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### Chapter Six

#### Chapter 6

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CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction
The objective of this study was to analyze the works of spelling reformers and their suggestions for spelling reforms and to study the feasibility of spelling reforms in the orthography of English. The study has dealt with the nature of the English orthography, and the developments and changes that have taken place in the English language which have resulted in the orthography as it exists today. This study has also discussed the objectives of spelling reformers and their efforts to reform the English orthography, their works and the current orthography.

The history of the language and the evolution of the orthography as it exists today have been discussed in chapter 2. The study has examined spelling reforms in Britain and America in chapters 3 and 4 and it has analyzed the works of two internationally renowned Indian spelling reformers in chapter 5 and has made a comparative analysis of their works.

The observations emerging out of the study have taken into consideration the following features and issues: problems in the orthography of English, the need for reforms in spellings, the objective of spelling reforms, some significant works of some prominent spelling reformers in England, America and India, causes for the failure of spelling reforms, pedagogical implications of the spelling reforms, significance of amendments in the orthography in the Indian context and suggestions for the improvement of the orthography of English.

6.2 Problems in the orthography of English
The study reveals that in spite of several spelling reforms suggested by so many spelling reformers over a period of years, the orthography of English has not really changed much though a few changes have taken place in American English. Today we have a spelling system, which has remained more or less unchanged since the middle of the seventeenth century and which even then
represented the pronunciation of English words at the end of the fourteenth century. This explains why English spelling seems so remote from its pronunciation. Pronunciation of words has changed a lot in six hundred years but the spelling has not kept up with it. There is hardly a letter or combination of letters that cannot be pronounced in two or three different ways and a good many of them have about half a dozen pronunciations. This kind of irregularity is somewhat disturbing to those who think it would be desirable to have a completely phonetic spelling for English.

Most letters in English are pronounced in more than one way but the opposite is also the case. Many English sounds have more than one spelling. So if one were to try to make up a list of words containing all the different spellings for the twenty English RP vowels one would find that there would be a need of about 220 different letters which obviously are not there in the current orthography. Although our writing is alphabetic it contains so many deviations from the alphabetic principle as to present a real problem whose solutions have been indefinitely postponed. There are five vowel letters in the English alphabet but twenty vowel sounds. According to the International Phonetic Association (I.P.A.), the five vowel letters can be phonemically represented by eight diphthongs and twelve pure vowels. However learners of English are not taught the phonetic symbols, they have to look at the spellings of the words and know the appropriate pronunciation or they have to know the pronunciation of words and write out the correct spelling. Similarly, the consonant graphemes are not sufficient for the consonant phonemes. For example, a learner who knows that the word charisma is pronounced as /kəˈrɪzma/ but is not sure of the spelling might spell the word beginning with a k as in karizma. He could spell the word doubt as dout when he hears someone pronouncing the word in that manner. Another source of imperfect fit between sound and spelling is alternate representations for a single phoneme. In English the phoneme /iː/ can be represented in various ways such as by the vowel letters ee and ea in meet, and meat respectively. From a structural point of view this superfluity of representation is haphazard since it corresponds to words which are pronounced
the same but spelled differently. There are several irregularities in the English orthography which is considered by most people to be confusing and antiquated. If a list of words which contain features like silent letters, doubled consonants where one would do, one letter representing several sounds and vice versa were to be written, the overwhelming impression of the anomalous state of affairs in English orthography would be quite obvious. That foreigners find it difficult is not to be wondered at but it may not come as a surprise to hear that it is almost equally difficult for native speakers of English too. There are so many irregularities and also a good many anomalous spellings which are unnecessary and which it would be therefore convenient to discard.

Some of them are as follows:

i the letter u for representing the short sounds of /e/ and /ɪ/ in bury - /'berɪ/, busy - /'bɪzi/

ii the letters ea for the /ei/ sound in break - /breɪk/, steak - /stek/, great - /ɡreɪt/

iii the letters ei, ey for the /ɪ:/ sound in receive - /rɪ'si:v/, key - /kiː/

iv the letters ou, ow for the /u/ sound as in soul - /sɔːl/, blow - /bluː/ etc.

It may be believed by some people that English orthography is not as bad as all that - that it even has some strengths. It may even be appreciated it for its regularity of spelling and sound correspondence in consonants. But one cannot ignore the numerous anomalies like the different pronunciation of the letters c in bloc, race and church or the s in house, houses and mission or the t in think, tinker and mention or the h in host, hour, thread and cough. The letter g is used twice in the words garage and gauge but both the gs are pronounced differently in both the words. Almost any argument in defense of English spelling begins to look a trifle flimsy when one considers such anomalies as lieutenant, a word which clearly contains no f and yet proceeds as if it did, or ache, bury, and pretty all of which are pronounced in ways that pay the scantiest regard to their spellings or four and forty one of which clearly has a u and the other of which clearly doesn’t. In fact all the ‘four’ words— four, fourteen,
forty, twenty-four and so on are spelled with a u until we get to forty when suddenly the u disappears.

The researcher wishes to convey the fact that the English orthography drastically needs some amendment and many of the reforms suggested by some eminent reformers must be implemented.

The data collected for this study indicates that there are several causes for the imperfection of an alphabet:

i  Alphabets grow up at a time when there is no scientific system of phonetics-no clear idea of how many and what sounds require representation. When certain signs began to be used for vowels no account was taken of the important difference between long and short vowels. Either men were not fully conscious of the difference or it did not seem to them of sufficient importance to require representation.

ii Sometimes the alphabet has been borrowed from some foreign source and since no two languages employ precisely all the same sounds, an alphabet which suits one language well is inadequate for another. Sometimes the borrowing people fill in the gaps by newly invented signs. Sometimes a combination of several sounds is used to represent the peculiar sounds of the borrowing language.

iii When a system of writing has once become familiar there is a tendency to stick to it even if the pronunciation changes. In English we not only continue to write numerous letters that have not represented any actual sound for hundreds of years but we have also introduced silent letters into certain words which never had the corresponding sounds.

iv Sometimes foreign words are retained in writing after they came to be translated in speech. We write etc. for etcetera, e.g. for exempli gratia, i.e. for id est but we read them as, so forth, for example and that is. In consequence all known systems of alphabetic writing have been more or less imperfect at the outset and in consequence tend to become less and less
faithful representations of speech. In a perfect alphabet, every letter would represent one sound and one only, and each sound would have its own symbol.

One of the important facts that the researcher would like to stress upon is a fact that is known to everybody and that is that judged by this standard the English alphabet is defective. We do not have enough symbols to represent all the sounds. In pointing out the deficiencies of the English alphabet, we are really calling attention to the fact that modern spelling is not phonetic; i.e. it does not accurately and consistently represent the sounds of speech. The spelling of Old English was phonetic. How is it then that the spelling of today represents the spoken language so badly? English orthography is basically alphabetic. There is sufficient consistency between letter and sound for it to be possible at least to begin the teaching of reading by sounding the letters individually and showing how they form words. However, it is not consistently alphabetic. No sooner have children learnt the letters of the alphabet and grasped the idea of letter-sound correspondence than they begin to encounter a host of words where the system breaks down. In fact they begin to encounter them when they have hardly got started since some of the most peculiarly spelt words in the language are among the commonest; the f in the word of, for example does not correspond to the /ff/ sound.

Obviously in some cases, English orthography departs seriously from the alphabetic principle. To start with as there are only twenty-six letters to represent forty-four sounds, letter pairs such as sh, th, oa, oo and oe etc., are often used instead of single letters to represent a single phoneme. This occasionally gives rise to momentary confusion when the letters are not to be taken as a pair as in the following: a bishop’s mishap, a swarthy wornhog, an inchoate moan, a cooper’s cooperative and an orthoepidist’s toecap. A hyphen is sometimes used to alert the reader to some of these problems, more often there is no mark at all. This would be a minor nuisance if the letters and the phonemes corresponded consistently but they don’t. Many phonemes have several different representations; the phoneme /ff/ for instance can be represented by the letters f as
in *often, ff* as in *off, ph* as in *graph* and *gh* as in *enough*. Conversely many letters or letter patterns have more than one pronunciation; consider *ou* in *out, four, through, cough, tough, dough,* and *borough.* At times the principle breaks down so badly that one hesitates to say what corresponds with what. To what does *gh* correspond in *night* and *bought*? Which letters represent the */tʃ/* sound in *picture* or the */w/* sound in *choir*? The */f/* sound is represented by the letters *sh* in *fashion,* *ss* in *mission* and *ti* in *nation.* Viewed purely as an alphabetic system English spelling is a mess a fact which spelling reformers have been proclaiming from a long time, but not much is being done to rid the orthography of English of its irregularities and ambiguities. Noah Webster in his ‘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’ in his *Dissertations on the English Language* wrote,

> It has been observed by all writers on the English language, that the orthography or spelling of words is very irregular; the same letters often representing different sounds, and the same sounds often expressed by different letters. For this irregularity, two principal causes may be assigned:
> i  The changes to which the pronunciation of a language is liable, from the progress of science and civilization.
> ii  The mixture of different languages occasioned by revolutions in England, or by a predilection of the learned, for words of foreign growth and ancient origin.

*Webster 1967:391*

He expressed the hope that an orthography almost regular or such that shall obviate the present difficulties which occur in learning the English language may be introduced and established with little trouble and opposition. It has been observed that the writings of many people show signs of deviant spellings, and exhibit the influence of American English. This can especially be observed in the spellings that they use when they sent a piece of text by e-mail. Something should be done and swiftly, to establish a fixed, standardized and a universally accepted orthography.
6.3 Objectives of spelling reformers

The study observes that the objectives of most of the spelling reformers have been more or less the same. In the general sense, their main objective was to render the orthography of English more intelligible, and easier to understand and learn, and to remove any defects that it has. Their specific way of going about it varied. Some of the reformers believed that a radical change was necessary. They suggested that the entire Roman alphabet should be scrapped and a new set of symbols be formed which would be more British. Due to the radical nature of their reforms they did not achieve much success. Another group of reformers' main objective was to amend the orthography in several different ways. Some of the methods they suggested were: removing any 'silent' or redundant letters, making the spelling more phonetic by substituting certain graphemes with others which corresponded to the phoneme, scrapping certain letters which were of not much use as they could be replaced by digraphs, and introducing diacritics to indicate vowel length. Most of the reformers were in agreement about two features of the English orthography, and that was the fact that firstly there wasn’t a proper grapheme-phoneme correspondence and secondly there weren’t enough graphemes to go with the phonemes which were almost double in quantity.

Several reformers all over the world have been proposing schemes of spellings reforms for hundreds of years. Many writers since the thirteenth century have expressed concern about the variable spellings in printed works. According to the more conservative view the important thing was to settle on one spelling for one word and have everyone stick to it and accept inconsistencies in the system for the sake of stability. But there were several radical views that spellings should be brought into line with pronunciation. Language has been undergoing various changes at many levels. But somehow though the present nature of the English orthography is not exactly satisfactory, there is not much being done about it. It is time that this aspect of linguistics was also given its due importance, and significant amendments were made in the orthography, by way of spelling reforms.
6.4 Causes for the failure of spelling reforms

The study reveals that many attempts at reforming the orthography of English had been made by several spelling reformers, but most of them failed because of the following reasons:

i Pronunciation is not uniform over those areas where the language is spoken. Pronunciation is not static, it is ever changing as a result a drastic reform would satisfy only a section of the community. It would also be difficult to distinguish homophones with a phonetic spelling.

ii The existence of printed texts would be a major source of problem. The millions of volumes in the private and public libraries of the world would become redundant, or 'closed books', i.e. without special study, to the children of tomorrow.

iv The proposed orthography would be unfamiliar, distracting or ugly. For example, the suggestion that kof, tho, akshun and doter should be used for cough, though, action and daughter respectively was criticized by many academicians who believed that it made the English orthography look ugly and awkward.

v The dialects of English vary from region to region and also within a region and from class to class as well. Which dialect should be considered as a standard? A particular choice may be rejected by the rest of the population. It would be difficult to convince them to change their pronunciation and the way they speak.

vi All etymologies would be lost and consequently we could not ascertain the meaning and origin of many words.

vii Many people of the older generation would not be happy about having to re-learn all the spellings.

viii A lot of time, labour, and cost would be involved in the change.
6.5 The need for spelling reforms in the current scenario

On analyzing the data collected for the purpose of this study it was observed that problems in the orthography of English are not of recent origin. It existed even in 1200 AD whenOrm, one of the pioneers in spelling reform made several suggestions for the reform of spellings. The cry for a reform in spellings has been in existence since then. There have been several reformers all over the world who have taken up this important project of reforming the orthography of English. There were several reform proposals suggested by various scholars and though some of them were approved by the spelling societies of England and America they were not given the stamp of authority for one reason or the other. This did not deter the academicians, scholars and researchers from continuing with the work of suggesting spelling reforms. This was largely due to the fact that everybody agreed upon one thing and that was that an orthographical reform would be of great advantage to most people.

It has also been observed that the problems in the existing orthography are many in number and they have been causing problems to the learners of the language. Discussions by the researcher with several academicians, scholars, students and teachers belonging to various disciplines, reinforced the view that the orthography of English is one of the main reasons for poor language skills especially reading and writing, among learners of the language especially in those countries where English is not the mother tongue. In a country like India, English is not the medium of education in all schools. In many schools it is the second or the third language and it is learnt from a period ranging from five to seven years in some of these schools. Not many hours are reserved for the teaching of English and all the language skills and not much importance or priority is given to it. As a result most of the students pass out with inadequate knowledge of the language. Several students do not get any practical training and practice in the use of English and they lack the confidence and the fluency to use it. It has also been found that these students make several errors in pronunciation and spellings. Many Indians find it difficult to pronounce several words in English. One reason could be that the sounds of English do not have an equivalent in their mother tongue.
For example many Indian languages do not have the /s/ sound represented by the letter s in words like measure, treasure etc. Hence they mispronounce it, substituting it often with /dʒ/. Obviously this will affect the spellings as they would write either the letters zh or jh instead of the letter s. Mother tongue interference is one of the major reasons for the cause of errors in pronunciation leading to errors in spellings. Thus, for example, some Indian speakers who say /fiːl/ instead of /fɪl/ for the word fill would also write feel instead of fill. Many people have difficulty in spelling words with doubled consonants and vowel digraphs. Thus some of the most common errors occur in words like committee, stopping, believe, receive etc. It would be quite difficult to teach Indian learners of English as well as other non-native learners in South Asian countries to speak like the British. It would be more appropriate to amend the orthography to make it simpler and easier to learn for every one. A beginning could be made by reforming the spellings in such a way that there would be better phoneme-grapheme correspondence. Certain anomalies like silent letters and ambiguous graphemes to represent certain phonemes could be taken care of. Many people who spoke to the researcher have expressed the view that they were not satisfied with the existing orthography and reforms in spelling which would result in a simpler orthography, would be most welcome.

On the basis of these facts, the researcher has come to the conclusion that there is a dire need for spelling reform which would be of great pedagogical significance.

6.6 Advantages of spelling reforms

In the light of the conclusions evolved in the present study, it can be claimed that spelling reforms can be of great advantage to everyone, and it is the need of the hour. Language has been evolving and several changes have taken place in the language at the phonological, morphological, syntactical and semantic levels. Perhaps the greatest number of changes are taking place at the phonological level as pronunciation of words differ from place to place and from person to person. For example, an American pronounces the word fast /faːst/ (British RP) as /faːst/, an Indian pronounces the word peas /piːz/ as /piːs/ so it sounds like
peace. But all these are accepted. Similarly several changes have occurred at the morphological level by way of neologisms and different ways of word formation. At the semantic level many words are acquiring different shades of meaning as English is increasingly used by people belonging to different multicultural and multilingual communities. English is also undergoing changes at the syntactical level especially with the increasing use of information technology. Hence, it would be logical to have changes at the orthographical level too. Spelling reforms would alleviate the difficulties that foreign learners of the language face especially considering the fact that at the phonological level too they experience difficulties. There has to be a grapheme – phoneme correspondence in the orthography of English. As a result not only would the spelling of most people improve but there would also be a standardization of pronunciation. Thus the phonological aspect would also be taken care of. A spelling which has a phoneme-grapheme correspondence would be the best guide for the way a word has to be pronounced and vice versa.

The advantages of a spelling reform are as follows:

i  The simplicity of the orthography would make life easier. Presently, there are very few people who are able to write a fairly long piece of text, without consulting a dictionary. It takes years for people to learn how to spell correctly and after several years, there are few people who can be said to have mastered the art of spellings perfectly. In spite of this some people still continue to hesitate when they are faced with certain words whose spellings they are not sure of. With reforms made in the orthography to make it easier, in a short period of time a learner could learn to spell correctly. There are very few possibilities of him making mistakes.

ii  Pronunciation is another aspect of English that gives trouble to learners of the language. This problem could be overcome if they learn the correct pronunciation. A correct orthography would result in correct pronunciation. There would be uniformity in the pronunciation throughout the land, and this would remove any prejudice and would promote mutual respect and affection.
Such a reform would result in the diminishing of characters. Obviously there would be an impact on printing costs which would be reduced to a great extent. For the most part these silent letters are a heritage from the late middle age and the Renaissance when scribes (who were paid by the page) used to add extra letters in order to pad out the text and increase the number of pages and learned men would copy the spellings.

Another argument sometimes advanced against the writing system of English is that foreigners learning to read English have a more difficult time than English speakers do when they learn the alphabetic writing system of many other languages. A writing system that corresponds directly to phonetic representations would positively be convenient for the learners of the language. Some critics may point out the fact that in course of time the said correspondence is likely to change due to changes in pronunciation. There may be arguments put up against any reforms in orthography. But, there is no doubt, that a reformed orthography would benefit most people especially if one considers the fact that according to surveys conducted, a majority of the users of the English language are non-natives. Shaw observes:

The flagrant corruptions of the sounds are directly due to the unphonetic spelling of our established orthography and nothing but a thorough reform will avail.

Shaw in Tauber 1963:10

Perhaps, the greatest advantage would be to the non-native learners of English. The greatest number of foreign learners of English are to be found in the Indian sub-continent where English is the second/foreign language and is also the chief means of communication and the medium of education especially at the higher levels of education. An orthographic reform would benefit this section of people and hence it is suggested that a reform in the orthography of English is very essential and needs to be implemented without any further delay.
6.7 The significance of an orthographic reform

A discussion on the usefulness of the orthographic reform can be significant in three directions:

i The first point that has to be considered is if there are deviations from the grapheme-to-phoneme correspondence that substantially diminish the degree of the appropriateness of the given orthography.

The current orthography has several deviations related to the grapheme-phoneme correspondence. It is at least questionable whether rearrangement of the Roman letters would prove psychologically more acceptable than something entirely different. The large-scale use of new symbols or graphemes would certainly be of an advantage if there were a grapheme-phoneme correspondence. It is quite obvious that any reform in orthography would consider the grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Add to that the economies achieved by the elimination of ‘silent letters’, redundant letters, and doubled consonants etc. and there should be no reason why a new orthography would not be accepted by most people.

ii The second issue that has to be considered is whether it is possible to state the proposed change in the orthography in simple, general terms (i.e. would the new rules be easy for the adult speakers who have been acquainted with the current system).

This generation could derive benefit from a reform in the orthography; and there are millions of learners and potential learners of English at any given time, for whom in any case of English especially the English orthography at any given time is previously unknown. It is quite obvious that it would be quite difficult for the adult speakers who are already acquainted with the old system of orthography. They would have to re-learn an orthography. They would have to spend quite some time learning something which they had been learning for years and which they have not even mastered. It would also not be easy for them to accept a new orthography when they
have been using a particular script for a very long time. Several books would have to be reprinted and a lot of time and money would be wasted.

iii The issue that would perhaps worry most people is whether reforms would make access to the ‘old’ literature relatively difficult for the coming generations (trained already in the new system).

This can be in part discounted by the realization that reading from our present spelling would have to be separately learnt in any case for an indefinite period into the future. The conventional allocation of Roman letters to the sounds of other languages is lacking in uniformity that the apparent advantage of continuity with past English tradition would not count for very much outside the English speaking world.

6.8 Suggestions for the improvement of the orthography of English

After analyzing the data, which had been collected for the purpose of this study, the researcher has come to the conclusion that a reform in the English orthography is imperative. There are various ways in which the orthography can be amended. The researcher has put forth a few suggestions.

The question of supplementing the deficiencies of the Roman alphabet is an important issue that has to be tackled. Firstly, the lack of graphemes to correspond to the phonemes has to be considered. In other words while there are about 44 phonemes in English, there are only 26 graphemes in the English orthography. One way of tackling this problem is by adding extra letters to the existing script. This can be done by various means:

- by taking over existing letters from other alphabets (e.g., Greek Cyrillic) with such typographical modifications as may be demanded by the need to harmonize with Roman fonts
- by altering Roman letters sufficiently to constitute additional independent shapes
by designing new letters to go with the Roman alphabet. There may be problems and hence care should be taken to see that any new letters must be distinctive and they must satisfy the essential feature of simplicity.

There are several advantages to be derived from alterations in the existing script. There would be intrinsic difficulties rather than the impracticability of the reforms. The proposal of the reformists was to throw out the superfluous silent letters and introduce a new set of letters. There is a need for an orthography, which will obviate most of the present difficulties, which occur in learning English. The changes may be introduced with little trouble and opposition. There would be uniformity in spelling and pronunciation. The substitution by a character that has a definite sound for one that is vague and indeterminate would be very useful for all learners of the language. Thus, the letters ee could substitute the letters ea or ie in words like speak and grieve. Thus these two words could be spelt as speek and greeve. The simplicity of orthography would facilitate all learners of the language. Time and again it has been suggested that an antiquated orthography could be one of the many reasons for low levels of literacy among children at the exit level. The only solution that would remove this impediment in learning English would be a reform in spellings.

English spelling to sound correspondence can be described in terms of patterns of graphemic, morphemic, syntactic and phonotactical processes. A rational approach to spelling reform must recognize the various phonological, morphological and syntactical patterns in the current orthography and must increase either the regularity of the existing patterns, or the range of one group of patterns at the expense of the other. The existing irregularities are in syntactical and morphological patterns as much as in phonological ones, so a phonetic alphabet could be presumably correct but the phonological deviations have created even greater irregularity in the system. The fact however is that English like any other language with a few exceptions does not work simply on a sound-symbol relationship. The form of words is equally important.
Technically this means that the English writing system is organized on a morphophonemic basis i.e. sound and form together relate to meaning. Several educational reformers have suggested that spelling strategies should be designed to help pupils appreciate the structures and patterns of words. Many people meet the following problems when trying to spell a word: They are not sure of the order of two consecutive letters (e.g. ie or ei in words like receive and believe); they are not sure whether to write a single letter or to repeat it (e.g. c and s in occasional); they find that some letters do not match a word’s pronunciation (e.g. thorough). Certain spelling changes can be made without altering the basis of the existing orthographical system while others require an entirely new orthographical principle. Eliminating silent letters in words like debt, doubt for example would make the current orthography more systematic. But to change the spellings of the words sane and sanity where the vowel is concerned would be to change the basic morphological pattern.

6.9 Pedagogical implications of the present study
This study has some significant pragmatic, and pedagogical implications. The benefits of a reformed orthography are quite obvious. Children would learn more quickly and easily and more of them would reach an acceptable level of competence. Foreign learners of English who far outnumber native speakers would find the spelling a reliable guide to pronunciation and vice versa. Students and teachers grappling with the problem of spelling and pronouncing a word correctly are a universal phenomenon. Any reforms in spellings would be very effective in helping all the learners to understand the written script in a better manner. Consequently their language skills would improve. Spelling problems would disappear to a very large extent. There would also be a substantial reduction in the average number of letters per word, leading to savings in paper, ink and computer storage space and in the time spent actually writing or typing.

G.B Shaw wholeheartedly supported spelling reform and one of the reasons he gave for implementing the Shaw Alphabet was that it was very economical.
In a letter to the editor of the Times in 1941, Shaw wrote,

It may interest you to learn that your leading article contains 2,761 letters. All these letters represent only 2,311 sounds. 450 of these letters are superfluous and could have been saved if we had a British alphabet. The same rate of waste on the 465,000,000 letters printed annually by the Times gives us 94,136,952 superfluous letters, everyone of which has to be legibly written or typed, read and set up by the monotypist, cast in metal and machined on paper which has to be manufactured, transported and handled.

Our attempts to make a foreign alphabet of 26 letters do the work of 42 are pitiable. We write the same vowel twice to give it a different sound and thus get 5 additional vowels. We couple 2 different vowels or even triple them in various permutations, which gives us much more than 18 vowel spellings.

Shaw in Tauber 1941:66

When a word is sounded out a pupil has to make the transition from aural symbols to visual symbols, which is potentially confusing particularly in a language like English which does not have a regular correspondence between sounds and symbols. It follows that the basis for teaching spellings must take into account the writing system of English. Popular belief is that English is a difficult language because it operates on a sound-symbol correspondence but does not do it with any reliability. It is difficult to spell English words for native speakers too because they are inclined to operate on a simple sound symbol correspondence.

There may be a possibility that there would be a few anomalies in the spelling in spite of a reform in spelling. This is because a reform of this sort cannot take place overnight. It would be a gradual process. Obviously some of the shortcomings of the present orthography would still exist. However more than half of the problems can be taken care of in the first phase. As a result most of the foreign learners of English, would be interested enough to learn the rules governing the other spellings and just accept certain spellings which are irregular. As a result the efficiency of students teachers etc, would improve and at the exit level the students would exhibit a high level of competence in all the language
skills. On positive and important fall-out of this is that the standards of education and the quality of students would also improve.

The fear of making mistakes is shown also by studies of schoolchildren’s writing. Children avoid using words they cannot spell. For many children this rules out such a large proportion of their vocabulary that their writing is rendered dull and repetitive. It is not simply that they avoid using rare words. Even high frequency words are danger spots if the spelling is troublesome causing the children to cast about for safer ways of saying things or safer things to say. As spelling grew in importance as a subject in elementary schools it became possible to judge the level of someone’s education in a rough and ready way by looking at their spellings. Since schools were supposed to teach spellings the general standard of people’s spellings has come to be regarded as a measure of how well or how badly the schools are doing their job. It is common to find many students who do not know the difference between their and there or where and were.

6.10 Spelling reforms in the Indian context

Of late the English learning and teaching situation in India has been changing so fast that we need to look at it periodically and take stock of the situation and reorient ourselves in consonance with the changing times. A sort of a flexibility is what our country needs in its approach to the learning and teaching of English and this sensitiveness to the changing situation is lacking in India. We continue to stick to age old traditions and cherish rules of the English language which have been laid down centuries ago. Indian English has been accepted as one of the varieties of English not much is being done to reform the orthography of English in India especially considering the fact that there are various cultural constraints that an Indian learner of English faces when he is confronted with a confusing, inconsistent and illogical orthographical system.

The lack of consistency between the letters and the sounds they represent constitutes a major source of error for the Indian learner of English. Since the letter does not represent the same sound consistently in English, as it does in most Indian languages generally, the recognition of individual sounds becomes
necessary in English. The phonic method where the learner sounds each and every possible letter of the word is not quite useful since there is no one to one correspondence between letter and sound in English. V.V. Yardi in *Teaching English in India Today* notes:

But it should not be ignored that quite a conceptual switch is involved in the transition from a syllable-oriented system, in which a neutral vowel may not be represented at all, to that of English, which in some ways is more morpheme oriented than phoneme oriented and in which the same unstressed mid-central vowel can have a number of different written representations. (Compare the first vowels in *directory, affected, tenacious, commend, subordinate*). Since it is exactly this kind of error over where vowels should be written that Indian pupils make it is likely that the structure of written words in their native language is at least one of the factors influencing them when they are forced through ignorance of what is correct to make a guess at an English spelling.

Yardi 1987:116

Reading involves two kinds of skills: perceptual and conceptual. The perceptual skill, among others pertains to the recognition of graphic symbols. Broadly speaking there are three kinds of scripts: alphabetic, syllabic and ideographic. The Indian learner who is used to the syllabic script generally experiences some difficulty in switching over to the alphabetic script. A major source of errors in writing in English is spelling. The learner has to spend quite a few learning hours over acquiring correct spelling. The current orthography defeats the attempts of foreigners to learn English. In India students are exposed to materials published in both the UK and the USA. Thus their writings may show deviant spellings. In the circumstance a teacher may have to accept American spelling which is as ‘correct’ as British spellings.
Yardi further observes that,

In Canada, according to H.L. Menken in his book *The American Language* the two orthographies, English and American flourish side by side. The English aluminium for example is to be used in scientific documents but the American aluminum is permitted in commercial writing. Cipher, dryly, jail, net, program and wagon are to be spelt in the American manner and even alright is authorised.

Yardi 1987:117

The situation in India where English is either the second or the third language and where there is no official or non-official body to influence spelling preferences is likely to be more complicated. Both British and American orthographies flourish side by side. The tradition in India is to follow the British model both in speech and writing. However in the changing context American English has already started influencing writing significantly. The researcher believes that it would be preferable to have an Indian model of orthography which would be more suitable for Indian learners and considering the fact that Indian English has been accepted as one of the varieties of English there is no reason why there should not be amendments in the orthography to suit the needs of the foreigner learners of English.

6.11 Scope for further study

The present research has made an in depth study of the problems in the orthography of English. It has analysed the reforms suggested by some spelling reformers in Britain, America and India. It has indicated the different ways in which spelling reforms can take place though it may have some limitations. The present study stresses on the need for spelling reforms especially in view of the fact that most of the learners of English are non-natives. The present study concentrates on the advantages of spelling reforms, the pedagogical implications and the method by which such a reform is possible.
There is a strong case for spelling reform. It is difficult to explain to an eight year child or even a teenager, the difference between *wring* and *ring* or between *meat*, *meet* and *mete*, or why we spell *hinder* with an *e* but *hindrance* without it or why *proceed* has a double *ee* but *procedure* doesn't, or why we spell *enough*, *biscuit* and *pneumonia* in the very peculiar ways that we do. From time to time one hears of proposals of spelling reforms in English but they are generally not taken seriously. It is of course at the initial reading stage that most trouble is encountered, and it is possible that a reformed spelling would possibly be worth the effort of children and teachers to learn our present system. Until the present however no linguists have taken this matter seriously enough to realistically examine the possible alternatives. Such a radically reformed spelling for English would be highly desirable and if at the present it seems to be a little difficult, the reasons for the obstacles may not be linguistic. They may be political, cultural and economic.

6.12 Retrospect and prospect

English continues to change and expand: both processes are signs of growth. In the welter of new words and the uncertainty of new usages, it is well to look back into the history of English. Our spelling still testifies to the tension between custom and logic between the etymological picture and the echo of the sound. If one is fortified by knowledge of how English speakers used their language in the past, one may feel on firmer ground when confronted with the problems of the present. There has been a continuous growth of English from that foreign looking language that was nevertheless called English in and before the day of King Alfred to the one written language of the Modern English speaking world. It is a unity in diversity, overriding territorial boundaries and carrying a common culture, however varied the local and temporal manifestations. It serves as the most useful medium of communication for peoples who have no part in it by race. They may have it imposed on them, or have chosen it: whichever way, it serves. And we must see that it continues to be serviceable. It is one of the forms and expressions of emotion and thought, of imagination and consciousness. Though we make it, it also makes us.
The researcher is aware that there are also questions, which cannot be solved by linguistic means. This concerns especially the social conditioning of a reform: e.g., for a language the native speakers of which constitute dozens of independent countries such a task is much more difficult and complicated than for a language mostly concentrated in a single country. Nevertheless time is quite ripe for a definitive conclusion as to the possibility and feasibility of a spelling reform of English. The study of various writings concerned with attempts at such a reform and with the linguistic and sociological problems connected with it will have revealed that it has been exactly the increasing interest of the linguists in the theory of the written norm, that has contributed considerably to the elucidation not only of the theoretical questions mentioned but also consequent of the problems of the limits within which a concrete spelling reform of English might be feasible and of the criteria that should be considered in attempting it. It is quite obvious that from the native speaker’s, the second language learners’ and from the foreign learner’s point of view that it is extremely desirable that a simple regular and logical orthography of English should be devised which would make it easier to learn to read and write in English.

The researcher would like to conclude this research work by a quotation from Noah Webster in his Dissertations on the English Language in the appendix titled, ‘An Essay on the Necessity Advantages and Practicality of Reforming the Mode of Spelling and Rendering the Orthography of Words Correspondent to the Pronunciation. Webster wrote,

NOW is the time, and this the country, in which we may expect success, in attempting changes favorable to language, science and government. Delay, in the plan here proposed, may be fatal, under a tranquil general government, the minds of men may again sink into indolence; a national acquiescence in error will follow; and posterity will be doomed to struggle with difficulties; which time and accident will perpetually multiply.

Webster 1768:406
There has been a realization that British Received Pronunciation as a socially accepted spoken variety is too ideal a model for non-native learners of English. It has given rise to the need for a viable model of English specially in India which would be acceptable from both the pedagogic and the communicative points of view. The phonology of Indian English is currently being used in many of the Indian universities for pedagogic purposes. This could be used to amend the current orthography and it has fairly strong possibilities of being accepted because it is representative of the observable general patterns in the regional varieties of English in India. A number of studies on IE by Bansal (1978), Kachru (1966 and 1978) and Verma (1978) are representative and have attempted to show that IE is different from British English at the phonological level. It has also been claimed that the features of the IE are not deviations from the norm, and therefore are not errors on the part of the foreign language users: they are regarded as constituting the norm in a different variety of English. The present study the findings of which has been reported is cast in the same mould.

Consequently the task before us is to consider in what way and to what extent it may be possible to simplify and regularize the spelling of English so as to attain the desirable goal. The study hopes that the point of pedagogical significance implied in the study could be tried out in the field of ELLT justifying the claims of the study.