woollen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>story</td>
<td>storey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whiskey</td>
<td>whisky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>check</td>
<td>cheque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tire</td>
<td>tyre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gray</td>
<td>grey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jewelry</td>
<td>jewellery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plow</td>
<td>plough</td>
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<tr>
<td>wagon</td>
<td>waggon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>net</td>
<td>nett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curb</td>
<td>kerb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Webster made a very significant comment with reference to the difficulty of non-native learners who learn English. In the appendix, in his *Dissertations on the English Language*, he wrote,

> Besides the advantage of a reformed orthography, foreigners would be able to acquire the pronunciation of English, which is now so difficult and embarrassing, that they are either wholly discouraged on the first attempt, or obliged, after many years labor to rest contented with an imperfect knowledge of the subject.

Webster 1789:396
united by a small stroke, or both engraved on the same piece of metal, with the left hand line of the w united to the s.

These, with a few other inconsiderable alterations, would answer every purpose, and render the orthography sufficiently correct and regular.

The advantages to be derived from these alterations are numerous, great and permanent.

1. The simplicity of the orthography would facilitate the learning of the language. It is now the work of years for children to learn to spell; and after all, the business is rarely accomplished. A few men, who are bred to some business that requires constant exercise in writing, finally learn to spell most words without hesitation; but most people remain, all their lives, imperfect masters of spelling, and liable to make mistakes, whenever they take up a pen to write a short note. Nay, many people, even of education and fashion, never attempt to write a letter, without frequently consulting a dictionary.

But with the proposed orthography, a child would learn to spell, without trouble, in a very short time, and the orthography being very regular, he would ever afterwards find it difficult to make a mistake. It would, in that case, be as difficult to spell wrong, as it is now to spell right.

Besides this advantage, foreigners would be able to acquire the pronunciation of English, which is now so difficult and embarrassing, that they are either wholly discouraged on the first attempt, or obliged, after many years labor, to rest contented with an imperfect knowledge of the subject.

2. A correct orthography would render the pronunciation of the language, as uniform as the spelling.

Figure 4.2 A page in the extended alphabet of Noah Webster from the appendix in *Dissertations on the English Language*

In this extract he mentions the advantages derived from amendments to the orthography of English. According to him the advantages are ‘numerous, great and permanent’.
4.2.3 Elias Molee’s *Amerikan*

Among the most extreme proposals for spelling reform offered were those proposed by Elias Molee. He was born in 1845, in Wisconsin. He grew up among people belonging to different nationalities. Molee’s reforms were systematic ones and covered all the domains of English he found defective: spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. His spelling reform proposals were so radical that they were not accepted by the general public. To achieve it Molee proposed three alterations: a phonetic spelling, replacement of Latin-Romance words by revived English or newly borrowed Germanic vocabulary, and “the largest possible regularity of grammar”. The resulting language he perfected he called variously *Amerikan* (1888), *Germanic-English* (1888), *Pure Saxon English* (1890), *Tutonish* (1902) and *Altutonish* (1911). His youthful experience of multilingualism eventually convinced him of the need for a ‘union’ language that he described in a third-person memoir. He wrote,

> Wherever he found in any of the other languages some feature in which he thought it excelled the English, he longed to see it appropriated by his adopted language, the English. We are here building up an American nationality out of elements contributed by various nations. It will be a grand nation. Why cannot our language also draw to itself the best features of allied tongues and conquer the world?

Molee quoted in Bailey 1991:201

4.2.4 Joseph Mayer Rice

John Mayer Rice was a surgeon turned educator who was born in Philadelphia in 1857. He criticized the waste, inefficiency and ignorance in public schooling. He did the first major survey of teaching methods on American schools and founded the Society of Educational Research. He carried out the first scientific studies in America on classroom learning, focusing first on spelling. Rice’s total research program included hypothesis formation through research design, data collection, analysis and reporting and his methodology indicated a very high level of seriousness. He was very much interested in educational reform and had devised
a very practical approach to modernizing education through incorporation of current pedagogy and psychology. Spelling was the first subject to which Rice chose to apply his techniques. He was highly critical of the English orthography and suggested various ways in which they could be simplified. He was not so much interested in spelling reform as he was in improving the methodology of teaching various language skills in an effective manner. However he believed that the spelling system of English was one of the causes for poor reading and writing skills. He was quite unhappy at the lack of interest his spellings generated and suggested that if spellings could not be changed at least one should teach the spellings in such a way that the students would make fewer errors while spelling certain words. He also hoped that certain techniques of teaching spellings would improve reading and writing skills.

Through several surveys, which he conducted, Rice was able to reach several conclusions, which he explained in his, *The Futility of the Spelling Grind* (1897). He concluded that the variance in spelling achievement is primarily under control of the teacher, and cannot be attributed to age, nationality, heredity, environment or any other background factor. The pedagogical implications of his findings are quite significant. Rice also had a simple answer and one which might be beneficial to present-day educational planners and that was: observe what most teachers can accomplish. Rice labored to improve the teaching of spelling and launched a vigorous campaign to simplify English spellings.

4.3 The Hanna-Moore Research Study

In the 1930s many educators felt that the orthography of English had received too little emphasis for too long. Efforts were made to revise the spelling programme and give it a proper status in the school curriculum and make it a more effective learning tool. The teaching of vocabulary was not given much importance and many students passed out of schools and colleges with a very limited vocabulary. Many academicians believed that when a student passes out of any educational institute his vocabulary should consist of a certain number of words and he should have a substantial number of words stored in his active as well as his passive vocabulary.
It was suggested by many educational reformers that children at the lower stages of education should be taught a certain number of words and the selection of these words should be very carefully done keeping several criteria for selection in mind. However in the selection of words for study the alphabetic principle underlying spelling, i.e., the phoneme-grapheme relationship, was almost entirely neglected. During the next few years the number of spelling texts burgeoned but reports came in that spelling tests showed a lack of significant improvement in orthographic literacy. Many spelling specialists turned to linguists for help. It was learned that the most important factor was overlooked: the English language employs a system of writing in which phonemes are represented by graphemes and so a spelling programme ought to begin by teaching phoneme-grapheme correspondences. The idea of studying words with this sound-to-letter approach raised the question of how profitable such an attack could be when English orthography was apparently so inconsistent and confusing.

To find an answer to this problem, in 1951 a research study; by Paul and Jean Hanna and James Moore was conducted to find answers to the question of regularity of American spelling. In their research study a 3000 word vocabulary was analyzed in terms of phoneme-grapheme correspondences. These correspondences were classified as either regular or irregular, and the relative frequencies of these correspondences were noted. The results of this study indicated that the written code is not so inconsistent that analysis of phoneme-grapheme correspondences cannot provide the basis for teaching spelling. Thus the orthography of English was not so confusing and irregular after all.

Some of the findings of this study are quite interesting and are as follows:

- About 82% of the consonant clusters have only one spelling
- Single-consonant phonemes are represented by consistent spellings about nine-tenths of the time they occur.
- Nearly three-fourths of the vowel phonemes do not represent significant spelling problems, since they have a consistent letter representation from about 57% to about 90% of the times they occur.
The pedagogical implications of the results of the research project are very significant and cannot be ignored. It is very significant as it gives one a new dimension where the teaching methodology is concerned. It was suggested that a totally new and innovative teaching technique be employed to reduce the problems faced by learners who are confronted with the present orthography. The research study generated a lot of interest, but many scholars and academicians were unwilling to accept the fact that the orthography of English was not as difficult as it was made out to be. The spelling reformers attacked the findings of the research and had doubts on the validity of the test results. They argued that it was impossible to teach learners the spelling rules because there are so many exceptions to the rule. They discarded the theory of teaching by understanding the phoneme-grapheme correspondences and said that the problem in the orthography of English was that there was no phoneme-grapheme correspondence in most words and the orthography of English was inconsistent and irregular. Critics continued to call attention to the lack of consistency in the written language and challenged the research findings of the Hanna-Moore study. They refused to accept the findings based on such a small sample of 3000 words. They felt that the research should have encompassed a corpus of 8000 words. They were inclined to believe that the deeper one delved into the language (i.e., the larger the vocabulary examined and the more complex the words) the less consistency would be revealed.

4.3.1 Project 1991

Paul and Jean Hanna were confronted with a lot of criticism when they publicised their research findings. One of the points of criticism was that 3000 words were not enough to conduct a research into phoneme-grapheme correspondences. So they decided to undertake another project with about 8000 words. This research project also resulted in the same findings as the Hanna-Moore study and received the same amount of criticism for the same reasons. They then decided to take up a greater number of words and this time they were successful in establishing as a part of their research findings that spellings could be taught very effectively by following certain rules which were based on predicting the correct graphemic options for a word. This project was conducted
at the Stanford University and was called the Stanford Research Project. It was sponsored by the United States Office of Education and was conducted at the Stanford University under the direction of Paul R. Hanna and Jean S. Hanna and with the participation of Richard E. Hodges, University of Chicago and E. Hugh Rudorf, University of Delaware. It made a study of the English phonemes, and the graphemes used to represent them. It was published by the US Government Printing Office for the US Office of Education as Project 1991. The research project was undertaken on a vocabulary of not 8000 words but of 17,000 words. An analysis of 17,000 words revealed the fact that relatively few words in this sample have no phonological or morphological cues for spelling.

The structure of the orthography was examined and a statistical analysis ascertained that the correct graphemic option can be predicted for a given occurrence of a phoneme approximately 90% of the time when the main phonological factors of position in syllables, syllable stress and internal constraints underlying the orthography are taken into consideration. This thorough analysis of the relationship between phoneme and grapheme indicates that other linguistic factors are determinates of the ways in which some parts of the words are spelled. A pedagogical method based on aural-oral clues to spelling may well prove to be more efficient and powerful.

In other words the findings showed that there were some words which were spelled in such a way as to confuse learners of the language, but they were relatively few. In addition, there were certain spelling rules which could be framed in order to make learning of spellings easier. When writing spelling books for students in educational institutes in America an important fact was overlooked: English employs an alphabetical system of writing in which phonemes are represented by graphemes and that a spelling programme ought to begin by teaching phoneme-grapheme correspondences and guide pupils to use them in spelling written words. According to the results of this project the conclusions were drawn that the orthography of English was not difficult to understand and learn. One had to only understand the phoneme – grapheme correspondences.
The findings of this research were quite significant from the pedagogical point of view as they were used to predict the standard spellings of different words. Of the 17,000 different words given only as phonemes to a computer to spell over 8000 or 49% were spelled correctly. A very small percentage of words were spelled with between one to three errors. The researchers believed that several misspellings could be obviated with the mastery of simple morphological rules.

One of the conclusions was that the position of the phonemes in syllables and words distinctly influences the spelling of many of the phonemes. The researchers also pointed out the basically alphabetic nature of American –English spelling. They also came to the conclusion that the spelling system was largely systematic and far from erratic. The results of this research confirmed the earlier research findings. The results of this project demonstrated that the deeper one goes into language, the greater the consistency of phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Thus, it became apparent that an effective spelling programme could be based on the alphabetic principle that underlies the writing system, and that such a programme ought to begin with a study of sounds in words and the letters that represent these sounds. The features of American English spelling were considered in carrying out this research.

The research findings did not have much of an impact on academicians, scholars and the general public who still felt that there was a necessity to change the orthography of English and make it more simple. There were several criticisms levelled at the research findings. Several questions were raised at the choice of the words and it was also pointed out that though spelling rules could be taught it did not mean that all the spellings could be covered under the rules. It would be very difficult to teach irregular spellings to learners of the language. One positive outcome of the research project undertaken was that several discussions were held to discuss the teaching methodology and books discussing spelling rules were published in large numbers.
The various spelling reform proposals by spelling reformers and the Simplified Spelling Board did generate a lot of interest in America. Various experiments were conducted and projects carried out on the amendments that could be made in the orthography and the implications of a reformed orthography as well as the existing one. The objective: to analyse the current orthography in terms of phoneme-grapheme correspondence and to justify the need to change the orthography of English and make it more phonetic.

4.4 The Simplified Spelling Board

The Simplified Spelling Board was established in 1906. Since 1989 it has been called The American Literacy Council with its headquarters in New York. In a 1993 statement the Board reaffirmed its commitment to what it sees to be the chief cause of English illiteracy: the lack of phonetic logic and simplicity. The use of computer technology is now an important aspect of its work. The aims of the Board are as follows:

i to encourage the idea that reform is possible.
ii to foster debate on reform methods
iii to devise, publish and promote potential reform schemes
iv to campaign for spelling reforms
v to benefit future generations by introducing consistent spellings

The period of the most intense activity of the American Simplified Spelling Board was from 1906 to 1920 when they enjoyed considerable financial support from Andrew Carnegie. Their various proposals were first published in a number of word lists, pamphlets, circulars and in a quarterly periodical called The Simplified Spelling Bulletin, but later they were revised and assembled in the Handbook of Simplified Spellings which the Board published in 1920. In the first part it gave a general account of the whole problem and the history of spelling reform from which they derived certain principles on which their own recommendations for changes in the spelling were based. In the second part the Board presented some well-known arguments in favor of spelling reforms and also replied in detail to some of the objections made to reforms. The third and last part contained the rules for simplified spelling that the Board recommended.
for general use and a dictionary of words in common use that were changes in spelling.

The board completely failed to achieve their objectives. They were not accepted and the Board’s ambitious list of 300 words, which was endorsed by president Roosevelt was not accepted either. Not even the famous twelve words (catalog, decalog, demagog, prolog, tho, altho, thoro, thorofare, thru, thruout, pedagog, program) which comprised the earliest list of recommended changes in spelling have become generally accepted in present-day orthography.

4.4.1 The Board’s proposals for simplified spelling

i For the letters ae in initial or medial positions substitute e, but retain ae in final position as in alumnae

Thus,
- aesthetic = esthetic
- mediaeval = medieval

ii Drop silent b before t as in debt.

Thus,
- debt = det
- doubt = dout

iii For the letters ceed in the final position, write cede.

Thus,
- exceed = excede
- proceed = procede

iv When ch is pronounced with a /k/ sound, drop h except before e, i, and y, but retain ch in architect, chemist and monarchy.

Thus,
- character = caracer
- school = scool
- stomach = stomac

v When a double consonant occurs before a silent e drop the last two letters:

Thus,
- bizarre = bizar
- gazette = gazet
- giraffe = giraf
vi For final double consonant write a single consonant, but retain ll after a long vowel: all, roll and ss in words of more than one syllable: needless

Thus,
add = ad,
bill = bil,
egg = eg

vii When ea is pronounced as in head or as in heart drop the silent letter i.e., a and e respectively

Thus,
bread = bred
breakfast = brekfast,
heart = hart

viii When final e if pronounced as d drop the silent e reducing a preceding double consonant to a single consonant.

Thus,
answered = anserd
called = cald
wronged = wrongd, but not when a change will suggest a wrong pronunciation.

Thus,
bribed not bribd, changed not changd.

ix When final ed is pronounced as t, drop the silent e, reducing a preceding double to a single consonant and changing ced, seed, to st.

Thus,
asked = askt
kissed = kist
passed = past

But not when the change will suggest a wrong pronunciation.

Thus,
baked not bakt, faced not fact or fast
hoped not hopt

x For ei pronounced as ie, as in brief, write ie.

Thus,
conceit = conciet
deceive = deciev
either = iether
xi  In final unstressed *ey* pronounced like final short *y*, drop silent *e*.

    Thus,
    *barley* = *barly*
    *money* = *mony*
    *valley* = *vally*

xii  For *gh* pronounced as *f* write *f* and drop the silent letter of the preceding digraph.

    Thus,
    *cough* = *cof*
    *laugh* = *laf*
    *rough* = *ruf*

xiii When *gh* is pronounced like *g* in *gas*, drop *h*.

    Thus,
    *aghast* = *agast*
    *ghastly* = *gastly*
    *ghost* = *gost*

xiv  In final *gm* drop silent *g*.

    Thus,
    *paradigm* = *paradim*

xv  In final *gue* after a consonant a short vowel or digraph representing a long vowel or a diphthong drop silent *ue*.

    Thus,
    *catalogue* = *catalog*
    *harangue* = *harâng*
    *tongue* = *tung*, but not *rog* for *rogue*, or *vag* for *vague*

xvi  When final *ise* is pronounced as *ize* replace *s* with *z*.

    Thus,
    *advertise* = *advertize*
    *advice* = *advize*
    *rise* = *rize*

xvii In final *mb* after a short vowel drop silent *b*.

    Thus,
    *comb* = *com*
    *bomb* = *bom*
    *lamb* = *lam*
When **ou** before the letter **l** is pronounced like **o** in **bold**, drop silent **u**
(except in the word **soul**)

Thus,
- **boulder** = **bolder**
- **mould** = **mold**
- **shoulder** = **sholder**

For final **ough** write **o, u, ock, f, or up** according to the pronunciation, but for **plough** write **plow** (but not **bow** for **bough**)

Thus,
- **although** = **altho**
- **doughnut** = **donut**
- **though** = **tho**

For final unstressed **our**, write **or**

Thus,
- **colour** = **color**
- **favour** = **favor**
- **honour** = **honor**

For **ph** pronounced **f** write **f**

Thus
- **alphabet** = **alfabet**
- **phonograph** = **fonograf**
- **telephone** = **telefone**

For final **re** after any consonant except **c** write **er**

Thus,
- **centre** = **center**
- **metre** = **meter**
- **theatre** = **theater**. But retain **re** in **lucr**e and **mediocr**e.

In words which have an initial **rh** drop the letter **h**

Thus,
- **rhetoric** = **retoric**
- **rheumatism** = **reumatism**
- **rhyme** = **rime**

In initial **se** pronounced like **s** drop silent **e**

Thus,
- **scenery** = **senery**
- **science** = **sience**
- **scissors** = **sissors**
xxv When u is silent before a vowel drop it.

Thus,
build = bild
guarantee = garante
guard = gard
guess = ges

xxvi When y occurs before consonants, substitute it with i

Thus,
analysis = analisis
physics = fisic
gypsy = gipsi
type = tipe

xxvii The vowel letter e has been the target of most spelling reformers. Some have suggested that it be retained though it is silent as it changes the pronunciation of the word. They referred to the magic power of e to change the pronunciation of words for example, pin /pɪn/ but pine /paɪn/. The Simplified Spelling Board had several suggestions to make about the use of the vowel letter e. It believed that the final e was superfluous and it was suggested that the final silent e in the following cases should be dropped:

a. After a consonant preceded by a short stressed vowel:
   Thus,
give = giv
have = hav
live = liv

b. In final unstressed syllables drop ide, ile, ine, ise, ite, ive when pronounced with short i -/i/
   Thus,
examine = examin
practise = practis

c. after iv and rv
   Thus,
involv = involve
twelve = twelv
carve = carv
d  After v or z when preceded by a digraph representing a long vowel
or a diphthong
Thus,
achieve = achiev
leave = leav
freeze = freez

e  In final oes when pronounced o: fo, ho, ro. But retain e in inflected
forms
Thus,
foes = fos

f  The Board has also suggested that the letter e be dropped in the
three words are, gone and were.

In addition to the spellings covered by the preceding rules, the Board further
recommended the adoption of the following special list of changed spellings:
aker, anser, beleager, burlesk, buro, campain counterfit, catar, delite,
diarea, foren, forfit, frens, grotesk, hemorrhage, iland, ile, ilet, maskerade,
mortgage, picturesk reciet siv sovren, tuch, yu, yung and yungster.

The American Simplified Spelling Board’s long list of rules for a simplified
spelling was nothing more than a suggestion for certain partial reform of
spellings. Many important spellings were avoided. Half of them do not offer
better guide to pronunciations than the old one. Many of the spellings that were
suggested by the Board only apply to small and comparatively rather unimportant
words. The spelling reforms which the Simplified Spelling Board proposed in the
list of rules discussed above were of course only intended as a beginning. They
were later to be followed by others when the public had become accustomed to
seeing and using the simplified spellings already suggested by the Board in their
handbook. The Board emphasized that the ultimate goal of the reform movement
must be to establish, if possible, a more or less phonetic spelling. They state that
the policy of the Board, is to propose no changes even for the sake of immediate
advantage that violate established phonetic principles and so would impede direct
progress towards the goal of a practically phonetic notations of the sounds of the
English speech.
4.4.2 Plan for carrying out the reforms

The Board was at a very great disadvantage in not having a complete and definite plan for the reform of English spelling. It must have been very difficult to interest the general public as a result. This lack of a complete plan was undoubtedly one of the reasons why the interest in the reform movement that actually existed in America flagged. It almost died out after the financial support from Andrew Carnegie ceased after his death in 1919.

Other reasons for the failure of the proposed spelling reforms were as follows:

- the limited scope of the Board’s proposals for immediate reform of the spelling,
- the vague and unsystematic plan for carrying out even these limited proposals.

The Board held the view that there were only two possibly ways in which a reform could be effected. The spelling would either have to be changed suddenly or gradually by immediate adoption of a phonetic scheme of notation or by progressive elimination of present irregularities. Since the first option was out of the question they decided on the latter course, i.e., on an attempt to reach the ideal goal, a phonetic spelling, by gradual approach. The interest in the reforms movement gradually died when the enthusiastic adherents of the spelling reform movement were greatly dissatisfied with the unimportant proposals suggested by the Board and with the slow rate of progress that they seemed to hold in prospect for the future. It follows that the general public could still less be induced to take any interest in the matter. However some of the spelling proposals were quite useful and several changes have taken place in recent years in the orthography of English. Obviously they are not enough because many people are still dissatisfied with the existing orthography. This however has not stopped American English from changing at various levels. It is quite obvious that more and more people are adapting the American style of speaking and writing and one of the reasons that can be attributed to this is the fact that American English is not static and is trying to keep pace with the changing times.
4.5 Spelling pronunciation

Spelling pronunciation is not a uniquely American phenomenon even if it appears to be more widespread in America than in England. With the growing awareness of the difference between spelling and pronunciation came a desire to adjust one for another. A fluid orthography tends to favour phonetic spelling but a fixed conservative mode of spelling holds the seeds of spelling-pronunciation. That so many of the new spellings now seem the more natural is because of this process i.e., spelling pronunciation. In the intervening centuries people have changed their pronunciation of a word to bring it into line with spellings. Spelling has to some extent affected standard pronunciation. The struggle between those who demanded that words be pronounced according to spelling and those who demanded that words be spelled according to the pronunciation generated a lot of heated discussion. The ‘preferred’ pronunciations were given in many dictionaries and the supreme authority of the dictionaries influenced pronunciation in this way.

Several words have acquired their pronunciation through the influence of the spelling. Some examples are the reappearance of the letter *t* in often the *ph* in nephew and the *n* in kiln. The trend is to pronounce words according to the graphemic representation of the phonemes thus the letter *l* is pronounced by the American in words like almond and salmon whereas to the British it is silent. Many critics have condemned the spelling pronunciations which are believed to be an American predilection for the visual standard and a tendency to assimilate the spoken to the written language. American typography eschews the use of diacritics at least in newspapers and magazines so the French acute accent rarely appears in words like coupe and fiance(e) in which the letter *e* has an acute accent over it. The result is the former is pronounced as /kup/ and spelled coupe.

There is a great deal of difference between British and American spellings. American English has undergone a great amount of change where spellings are concerned. One of the reasons for the changes could probably be the influence of spelling pronunciation. This change is reflected in the way words are spelled in advertisements. For example, nite for night, bred for bread, kool for cool etc.
Spelling pronunciation has already left indelible marks on the English speech and will doubtless leave others if present trends prevail. There are not many obvious benefits from this if one has to define distinctness of utterances in terms of a tightened relationship of the spoken to the written form. But a reasonable case can be made for trying to adjust the pronunciation to the spelling at least in less familiar words since there seems to be hardly anything being done for a reverse adjustment.

4.6 Some features of the present American orthography:

i honor, color and a score of words are written without the letter u.

Thus,

honour = honor

colour = color

ii one consonant is employed where the English have two.

Thus,

traveller = traveler

waggon = wagon

iii r is used instead of re

Thus,

fibre = fiber

metre = meter

iii s is preferred in words like defense, offense

iv ax, plow, tire, story and czar are written for axe, plough, tyre, storey and tsar

v z is preferred instead of s as in analyze not analyse

4.7 A comparison of British and American spellings

American English differs from British English in many aspects. The differences are in vocabulary, syntax, semantics, pronunciation as well as orthography. Americans have developed their own system of spellings which they follow. Many people all over the world follow the American orthography as they believe that it is economical, easier and more convenient. The differences are not very
obvious sometimes, because a number of English spellings are still current in America, and some of the American innovations are now common in English and in general because certain alternatives are permissible in both countries. The spelling reforms as suggested by Noah Webster are already being implemented by the Americans. Most of the software programs use these spellings. It is very interesting to note that most of the reforms suggested by Webster seem to have been accepted and approved of by a very large number of people all over the world. Thus the computer accepts **program** not **programme**, **color** not **colour**, etc. In the field of advertising too, it can be seen that many advertisers are using rather catchy spellings such as **nite** instead of **nite**, **chocklit** instead of **chocolate**, etc. Some of the differences in spelling in the current orthography are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>British</th>
<th>American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>honour</td>
<td>honor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traveller</td>
<td>traveler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>programme</td>
<td>program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>storey (of a house)</td>
<td>story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plough</td>
<td>plow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>catalogue</td>
<td>catalog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheque</td>
<td>check</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centre</td>
<td>center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jewellery</td>
<td>jewelry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pyjamas</td>
<td>pajamas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyre</td>
<td>tire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connexion</td>
<td>connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theatre</td>
<td>theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waggon</td>
<td>wagon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kerb</td>
<td>curb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>defence</td>
<td>defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>levelled</td>
<td>leveled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colour</td>
<td>color</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher found it very interesting that after the list of differences between British and American spellings was typed out in the computer all the words on the left side which consisted of British spellings were underlined in green which indicated errors in spellings. But none of the spellings in the right side column were underlined in green which showed that the computer had accepted all the spellings as correct! This is obviously because the software programme was developed by an American.

Most of the differences in spellings between American English and British English are due to two main reasons:

i. Spelling reformers in America were deeply interested in making the language more American and when changes were being made at other levels like morphology, phonology, lexis and syntax, the orthographical level was not ignored. Reforms in orthography were also given a lot of importance and many of them were gradually implemented.

ii. There are several differences between the pronunciation of the British and the Americans. The differences are there in the consonants as well as the vowels. The Americans pronounce certain words very differently from the British and hence changes at the orthographical level were also made in order to have a better phoneme grapheme correspondence.

There is no doubt that the orthography of English is gradually undergoing a transformation. However, most of the changes are being made by people in the media like advertising, TV and through the E-mail etc. There does not seem to be any systematic, deliberate efforts to reform the orthography. In order to have a proper, phonemic and logical orthography, the problem has to be tackled in all seriousness and there has to be a thorough ongoing spelling reform movement. The amendments have to be made in such a way that the orthography becomes acceptable to most people of all ages and all nations. And one way of doing it is to create a universally accepted orthography of English.