

building a phon'emic alphabet for the english language: outline of a methodology, using yur26 as the benchmark

by ken goodwin; december 2012 (revised may 2013)

i am not a professional linguist, but have had years of exp'osure to a number of europ'ean languages.. i was motivated to look into the phon'etic an'omalies of english, part'icularly when comp'ared to other europ'ean languages which use the same alphabet and enj'oy other lingu'istic simil'arities, incl'uding many common sound/symbol matches .. my focus has been on simpl'icity and phon'emic logic (matching sound with symbol on a 1-for-1 basis).. i hope my exp'perience will be useful to those who asp'ire to ref'orm english spelling for the benefit of future gener'ations

features used in this paper, which are commonly av'ailable to ts transcriptions and spelling ref'orm system:

marking of irregular stressed vowels, via a leading ap'ostrophe

ab'andoning all use of capital letters

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(1) introduction

this paper outlines a method of evolving an alphabet which respects the current sounds used in pronunciation and reflects those sounds, unambiguously, in spelling words containing them.. the aim is to be able to accurately spell any word, based only on the pronunciation thereof, and vice versa.. this outline is a broad description of issues to be overcome and suggested means of doing so, rather than a full methodology.. it is intended to guide a reader, ie a would-be reformer, in his/her thinking, rather than provide a complete description of all the detail required to develop a system from scratch

as the methodology progresses, it is exemplified by reference to a phonemic spelling system called yurabet26, or yur26 for short.. yur26 claims to be able to squeeze the sounds, inherent in the english language, into the existing 26 letters of the alphabet (symbols) on a 1sound/1symbol basis.. to achieve this, only core sounds (phonemes) are used and regional dialects which have adapted these core sounds to local cultures are discarded.. to do otherwise would be to attempt to display all sounds within a single alphabet, which would have made the exercise impractical and the alphabet too cumbersome.. thus, the system used is phonemic, rather than phonetic.. yur26 focuses, as one would expect, on core dialects, ie mainstream american and mainstream british english; it doesn't favour either

the system is applicable to other european languages, but the present paper limits explanation to its english application.. occasional references to other european languages are made in the context of relevance to english, to support or clarify a particular issue.. suffice it to state that yur26 doubles up as a european phonemic alphabet (yuropean fonemik alphabet - yfa), with minimum language-specific adaptation, being:

- (a) the default or regular location of the stressed vowel and
- (b) faithful reflection of the mainstream phonology in each language

yur26 was developed on a trial and error basis, over many years.. on reflection, and knowing the final result of yur26, i am able to go back to square 1 and set out a logical means of developing a phonemic spelling system, requiring a fraction of the time that i took to develop yur26.. the combination of 1sound/1symbol and the 26 letter alphabet can be summarized as 1-1-26.. this combination is fundamental to the methodology of designing a phonemic spelling system, as described in the following passages.. the methodology is, therefore, only applicable to any aim of a would-be reformer which satisfies the preset 1-1-26 condition.. i reiterate that the use of yur26 is to conveniently exemplify features of 1-1-26; a would-be reformer would need to take his/her own decisions on the format of these features, as the development of his/her methodology evolves and progresses

(2) across-the-board improvements

some features of yur26 can be used in traditional spelling (ts) and, in fact, all traditional spelling in this paper – including the present text – reflects these features.. this is to demonstrate that some of the suggested spelling improvements are not exclusive to

yur26, or any other 1-1-26 system, and can be applied equally to ts or many other proposed spelling reforms.. these (which will already have been noticed) are:

- (a) capital letters are discarded.. there is no sound difference between the appearance, in any given word, of a lower case or upper case (capital) symbol.. in a 1sound/1symbol system, capital letters are, by definition, redundant.. yur26 is truly a 26-letter alphabet, compared to the present 52-letter alphabet which includes both lower case and upper case (capital) symbols (note also that current use of capital letters is erratic, with the rules regularly abused)
- (b) sentences end with a double full stop.. the elimination of capital letters initially clouds the sentence break; a quick reader might miss it.. the double full stop provides a clearer break.. however, there is no need for a full stop or double full stop where the sentence break is obvious, such as at the end of a paragraph or section
- (c) an apostrophe is imposed immediately prior to the stressed vowel in a 2+ syllable word, but only where the stress appears in an irregular location.. in english, the regular (default) position for stress is the 1st vowel.. but stress, which entails something like lifting the sound of the stressed vowel one musical note up, may appear elsewhere in a given 2+ syllable word, in which case it is marked (note that this is a simplified version of the stress markers that already appear in dictionaries, but in the case of yur26 it is the vowel that is designated for the stress location, not the syllable.. note also that latin-based european languages use accents – acute or grave – which appear above the irregular stressed vowels in common correspondence).. secondary stress is ignored

(3) mother-words: familiar matchings

the key to yur26 can be explained by the use of “mother-words”.. it can be claimed that the complete evolution of the system radiates from the selection of these mother-words.. i have used this approach, as i believe it is the most efficient way to guide any would-be reformer into the evolution of a phonemic 1sound/1symbol spelling system using the existing alphabet, ie 1-1-26

mother-words are 3-letter single syllable words, made up of consonant+vowel+consonant.. there are 2 types of mother-words: vowel and consonant.. each mother word uniquely matches a vowel or a consonant.. the 2nd letter in each vowel mother-word is matched to the corresponding vowel letter of the alphabet; the 1st letter in each consonant mother-word is matched to the corresponding consonant letter of the alphabet.. the 3rd letter of each mother-word is necessary for the process of developing a phonemic version of english, but is not used in this matching process.. however, each 3rd letter must appear in the 1st letter order of the alphabetic listing

mother-words are not invented; they must exist in ts.. mother-words provide an essential link between an eventual phonemic spelling system and the existing undisciplined, chaotic ts.. in the mother-words, all the symbols used are phonemically logical in ts and can and should, therefore, be repeated into a new spelling system.. in fact, they must if the mother-word approach is to work properly

to kick off, i suggest the vowels

a, e, i, o, u be matched to the mother-words (resp'ectively):

pat, pet, pit, pot, put

in other words, the 2nd letter of each vowel mother-word matches the corresp'onding vowel.. to put some practical meaning to this, wher'ever the sound of a vowel app'earing in one of these mother-words is present in any other word, then that vowel is spelt using the symbol that app'ears in the mother-word.. the ex'isting ts spelling of the full word may or may not be logical, but the new spelling must satisfy this cond'ition of ret'aining the same vowel symbol relative to the phoneme

for instance, the "o" in "bomb" is the same sound as the "o" in the mother-word "pot", so in any rec'onstituted spelling of "bomb" the "o" must be ret'ained.. on the other hand, the "o" in "comb" is not the same sound; consequently, any resp'elling of comb cann'ot incl'ude "o", at least not on its own (in fact "comb" is spelt with a single vowel, but it refl'ects the sound of a diphthong – 1 sound drifting into a 2nd sound – the 1st sound of which could logically be "o", but "o" on its own does not fully descr'ibe the 2-phoneme diphthong sound).. note that, in both "bomb" and "comb", the last symbol is silent and is disc'arded in the resp'elling – see (8) for disc'ussion on silent letters or ghost symbols

consonant mother-words match the 1st letter of the corresp'onding consonant.. as all mother-words must ex'ist and be phon'emically logical in ts, it follows that any 3-letter word which satisfies the format and cond'itions of a mother-word can be ad'opted as a mother-word.. it also follows that, if a valid mother-word cannot be loc'ated as a match for a part'icular consonant, then that consonant symbol is in'itially surplus to requ'irements in any new 1-1-26 spelling system.. it is an orphan symbol

there are many valid consonant mother-words, but rem'em'ber that the pronunci'ation of each mother-word must resp'ect, letter-by-letter, the sound/symbol matchings of all the other mother-words.. on this basis, i have loc'ated consonant mother-words for 18 of the 21 consonants of the ex'isting 26-letter alphabet.. my sel'ection is:

b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w, y, z

with the matching mother-words:

bet, den, fen, get, hen, jet, keg, leg, met, net, pen, red, set, ten, vet, wet, yet, zen

the usefulness of these mother-words is their versat'ility, as will bec'ome obvious in reading what comes later in conn'ection with dev'eloping a phon'em'ic 1-1-26 spelling system, be it yur26 or an'other.. the sel'ection of "e" as the vowel comp'onent of the consonant mother-words is not ess'ential for this purpose, but is conv'enient as it is used in rec'iting the alphab'et in its new format.. at present, one comes acr'oss ill'ogical pronunci'ations; h = aitch and w = double-you are part'icularly silly ex'amples

in yur26, the mother-words prov'ide the basis for rec'iting 23 alphab'etic symbols.. each vowel attr'acts the vowel phoneme, as it app'ears in resp'elt words (ie, the 2nd letter of each mother-word).. each consonant, how'ever, attr'acts the 1st 2 letters of the relevant mother-word, bec'ause the natural pronunci'ation of the consonant phoneme requ'ires it to be

finalized with a vowel.. yur26 has selected “e” as this trailing vowel, mainly because it is consistent with the recitation of some latin-based languages.. thus:

a e i o u be de fe ge he je ke le me ne pe re se te ve we ye ze

(4) remote matchings

there are 3 orphan consonants: c, q, x.. note that all ts-spelt words containing “c” are catered for if (as in yur26) “k” is adopted for the hard “c” sound, as in cat = kat, and “s” is adopted for the soft “c” sound, as in cell = sel.. this leaves “c” as surplus.. i could find no mother-words starting with q or x, so these are also surplus to initial requirements

once established the 5+18 mother-words, nearly all possible single syllable words can be respelt (or the original ts spelling retained).. as the respelling process progresses, any sound which cannot be matched to a symbol via a mother-word becomes a “floater”.. to retain the integrity of 1-1-26, at the same time catering for all existing phonemes, the number of floaters must also be 3.. this is indeed a challenge, because it is widely thought that english contains 40+ phonemes (the merriam-webster dictionary quotes 58)

all symbols and matched phonemes appearing in mother-words are “familiar matchings”.. on the other hand, if the 3 orphan consonants are force-matched to the 3 floaters (ie with no expansion to the 26-letter alphabet), they can be referred to as “remote matchings”.. in yur26, the floaters, for which corresponding symbols don’t appear in the mother words, are: voiced th (as in “this”), unvoiced th (as in “thin”) and nasal ng (as in “thing”).. if the claim to a valid 1-1-26 system is accepted, yur26 has indeed managed to keep the number of floaters down to 3 and the total number of phonemes fixed at 26

in the interests of simplicity, i have allocated the 3 orphan symbols to the (convenient) 3 floaters.. these remote matchings are as follows in yur26:

voiced th: x, such that “then” becomes “xen”
unvoiced th: c, such that “thin” becomes “cin”
nasal ng: q, such that “thing” becomes “ciq”

none of these 3 remote matchings have a precedent in english, although “c” is pronounced commonly, in the spanish of northern and central spain, as unvoiced “th”.. however, the appearance of these 3 remote phonemes in sample english texts suggests that only 5% of any respelt text uses remote matchings.. from this, it can be concluded that ts is substantially salvageable, despite my view (based on a sample text and a count of letter-by-letter spelling changes from ts to yur26) that ts english is only about 58% phonemic.

if ts is thus 42% unphonemic, and remote matchings in yur26 only account for a 5% appearance in a typical random text, it follows that remote matchings account for $5 \div 42$ or 12% of spelling changes.. therefore, familiar matchings, ie directly via mother-words, account for 88% of spelling changes (if yur26 is used as the target system).. it can thus be concluded that ts is 88% salvageable.. in order to progress with the development of a logical spelling system, it is useful to understand the irony that ts is, on the 1 hand so chaotic and, on the other substantially salvageable

to complete recitation of the alphabet with the missing 3 consonants – see (3), the same trailing “e” vowel sound used in the 18 consonant familiar matchings is invoked.. thus:

c = ce (as in theft = ceft) x = xe (as in then = xen) q = qe (as in hanger = haqer)

note that “q” is the only letter of the new alphabet that cannot start an english word

(5) ts abs’urdities

the addition of 3 remote matchings to the 23 familiar matchings which appear in the mother-words completes the yur26 phonemic alphabet, subject to exhaustive testing.. however, the application of these familiar and remote matchings to respelling english words is not an easy task, being confronted by absurdities in present spelling, including:

- (a) different ways of pronouncing the same vowel, eg the “o” in cover, hover, mover, rover
- (b) different vowels for the same pronunciation, eg bird, curd/kurd, nerd, word
- (c) 10 ways of pronouncing words containing the combination “ough”: eg thought, though, tough, trough, through, thorough, bough, hiccough, lough, hough (although some of these do have alternative spellings)
- (d) words with the same pronunciation, but spelt differently, eg where/wear/ware and rain/rein/reign
- (e) words spelt the same, but pronounced differently, eg read(present tense), read(past tense)
- (f) double consonants, which change the pronunciation of nearby vowels, eg tapped v. taped
- (g) diphthongs, where the 2 phoneme-connected vowels are separated by a consonant, eg maid v. made
- (h) diphthongs which are spelt differently, according to which word they appear in, eg howl, towel, foul
- (i) illogical digraphs (of 2 consonant symbols which purport to express a single sound, but don’t)
- (j) false digraphs, ie in which the 2 consonants express 2 sounds not 1, eg sh = s+y
- (k) digraphs which already have a single symbol expression in the alphabet, eg ph = f
- (l) negative digraphs, in which a single symbol expresses 2 phonemes, eg x = k+s
- (m) silent letters, which have no phonemic significance at least not in modern english

- (n) interposed vowels that change the way an adjacent vowel is pronounced, eg magic “e” as in tap v. tape
- (o) misplaced symbols, eg the “e” in “middle” which should come logically before rather than after the “l”
- (p) unstressed vowels which have, in some dialects, eroded into a schwa or grunt, eg the word dependent, in which the 1st vowel and last vowel (both unstr’essed) fall into this category
- (q) (mis)use as a vowel of the consonant “y” instead of the vowel “i”, as in in “myth” (compare to “mist”) and as a diphthong in “asylum”.. yur26 = mic, mist, as’ailum
- (r) doubling a consonant apparently to reduce phon’emic ambig’uity, eg: the 2nd “ss” in possess voices the “s” sound in “set” rather than the “z” sound in “peas”
- (s) mis(use) of a double consonant, eg “ss” is used almost inv’ariably to voice the “s” sound in “set”, but the 1st “ss” in “possess” expresses the “z” sound, as does the “ss” in “aussie”

these and other anomalies of present spelling cause the chaotic transcription of the spoken into the written word, turning a potentially substantial phon’emic structure into a spelling regularity of only 58%.. the following sections explore how a phon’emic spelling system can eliminate these anomalies, by creative application of the mother-words to bring 95% regularity to the spelling system – see (3).. to complement this and bring the system up to 100% regularity, within the parameters of 1-1-26, the remote matchings in (4) must be invoked to complete the picture

(6) unr’avelling ts

it is widely thought, by would-be spelling reformers, that the english language contains 40+ phonemes.. the merriam-webster dictionary suggests 58.. both are misconceptions, because they fail to recognize that many of the so-called phonemes in english (purporting to be self-contained sounds) are comprised of 2 phonemes which already have a life of their own: they appear individually in ts and in the above list of 23 mother-words.. for a spelling system to satisfy the tight 1-1-26 conditions, all means are necessary to bring to bear on its design.. in the first instance, this means resp’elling those words which only use the phonemes which appear in the mother-words

for instance, no symbol of the ts spelling “ache” corresponds to a mother-word.. however, there *are* mother-word sound/symbol matchings which fit the picture.. analyzing the sound composition of “ache”, it is evident that there are 3 phonemes.. the first 2 comprise a diphthong (written as a strong vowel + weak vowel), followed by a consonant.. all 3 phonemes appear in mother-words: e+i+k, but none of these appear in the original ts spelling.. consequently, the word can be rewritten “eik”.. this resp’elling satisfies the 1sound/1symbol principle, without adding to the 26-letter alphabet (ie it satisfies 1-1-26), and uses only familiar sound/symbol matchings.. the yur26 transcription is therefore eik and forms part of the 88% salvageable component of ts

it seems logical that, as a 1st step, any 1-syllable word that can be resp'elt from the 23 letters of the mother-words should ind'eed be so resp'elt.. such an exercise is a large 1st step adv'ancement in the process of spelling reform.. it can work in tandem with the elimin'ation of silent letters (ghost symbols) which can easily be disc'arded as an integral part of this 1st step.. for instance, in the word "ghost", the "h" has lost its use over the centuries and is now silent in pretty much all dialects.. if it is dec'ided, as i did with yur26, to reg'ard this "h" as a silent letter, then it can simply be disc'arded

in resp'elling "ghost", consider'ation must be given of course to the phonemes which compr'ise the word.. the 3 rem'aining consonants, g+s+t, appear in the mother-words and, therefore, are ret'ained in the resp'elling.. how'ever, the sound of written "o" in this word does not app'ear in the mother-words and therefore needs att'ention.. the "o" in "ghost" is eff'ectively a diphthong compr'ising a strong vowel + weak vowel.. the corresp'onding 2 vowels are o+u, as in the pot+put mother-words.. the word is, thus, resp'elt "goust".. the resp'elling now resp'ects the int'egrity of the 4 symbols, as they app'ear in the mother-words.. other ex'amples of ghost letters (shown here in brackets) are: psychic(p), knot(k), gnat(g), though(gh).. yu26 = saikik, not, nat, xou

in summary, by using the combin'ation of mother-word list and elimin'ation of silent letters, many 1-syllable words can be rewr'itten into a phon'emic form using fam'iliar sound/symbol matchings.. for the phon'emic form to be most eff'ective, the fam'iliar sound/symbol matchings (and ind'eed the 3 rem'ote matchings mentioned earlier) must be appl'ied dogm'atically, ie with'out sign'ificant compromise.. it rem'ains to be seen if that can be ach'ieved within the par'ameters of 1-1-26

in the following sections, i will expl'ore further the rationalis'ation of diphthong spelling, conn'ecting this disc'ussion to short and long vowels.. i will also addr'ess digraphs (2 symbols to expr'ess a single sound).. as digraphs have no place in a 1sound/1symbol system, the aim is to el'imate digraphs altog'ether.. the process will expl'ore true, false, and unn'ecessary consonant digraphs, as well as mispl'aced symbols

(7) short vowels; long vowels; diphthongs

in my defin'ition, short vowels are those that app'ear the set: pat, pet, pit, pot, put.. long vowels are the app'earances of the same sounds (or almost the same sounds) in some words, but in a stretched version.. just as the short vowel sounds can be badly spelt, at least from a phon'emic viewpoint, so too can long vowels.. the latter are perh'aps more widespread, with phon'emic conf'usion prev'ailing betw'een the different vowels.. an ex'ample of the latter: "all".. clearly, the "a" bears no res'emblance to the short sound of "a" in "pat".. it is closer to the "o" in "pot", but is actually stretched into a long vowel.. there are no obvious symbols in the ex'isting 26-letter alphabet to match long vowels.. furtherm'ore, there are no symbols left over from the fam'iliar and rem'ote matchings, mentioned ab'ove.. so it's time for a bit of lateral thinking, given the scarcity of symbols and the app'arent ex'istence of 40+ phonemes

let's take an an'alogy: cons'ider double consonants.. these ex'ist in ts partly as a spelling aberr'ation: 1 of the consonants app'ears to be surplus to requ'irements and falls into the silent letters category, and can thus be disp'ensed with under a 1sound/1symbol system; so

the word “inn” would be resp’elt “in”.. how’ever, in some words, the double consonant stretches the single consonant sound and, in this resp’ect, serves a purpose.. for instance, in “unn’erve” there are 2 sounds which are glued tog’ether into 1 long sound

yur26 resp’ects the double consonant in these instances, as it is not cons’idered justified, nor cons’istent with the 1sound/1symbol principle, to inv’ent an add’itional symbol for each double consonant.. the same principle can be (and, in yur26, is) appl’ied to long vowels: the short vowel symbol is simply doubled, such that “all” bec’omes “ool” (long “o”, not long “a”).. how’ever, there is a difference betw’een the ret’ained double consonant and the double vowel.. the former bridges a syllable boundary (unl’ike as in “inn”), where’as the latter is cont’ained within a syllable.. thus, we are alr’eady chipping aw’ay at the 40+ phonemes, by inn’ovative thinking with’in the par’ameters of the mother-words

diphthongs compr’ise a strong vowel, drifting soundwise into a weak vowel.. the weak vowel is always u or i sound, but there are consonant shadows of these 2 vowels, resp’ectively w and y.. yur26 sel’ectively uses w inst’ead of u and y inst’ead of i as the weak (ie 2nd) sound in a diphthong.. i will expl’ore the reasons for this, but first there are conn’ections betw’een vowels (short and long) and diphthongs, which frustr’ate att’empts to ach’ieve 1sound/1symbol and requ’ire matching dec’isions to be made on the run

yur26 has ad’opted the appr’oach of squeezing into 1-1-26 all the subtleties of the present language sound make-up that are possible.. in other words, where a short vowel is voiced in a part’icular word, in some dialects, but a long vowel in others, then the latter is the preferred basis for the matching spelling.. similarly, a part’icular sound combin’ation may app’ear as a long vowel in some dialects and a diphthong in others; ag’ain the latter is preferred as the more emph’atic option.. this appr’oach is simply to ens’ure that the more subtle option is ret’ained in the language.. to do otherwise would be to lose the subtlety for’ever (of course, regionally, the combin’ation will still be pron’ounced as bef’ore, being simply one of several adapt’ations of the standard spelling to the local dialect), eg:

ts:	bold	bald	bawled	bowled	boiled
yur26:	bold	boold	boold	bould	boild

yur26 = short vowel, long vowel, long vowel, diphthong, diphthong

(note: some dialects partly red’uce the combin’ations to the or’iginal short vowel phoneme)

how’ever, there are some exc’ptions to the “subtlety rule”, which have been ad’opted in yur26.. perh’aps the most obvious is where a single vowel symbol is currently used to expr’ess a diphthong.. for example, “programme” (british) and “program” (am’erican) mean the same thing.. the am’ericans have dropped off the 2 last symbols, as they are silent; this is clearly logical with’in the context of a phon’emic spelling system.. how’ever, there is also a pronunc’iation difference.. the british voice the symbol “o” as the diphthong “ou”, where’as the am’ericans pron’ounce it as a short vowel, ie as in the mother-word “pot”

in this ex’ample, the ab’ove rule of ret’aining subtleties has been dropped in yur26; it is judged that the ext’ension of “o” to “ou”, in the reformed spelling, is an unj’ustified complic’ation.. in this ex’ample, simpl’icity has shoved subtlety as’ide.. a further adv’antage of ret’aining “program”, in preference to rewr’iting it as “prougram”, is the ret’ained link to ts (a yur26 dictionary would note this difference in pronunc’iation, but would fall short of sugg’esting an optional spelling be used by the british)

in summary, yur26 has not chosen between standard american and standard british pronunciation as the basis for spelling.. it has adopted a pragmatic approach which attempts to retain speech subtleties (discarded in some dialects, but not in others), but avoids extending spellings to incorporate sounds which many dialects have discarded.. these sound extensions, such as program->prougram, can and should be explained in the eventual new dictionary, in preference to adopting the latter spelling or advocating optional spellings.. at least, that is what i did in yur26.. of course, a would-be reformer will need to take his/her own decision, which could be a winner/loser choice between standard american and standard british, or 2 separate dictionaries, or some other solution.. whatever decision is taken, it must focus on core phonemes (it must be phonemic rather than phonetic) to have any chance of fitting the format into 1-1-26

(8) rhotic “r”; more on vowels; trimmings

before moving on to examples of short vowels, long vowels and diphthongs, it's worth mentioning the rhotic “r”.. in some dialects of english, the appearance of “r” in the middle or end of some words is silent, but not before it stretches the sound of the preceding vowel.. for instance, “part” is pronounced “paat”, ie consonant + long vowel + consonant.. the yur26 adaptation of “part” is “paart”, ie the rhotic “r” is retained, as is the preceding long vowel.. on the other hand, “very” and “vary” differ soundwise only in the length of the vowel sound, the “r” sound being retained in all dialects (yur26 = veri, veeri, resp'ectively)

apart from the rhotic “r” situation, ts is particularly chaotic when it comes to vowel spellings in general.. here are some examples:

long vowels:

aa: aunt aren't can't (yur26 = aant aarnt caant)
ee: wear where fare fair (yur26 = weer weer feer feer)
ii: fear beer pier weir (yur26 = fiir biir piir wiir)
oo: poor pore paw paul (yur26 = poor poor poo pool)

diphthongs:

ai: fire liar cryer tyre/tire (yur26 = fair lair krair tair)
au: howl vowel foul (yur26 = haul vaul faul)
ei: hay hey pail pale (yur26 = hei hei peil peil)
ou: toe so coal mole (yur26 = tou sou koul mou)

connecting short vowels, long vowels and diphthongs:

a: bat bart bout bite (yur26 = bat baart baut bait)
e: bet bear/bare bait (yur26 = bet beer beit)
i: bit beer beet/beat (yur26 = bit biir biyt)
o: tot taught tote toy (yur26 = tot toot tout toi)
u: luck look luke (yur26 = luk luuk luwk)

note that in the diphthongs beet/beat = (yur26)biyt and luke = (yur26)luwk, the consonant shadows “y” and “w” are preferred, replacing the weak 2nd vowel in each diphthong.. in both cases, the consonant is a shadow of its corresponding strong vowel: “y” is the shadow of “i” and “w” is the shadow of “u”.. the reason for this decision is to avoid

confusion with the long vowels “ii” and “uu”, which correspond subtly to other (non-diphthong) sounds as in the above long vowel examples.. the need for such clarity is, perhaps, especially obvious in the word examples “seeing” and “sueing”; these are transcribed into yur26 as “siyiq” and “suwiq”, in preference to “siiiq” and “suuiq”

but there is a 2nd reason to selectively use consonant shadows in diphthongs: consider the examples “sighing” and “sewing”; to avoid a string of 3 vowels (which would cause confusion in the mind of a reader as to whether they include short vowels and/or long vowels and/or diphthongs), yur26 interposes “y” and “w” where one would expect “i” and “u”.. thus these words are transcribed as “sayiq” and “sowiq”, rather than “saiiq” and “souiq”.. the pronunciation clarity of the former set is obvious.. to reflect these selective uses of the consonant shadows, yur26 has adopted the following rule: if a diphthong is immediately followed by a vowel, then the weak vowel position in the diphthong must be filled by a consonant shadow, ie “y” or “w”.. whilst yur26 supports the simple logic of this approach, i have not seen it adopted by any other reformer

the existence of “y” and “w” as consonant shadows of the verbs, respectively, “i” and “u”, means that other situations arise in which a decision needs to be taken as to whether a vowel or a consonant is the more appropriate.. these situations are clouded by the fact that both “y” and “w” in ts sometimes double up as vowels.. in a more disciplined arena, such as 1-1-26, strict rules are required so that in respelling the choice is clear.. yur26 has adopted the rule that a vowel-type phoneme leading into a vowel will attract the consonant shadow, unless this vowel is the 2nd (ie weak) vowel of a long vowel or diphthong combination.. to illustrate this, “yes” is *not* respelt as “ies” and “wood/would” is *not* respelt as “uuud”.. yur26 = “yes” and “wuud”, respectively.. to do otherwise would be to deem these words to contain 2 syllables - see (12) below - which they clearly do not

another aspect is the possibility of trimming diphthongs of superfluous symbols.. we have already seen that “y” and “w”, in limited circumstances, can each be used as a quasi-vowel being the weak (ie 2nd) vowel in a diphthong which starts with the strong vowel, respectively, “i” and “u”.. the combinations “iy” and “uw” are needed to avoid clashing with the long vowels “ii” and “uu” and to avoid strings of 3 vowels.. the question arises, with regard to a diphthong appearing at the end of a word, as to whether or not “iy” and “uw” are necessary, or can be replaced by the short vowel “i” and “u”

let’s consider the full set of pronouns: i you he she we they
although not obvious from the ts spelling, they all end in a diphthong.. one would expect them to be transcribed into yur26 as: ai yuw hiy syiy wiy xei

ai and xei do not contain “y” or “w” as the weak quasi-vowel; on the other hand the middle 4 pronouns do.. ai and xei, clearly, require symbols for the 2 sounds in each diphthong, but it seems that in the other 4 the “y” and “w” can be discarded, without distorting the pronunciation thereof.. yur26 adopts this approach and

you he she we become: yu hi syi wi

if a verb is added behind each, the diphthong is often cut short in normal communication anyway, becoming a short vowel sound: yu went hi went syi went wi went.. thus, yur26

uses the diphthong combinations “iy” and “uw” only in the middle of relevant words, discarding the shadows which could conceivably appear at the end

in another example, “y” is used in many ts spellings as a full vowel when it appears at the end of a word and, sometimes, in the middle.. “myth” is an example of the latter; in yur26, “y” is replaced by “i” and the word is respelt “mic”.. in fact, i have set a rule that neither “y” nor “w” should ever be used as a full vowel, although as we have seen above they are quasi-vowels in a limited number of diphthongs.. with regard to “y” ending a ts-spelt word, again, it is used as a vowel.. in yur26, each syllable must contain a vowel and “y”, being a consonant, is inappropriate.. “silly” is respelt “sili”, the 2 vowels reflecting the 2 syllables of this word.. on the other hand, “y” can appear at the end of a yur26 spelling, providing it has the value of “y” in “yes”.. for example, “splash” becomes “splasy”, which looks curious but only because we are used to “y” at the end of a word being a vowel.. “splasy” is a 1-syllable word and, as such, cannot accept a 2nd (detached) vowel in yur26 rules

(9) consonant digraphs: true; false; unnecessary

a digraph is a combination of 2 alphabetic symbols which purport to express a single sound.. this section is dedicated to digraphs which are made up of 2 consonants in ts-spelt words.. in some cases, the same sound can be written in 2 forms.. this complicates the understanding of the written forms and cries out to be rationalised.. in a 1-1-26 system, such rationalization includes the necessary application of a single matching symbol for each “true” digraph.. if each combination currently considered as a digraph were required to be matched with a unique symbol, there would not be enough letters in the alphabet.. fortunately, most digraphs we recognize in ts are not digraphs at all (false digraphs: single phonemes disguised as digraphs), or the corresponding sounds are already mother-word-matched each with a single symbol in some words (unnecessary or redundant digraphs)

typical redundant digraphs are ph and gh, as in phase/trough/hiccough (yur26 = feiz/trof/hikup).. note that the gh combination is silent in though/through/thorough/bough and should be deleted (yur26 = xou/cru/curu/bau).. an example of the combination of a redundant digraph and a silent letter is chique (yur26 = syiik), also described as a redundant trigraph.. false digraphs are those which, on analysis, contain 2 phonemes.. they are not digraphs at all, but the ts consonant combination does not reflect the 2 sounds as they appear in the mother-words; eg: chip/ship/mention/queue/quest/passion.. the latter word contains the (false) trigraph “ssi”.. the closest 2 symbols which express the phonemes are: ch=t+y; sh=s+y; ti=s+y; qu(eue)=ky; qu(est)=kw ssi=s+y.. yur26 for chip/ship/mention/queue/quest/passion = tyip/syip/mensyon/kyuw/kwest/pasyon

it is appropriate to mention that “y” appears as a drift sound (rather like the 2nd, ie weak, vowel in a diphthong) in such words as million and canyon (yur26 = milyon and kanyon), neither of which is generally thought to contain a digraph in its ts spelling.. these are perhaps 2 examples of false digraphs, even though in ts they are not generally recognized as digraphs

the remaining consonant digraphs are: voiced th, unvoiced th and nasal ng.. these are true digraphs, in that each expresses a single phoneme.. digraphs are banned in any 1-1-26 system, as each single sound must be uniquely matched to a single symbol.. equally, yur26

does not contain digraphs.. as mentioned in (4) above, these 3 phonemes (floaters) are remotely matched to the orphan symbols available after all other 23 characters are matched to mother words.. ep'eating, yur26 remote matchings are:

voiced th = x
unvoiced th = c
nasal ng = q

(10) resp'elling 1-syllable words: ex'amples

at this stage, it is opport'one to mention that speakers of ts english have a tendency to merge sounds into abbr'eviated pronunci'ations.. pres'umably this has res'ulted from the cha'otic nature of spelling, opening the way for indiv'idual interpret'ations of how words should be pron'ounced.. those who, at a certain stage, haven't learnt each word twice (the written and the spoken), are forced into guessing how any part'icular text should be pron'ounced.. in section (11), i expl'ore the incidence of schwa versus emph'aticly pron'ounced unstressed vowels.. similarly, and as a res'ult of lax phon'emic rules, whole sequences of symbols can be merged into an ill'ogical pronunci'ation

in a 1-1-26 system, each individual symbol is pron'ounced in a set way.. it can only change with reg'ard to pitch (if it is a stressed vowel), but this does not constitute a tainting of the phoneme itself.. it follows that 1-1-26 spellings requ'ire phon'emic consider'ation of each symbol (almost as if in isol'ation).. this contrasts with mergers and slurrings, which are common in ts.. in rec'iting 1-1-26 spellings, there is a tempt'ation for ts adepts to bypass this cardinal rule and lapse into unphon'emic brevity.. my sugg'estion is to first read out the 1-1-26 spellings (as for instance the ex'amples that follow) letter-by-letter, until the words can be speeded up and fluently pron'ounced as conn'ected sequences.. in the 1st instance, the pronunci'ation may app'ear jerky and this is a typical character'istic of phon'emic languages that do not perm'it pronunci'ation short cuts, eg spanish.. even the fluently pron'ounced conn'ected sequence of a 1-1-26-spelt word will still app'ear jerky, but this is bec'ause no symbol can be om'itted or slurred in the pronunci'ation there'of.. in summary, ad'option of the 1-1-26 concept means no phon'emic compromise and no short cuts

before moving on to the subject of 2+ syllable words, it is necessary to put into practice the outline of previous sections, emanating from the mother-words – see (3) - and remote matchings – see (4), and working through sections (6) to (9).. it is also necessary to cons'ider silent letters (or ghost symbols) which app'ear in ts spellings, but which have no phon'emic significance.. in (3), ab'ove i mention the words “bomb” and “comb”, in the context of a different verbal interpret'ation of “o”.. how'ever, these 2 ex'amples are also useful to illustrate the app'earance of silent letters in ts spellings, in this ex'ample the last consonant “b”.. this is as sup'erfluous to any phon'emic spelling system as it is to ts its'elf and must be del'eted.. even spelling ref'ormers who favour minor impr'ovements to current spelling (playing at the edges), ie the minimalists, inv'ariably drop silent letters

i have sel'ected 100 short words that are part'icularly difficult to spell.. 43 of these words, as pron'ounced, have different meanings and 2-3 alt'ernative spellings (making a total of 149 ts spellings).. the yur26 transcr'ptions, and in fact those of any 1-1-26 system, requ'ire a single spelling for each pronunci'ation; consequently, these 149 ts spellings are cond'ensed

to 100 in the yur26 transcription there'of.. for purposes of the following, and for simplicity only, i have ignored american spellings where these differ from the british spellings:

ache all arch ant aunt bail/bale bare/bear beat/beet bird bough/bow(verb) boy/buoy
eik ool arty ant aant beil beer biyt burd bau(verb) boy

buy/by/bye cache/cash calf cell/sell choir coarse/course dawn days/daze dew/duo
bai kasy kaaf kwair sel koors doon deiz dyuw

doe/dough eel eyes field food foul/fowl for/fore/four gaol/jail gem ghost gnome hair/hare
dou yil aiz fiyld fuwd faul foor jeil jem goust noum heer

hear/here heard/herd her him/hymn hole/whole how i ice ill jammed key/quay/cay knees
hiir hurd hur him houl hau ai ais il jamd kiy niyz

knight/night knot/not laughed loan/lone loch lock loose lose naught/nought near niece
nait not laaft loun lokh lok luws luwz noot niir niys

note one/won ox path peace/piece phlegm quite rain/reign/reign road/rode/rowed
note won oks paac piys flem kwait rein roud

rough/ruff rye/wry salt saw sole/soul sow said say seas/sees/seize sew/so shoe/shoo south
ruf rai solt soo soul sau sed sei siyz sou syu sauc

tall taught/taut the(bef'ore a consonant) the(bef'ore a vowel) threw/through to too/two
tool toot xu(bef'ore a consonant) xi(bef'ore a vowel) cruw tu tuw

tongue trough up use(noun) use(verb) vine wail/whale wait/weight which/witch with
toq trof up yuws(noun) yuwz(verb) vain weil weit wity wix

wood/would word wreck yeast yes you'll/yule
wuud wurd rek yiyst yes yuwl

of the alternative spellings for words with the same pronunciation, none are spelt differently in yur26, nor can they be in any 1-1-26 system.. on the other hand, one ts word (the definite article) has 2 possible pronunciations, and therefore 2 1-1-26 spellings, depending on whether the subsequent word in any given sentence starts with a consonant or a vowel

a reader will instantly notice that the yur26 spellings take up, on average, substantially less space their ts counterparts.. this is of course mostly because of the duplicated spellings in ts.. but the yur26 words generally are shorter.. however, the above words have been selected because of their ts spelling difficulty and are not representative of word length across a random list of words.. in such a random text, yur26-spelt words are likely to average in the range of 5-10% shorter than the corresponding ts-spelt words

to complement the above list of 1-syllable words, i now add those containing the sequence "ough" – see (5).. again, i have listed the british, rather than the american, spellings as the former reflect more obviously the lack of phonemic logic:

thought though tough trough through thorough bough hiccough lough hough
 coot xou tuf trof cru coro bau hikup lokh hok
 (note the alt'ernative british spellings for hiccough, lough, hough: hiccup, loch, hock)

see also (5) for the following 2 sets:

cover	hover	mover	rover	bird	curd/kurd	nerd	word
kuver	hover	muwver	rowver	burd	kurd	nurd	wurd

(note that these ex'amples show 1- and 2-syllable words.. see also (10) for unstressed schwa, using "u")

the ex'amples in this section emphasise the imp'ortance of the 23 mother-words and the 3 remote matchings – see (4) for the yur26 list.. in fact, all resp'ellings in a 1-1-26 system radiate out from these mother-words + rem'ote matchings.. it is therefore imp'ortant that the compos'ition of all 26 sound/symbol matchings be carefully sel'ected.. it is likely that a would-be reformer will have to do a bit of trial and error bef'ore finalizing his/her list.. this may happen at each stage of the process, as he/she cons'iders the various issues expl'ored in sections (7) to (9) and worked his/her way through the ex'amples (or others chosen) in this section (10).. an ess'ential part of the exercise is to underst'and how the irregul'arities of ts imp'inge on current spellings.. this underst'anding ass'ists in the rational disc'arding of absurd ts spellings and helps to av'oid the tempt'ation, by virtue of ts famili'arity, to rep'eat ts abs'urdities

a common error is to all'ow the great vowel shift to influence spelling choices.. this is where vowel symbols parted ways with acc'ep'ted short vowel sounds.. for instance, many reformers regard the "ai" in "bait" and the "a_e" in "late" as a valid expr'ession of the long "a" vowel.. a cursory an'alysis of this so-called long "a" sound extr'acts the true sound (actually 2 sounds) of the diphthong e+i, in both cases.. there are ex'amples of the phon'em'ic disp'arity caused by the great vowel shift, in most of the vowels

in a 1-1-26 system, the symb'olic expr'ession of any long vowel must conn'ect to the short vowel symbol, to which it is phon'em'ically rel'ated.. this is but 1 issue of the sugg'ested rules outlined in the ab'ove sections (or ind'eed any vari'ations there'of supp'orted by a would-be reformer).. once fine-tuned, it is probable that a would-be reformer, with the unsw'erving aim of finalizing his/her 1-1-26 system, would be able to ach'ieve this by reference to 1-syllable words only, ie at this stage, the system could be finalized and ready for testing

x x x x x x x x x x

the following sections rel'ate to 2+ syllable words, which pres'ent some compl'exities in sound/symbol matching, in add'ition to the obvious one of word length.. how'ever, a tunnel-vision appr'oach, based on the mother-words and rem'ote matchings (hopefully finalized via the study of 1-syllable words), should en'able a would-be 1-1-26 reformer to tackle the 2+ syllable words with confidence

(11) unstr'essed vowels: to schwa or not to schwa

over the decades and centuries, forms of pronunci'ation have changed and ev'olved regionally.. in the english language, there has been a tendency to abbr'eviate the pronunci'ation of words, perh'aps through laziness.. this has been possible bec'ause the phon'emic rules (more prec'isely the lack there'of) have perm'itted a lax appr'oach.. this has given rise to the em'ergence of the grunt form of unstressed vowel pronunci'ation, otherwise known as "schwa".. reformers are not in agr'eement over how (or in fact if) this slurring sound should be symbolized in spelling.. some ign'ore it; others inv'ent a new symbol.. neither of these options is acc'eptable, in my view, and neither could be justified in any 1-1-26 system

the 1st option is ill'ogical, as the schwa sound does ex'ist and, therefore, must match a symbol.. in the 2nd option, a new symbol would need to be inv'ented, unless of course any would-be reformer finds he/she has a symbol left over (a feat i could not ach'ieve) after his/her previous work on mother-words + rem'ote matchings.. fortunately, there is a way out: whilst the habit of "schwa-ing" is widespr'ead, it is not unc'ommon to hear unstressed vowels being pron'ounced the way ts spellings sugg'est they should.. furtherm'ore, such emph'atic pronunci'ation of unstressed vowels all'ows easier compreh'ension of the spoken word and it will come as no surpr'ise that foreigners learning english tend to inv'oke the emph'atic version.. in add'ition, many english native speakers will also inv'oke the emph'atic version when clarity is needed, for instance when a word needs to be rep'eated, having been not underst'ood in the 1st instance

it will perh'aps come as no surpr'ise either that the most phon'emic of the main europ'ean languages have a low or no incidence of schwa grunt (portuguese, it'alian, spanish).. it is to be exp'ected that, as spelling reformers move english tow'ards being fully phon'emic, the need for speech and spelling clarity will incr'ease; people will be conf'used less and are likely to dem'and less ambig'uity.. a further ex'ample of the exp'ected need for red'uiced ambig'uity (with'in a phon'emic english spelling system, such as a 1-1-26 system or other) is irr'egular stress marking – see (1) and (11).. it is for these reasons that i have opted in favour of emph'atic sound/symbol matching.. those who wish to cont'inue schwa-ing certain unstressed vowels will, of course, cont'inue to do so, but this is cons'idered by me to be a phon'etic, not phon'emic (core) character'istic of yur26.. a fellow reformer, who also supp'orts emph'atic pronunci'ation of unstressed vowels has sugg'ested that unstressed vowels capable of being schwa-ed should be appr'opriately marked in a dictionary, rather than resp'elt using an ad'opted schwa symbol.. i supp'ort this in'tiative

ad'opting the emph'atic appr'oach red'uces sign'ificantly the incidence of the schwa sound, but does not del'ete it altog'ether.. in my view, the schwa sound is a genuine vowel, which when properly used is as emph'atic as any other vowel.. like any other vowel, it can app'ear as stressed or unstressed.. it can ev'olve into the long vowel and diphthong forms.. with'in the 26-letter alphabet, and cons'istent with the 23 mother-words + 3 rem'ote sound/symbol matchings, the only vowel symbol which in my view satisfies the schwa sound cond'ition is "u".. thus, in "purs'ue", the sound app'ears as 1st unstressed, then stressed; yur26 = pursy'u – see (8) for shortening "u" diphthongs app'earing at the end of words.. in an'other ex'ample, the unstressed u/schwa app'ears twice in "pendulum" (yur26

= pendyulum).. in “murmur” the 1st vowel is stressed, but app’ears at the regular pos’ition and, thus, does not require a marker; the 2nd vowel is unstressed (yur26 = murmur)

in the following set of 2 ex’amples, the 1st word of each set is the ts spelling.. the 2nd spelling repl’aces unstressed vowels with a schwa symbol - “u” - and the 3rd transcr’iption ret’ains the emph’atic pronounci’ation option for unstressed vowels.. this ex’ample illustrates the pot’ential for ret’aining ts spellings.. of course, it only works if the emph’atic pronounci’ation is valid and underst’andable by the masses..

dep’endent: dpendnt, dup’endunt, dep’endent (yur26 = the latter)
dep’endant: dpendnt, dup’endunt, dep’endant (yur26 = the latter)

in another ex’ample, in del’eting a surplus symbol the am’erican spelling is favoured by yur26, as it del’etes the silent “u” symbol from words ending in ...our (uk)

saviour = (yur26) seivyor, not seivyur

this yur26 appr’oach minimizes the incidence of schwa sounds which, firstly, do not have the symbol “u” in the ts ori’iginal and, secondly, which (if pron’ounced emph’atically) prod’uce an unacc’eptable and unfam’iliar result.. this is more prevalent in the stressed schwa phoneme, which irresp’ective of the original ts spelling requ’ires the impos’ition of “u” in the yur26 spelling (bird, nerd, word = burd, nurd, wurd).. the ab’ove comments apply to the app’earance of the schwa sound as an indiv’idual phoneme, ie short vowel.. there is a special set of rules for long vowels and diphthongs – see (7)

(12) 2+ syllable words: stress marking; vowel rules per syllable

in the introd’uction, the method of marking stress is outlined.. stress marking is phon’emic, in that it shows when a different pitch is required to the voiced sound.. yur26 places this stress on a vowel (as in it’alian, spanish and portuguese), rather than on the stressed syllable, the latter being the preferred method in english dictionaries.. the former is simpler, bec’ause it does not requ’ire an intimate knowledge of the loc’ation of syllable boundaries in 2+ syllable words.. this is ess’ential if stress marking is to be ad’opted in common corresp’ondence and underst’andable to the masses

in other words, to copy the present dictionary method would precl’ude (for practical reasons) the use of stress marking in common corresp’ondence.. the latin-based languages, mentioned above, do not face this complic’ation.. furtherm’ore, in these highly phon’emic europ’ean languages, stress marking in common corresp’ondence is part and parcel of the rules of the language.. it is perh’aps not coincid’ental that stress marking is cons’idered necessary in phon’emic languages and unn’ecessary in und’isciplined languages like english

in the latter, the absence of stress markers in common corresp’ondence is but 1 of many cha’otic elements of sound/symbol matching in indiv’idual words and is lost in the mess.. once you move tow’ards a 1-1-26 spelling system (or any other highly phon’emic system) for english, stress marking gains imp’ortance and is a worthy part’icipant in the dogm’atic rules that such a system dem’ands.. it is curious that many ref’ormers choose to ign’ore this pretty obvious concl’usion, at the same as claiming a high degr’ee of phonem’icity in their resp’ective systems

in 1-syllable words, the stress is always on the 1st vowel, which of course is the same as the 1st vowel of the word itself.. this dogmatic rule allows the elimination of a stress marker in all 1-syllable words, because it is unnecessary: it is sufficient to state that the normal stress location in 1-syllable words is on the 1st vowel.. this is so, even when a 1-syllable word contains a double vowel (long vowel) or a strong+weak vowel (diphthong).. in the latter 2 cases, the 2nd vowel symbol is where the initially strong sound combination peters out.. this is perhaps more obvious in diphthongs, but can also be applied to long vowels and for simplicity it is convenient to do so.. yur26 adopts this principle, thus enabling the stress rule to be located, without exception, at the 1st vowel.. this is the default, or regular, position of stress in 1-syllable words.. in fact, it's the only position

in english, but not in some other languages, the usual location of stress in 2+ syllable words is on the 1st vowel of the 1st syllable.. this is convenient, given that the rule for 1-syllable words can be simply copied into the longer words.. thus, in any 2+ syllable word where the stress is on the 1st vowel, there is no need to enter a stress marker.. in fact, it would be confusing to do so.. in summary, the appearance of a stress marker can only be justified, if a word satisfies 2+ syllables and stress is at an irregular location

for instance, in the word "instance" the stress is in the regular (or default) position of the 1st vowel; consequently, no marker is required.. however, in the word "required" the stress appears at the irregular location of the vowel in the 2nd syllable, in fact in this case the 2nd vowel in that syllable, as the "u" is used for the "w" consonant sound.. in the word "exhibition", the stress appears at the irregular location of the vowel in the 3rd syllable.. in the word "clarification", the stress appears at the irregular location of the vowel in the 4th syllable.. some clarification is required for words containing long vowels or diphthongs.. for purposes of stress marking, any long vowel or diphthong is treated as a single vowel, given that the 2nd symbol of the combination is always weak and a weak vowel can never be stressed.. in other words, it is the 1st vowel in any such combination that will be marked, provided of course that this stressed vowel is at an irregular location

it is evident from the above that, in switching the focus from 1-syllable words to 2+ syllable words, there is more to stress marking than simply applying the rule of regular or default stress location.. it is also evident that the rules must be dogmatic and simple to avoid misplaced stress markers.. there is no room for exceptions.. note that, in the ts spelling of the word "applying", "y" is actually a diphthong symbolized in ts with the consonant "y".. in another ts anomaly, in "required" the marking is on the 2nd vowel of the 2nd syllable.. this is because "qu" is used in the ts spelling, where "kw" would seem to be more phonemically logical.. i have set a rule in yur26 that the stressed vowel can only be the 1st vowel, in any given syllable.. another rule allows 1 short vowel, or 1 long vowel or 1 diphthong in each syllable, no more no less.. this rule is particularly important in 2+ syllable words and especially those where vowels are inclined to gather around syllable boundaries

in the following examples, each word is respelt in yur26, then discussed briefly (note that all the examples contain the diphthong "iy" in the yur26 transcription):

naïve = na'iyv this is an unusual spelling as it contains a dieresis or umlaut, apparently to avoid the erroneous conclusion that the "ai" could be a diphthong; the word contains 2

syllables and, thus, requires 1 vowel or vowel combination for each (in this case short vowel + diphthong); “e” is silent and eliminated in the yur26 transcription

hy’ena = hai’yna this is a 3-syllable word in which “y” and “e” act as diphthongs; “e” is irregularly stressed and, thus, marked.. the string of 3 vowels in the respelt transcription, aii, is split by the stress marker; this avoids the need for a hyphen which would otherwise be required to mark the syllable boundary and separate the “ai” diphthong from the “i” short vowel

re’issue = ri’yisyu another 3-syllable word; the 1st “e” is a diphthong; “i” is a stressed short vowel (irregularly located); “ss” is a digraph which yur26 spells as “sy” - see (8) above; “ue” is a diphthong but this is trimmed to “u” in the yur26 transcription – see (7) above (vowels ending a word)

reun’ite = riyun’ait this 3-syllable word contains 2 diphthongs, and a double consonant in the yur26 transcription.. the latter is valid because it represents 2 equal sounds, bridging a syllable boundary – see (7) above (double consonants)

recre’ate = riykriy’eit discounting the last symbol of the ts spelling, all the other vowels are effectively diphthongs; “a” in the ts spelling is stressed

recre’ation = rekriy’eisyon the 1st “e” is a short vowel (contrast this with “recre’ate, above).. the 2nd “e” and “a” are diphthongs, the latter being irregularly stressed; “ti” is a digraph, respelt “sy” in yur26 – see “re’issue” and (8) above

it is evident that the move from 1-syllable words to 2+ syllables words is not at all seamless.. the latter compound the complexities of ts spelling, not only because the words are longer.. it is perhaps because of this that the principles of mother-words and the 1-1-26 format are better explained by using 1-syllable word examples, and the durability of the mother-word system is tested in spelling conversion of the more complex words

(13) syllabic consonants; misplaced vowels

the yur26 rule of 1 short vowel, 1 long vowel or 1 diphthong per syllable also applies to syllables which, in ts spellings, contain no vowel (termed “syllabic consonants”).. on the face of it, this insistence that each syllable contain a vowel appears logical and gives certainty to spelling by eliminating the temptation to follow the ts precedence of excluding a vowel from a specific syllable (such exclusion, if applied to a 1-1-26 system, would immediately present an optional vowel-less spelling).. it should be a goal of any would-be reformer to minimize optional spellings and keep rules as simple as practical

the words “prism” and “chasm” contain syllabic consonants.. this means that the “m” consonant is a syllable in its’elf.. this is a complication we do not want.. yur26 interposes a vowel before “m”; indeed, there is a phoneme there.. in a similar way that yur26 (and, indeed, any 1-1-26 system) abolishes digraphs – see (9) above – yur26 also abolishes syllabic consonants.. thus: “prism” is respelt “prizum” and “chasm” is respelt “kazum” (2 syllables, 2 short vowels).. similarly, “capitalism” becomes “kapitalizum” (5 syllables, 5 short vowels).. all this has some similarity with section (11), above, where the spelling

option which eliminates the schwa, being the only vowel sound in a given syllable, is dismissed in the yur26 transcription

there is a further and related peculiarity of ts: the appearance of vowels in the wrong place.. for example, in voicing the word “rabble” one would expect “e” to come before “r”.. in yur26, it does: rabel.. there is a connection with the previous issue: the temptation to turn the word into a syllabic consonant (rabl), because “e” can be pronounced as a schwa – see (7), above.. some reformers do this, presumably because they ignore schwa sounds or deny their existence.. as mentioned, yur26 accepts schwa sounds as part and parcel of the set of vowels.. furthermore, each syllable requires a vowel or vowel combination and syllabic consonants have no place in a 1-1-26 system

as an added example, we can compare the french and english word “table”.. the former is pronounced “tabl”; it is a 1-syllable word, the final symbol, “e”, is silent and in yur26 is discarded.. the english pronunciation uses ts “a” to symbolize a diphthong and the last 2 symbols are inverted in the pronunciation.. this inversion is an example of vowel misplacement.. thus, yur26 = “teibel”.. and, of course, “example” becomes “egz’ampel”

(14) respelling 2+ syllable words: examples

50 multi-syllable words follow, together with their yur26 transcriptions (irregular stress marker, preceding the stressed vowel, has been added to the ts spellings):

autumn charism’atic chasm conscious cymbal exit exhibit exhibition expr’opriate
ootum karizm’atik kasum consyus simbal egzit egz’ibit eksib’isyon eksproupri-eit

eerie english envious farther father fusion honour indian inscr’utable ledger leisure
iiri inglisy envyus faarxer faaxer fyuzyon onor indyan inscr’uwtable lejer leizyur

little luxury meagre mettle mission misunderstand’and nephew ocean palaeol’ithic pand’emic
litel luksyuri miyger metel misyon misunderstand’and nefyu ousyan peilyol’icik pand’emik

pension psychic quiet reconcili’ation relay socialist southern station sticky symbol
pensyon saikik kwayet rekonsili’eisyon riylei sousyalist suxern steisyon stiki simbol

thirt’een amb’iguous vacuum vicious viscous wander wonder xylophone yeoman zealot
curt’iyn amb’igyuwus vakyuwum visyus viskus wonder wonder zailofoun youman zelot

(15) random sample of long words

we continue to move forward in exemplifying the yur26 transcription of ts-spelt words.. after considering 1-syllable and 2+ syllable words, above, we now turn our attention to long words.. the following are 50 12+letter words, picked randomly from the dictionary.. (irregular stress marker, preceding the stressed vowel, has been added to the ts spellings):

unsoph’isticated standardis’ation teratol’ogical paedriatrician octogen’arian
unsof’istikeited standardaiz’eisyon teratol’ojikal piydriatr’isyon oktojen’eerian

exacerb’ation disqualific’ation unw’arrantable terminol’ogical obstr’eperous

egzaserb'eisyon diskwolifik'eisyon unw'orantabel terminol'ojikal obstr'eperus

exagger'ation artifici'ality undescr'ibably octosyll'abic disporp'ortionate aliment'ation
egzajer'eisyon artifi'si'aliti undeskr'aibabli oktosil'abik disprop'oorsyonat aliment'eisyon

coll'aborator humanit'arian allotr'opically brontos'aurus gastroenter'itis par'enthesize
kol'aboreitor hyumanit'eeryan alotr'opikli brontos'oorus gastroenter'aitis par'encisaiz

reduplic'ation necrol'ogical semi-det'ached comm'ercialism tercent'enary radioth'erapy
riyduplik'eisyon nekrol'ojikal semi-det'atyt kom'ursyalizum tersent'inyari reidyoc'erapi

sulph'onomide comm'ensurable ventr'iloquism whortleberry commission'aire titill'ation
sulf'onomiyd kom'ensyurabel ventr'ilokwizum woortelberi komisyon'eer titil'eisyon

schizophr'enia station-master phil'anthropy quinqu'ennial depreci'ation bibli'ograpy
skitsofr'enya steisyon-master fil'ancropi kwinkw'enyal depriysi'eisyon bibli'ogرافي

ass'imilatory photoel'ectric shooting-gallery consider'ation chiropr'actic pharmac'ology
as'imilatori fotoel'ektrik syuwtiq-galeri konsider'eisyon kaiopr'aktik farmak'oloji

emancip'ationist steering-wheel orchestr'ation consubst'antial
emansip'eisyonist stiiriq-wiyl orkestr'eisyon konsubst'ansyal

(16) 1-1-26 proc'edure highlights

as mentioned previously, the yur26 spelling system has been used as a conv'entient way of ex'emplifying how a would-be reformer might int'erprete the proc'edural steps sugg'ested in this paper, on his/her way to prod'ucing a 1-1-26 system.. in short, the round wheel does not have to be reinv'ented, but there are many vari'ations which can be expl'ored by an inn'ovative reformer.. i hope such a reader will not need to go through the years of work, and leap the numerous hurdles that i faced, to arr'ive at the yur26 res'ult.. knowing what i know now, if i started from scratch my reasonable time estimate would be about 10% of that which i actually spent on yur26

it is now opport'une to condense the above sections, to allow a reader to focus on the ess'entials in his/her quest for a valid 1-1-26 spelling system.. these are bullet points, further details of which can be of course obt'ained by going back over the ab'ove explan'ations and expl'oring his/her own lines of research and enqu'iry:

(a) dedic'ation to the concept of 1sound/1symbol, with'in the 26 letter alphabet (1-1-26): this guide will only be useful to would-be reformers who acc'ept this dogma

(b) mother-words + remote matchings: with yur26 as a basis, 88% of spelling changes are der'ived from the mother-words and 12% from the rem'ote matchings; to ach'ieve this, current "phonemes" must be broken down into their comp'onent phoneme parts (if ind'eed there are comp'onent parts) and these matched to the 23+3 list of mother-words and remote matchings; all resp'ellings emanate from this 23+3 list

(c) rationalization of vowels: short vowels, long vowels, diphthongs; this involves a laborious review of as many word spellings as practical, to establish the link between the vowel phonemes thereof and the mother-words (note that the 3 remote matchings of yur26 are consonants, so all vowel phonemes relate back to the mother words)

(d) decision on the use or otherwise of the rhotic “r” and choice of preceding long or short vowel; elimination of silent (or ghost) letters

(e) elimination of consonant digraphs: a 1-1-26 system does not allow digraphs; as many as possible of existing ts digraphs need to be analysed and respelt according to their component phonemes; the remaining digraphs, ie those that express a single phoneme, cannot exceed 3, in the yur26 format, as these need to be remotely matched to the orphan symbols left over from the mother-word application process

(f) at this stage, it is advisable to make an extensive test of 1-syllable words to check the validity of the 1+1+26 format adopted by the reader; the format may need review (if the would-be reformer has come up with the same format as yur26, any eventual difference between his/her format and yur26 is only likely to be cosmetic)

(g) 2nd review of vowels: stressed and unstressed; imposition of missing vowels; relocation of misplaced vowels; this 2nd review is relevant to 2+ syllable words

(h) testing of 2+ syllable words and long words, by respelling as many as practical

(note that extensive work at stages (e) and (g) will alert the reader to the need, or otherwise, to review his/her 1-1-26 format)

at this point, a would-be reformer should be in a position to cement in his/her 1-1-26 system.. but “success is 10% innovation and 90% perspiration”; in my view most of the former will have now been used up.. for a would-be reformer, the next stage is to do the hard yards, ie go through the laborious process of expanding his/her basic system into a fully-fledged plan

x x x x x x x x x x

(17) what comes next?

this section explains briefly the type of additional work which needs to be done to develop the basic system into a complete package.. the balloon has been manufactured; now it has to be blown up.. brief comments are made on some issues relating to the enhancements needed to move a basic 1-1-26 system towards a complete package.. as the aim of this paper is to guide the reader in his/her design procedure, this section (17) does not go into great detail as to what comes after the basic structure

europ'ean languages

a would-be reformer will need to consider if English should be looked at in isolation or in parallel with European languages.. Yur26 prefers the latter, given the close proximity of cultural and historic connections, common alphabet and phonemic similarities.. In fact, Yur26 doubles up as a European phonemic alphabet and any other 1-1-26 system is potentially capable of doing the same.. A reformer would be well advised to consider this

numbers

each number requires a written version of the pronunciation.. thus, 1 = one, 2 = two, 100 = one hundred (or a hundred), 1,000 = one thousand (or a thousand) and so on.. in Yur26, the spellings are: won, tuw, won hundred (or a hundred), won cauzand (or a cauzand) and so on.. in ts, it is common practice to use either the numeric sign or the alphabetic spelling, depending on the personal choice of the writer.. I prefer the shortest version: 1; 2; 100; 1,000.. but larger numbers are cumbersome if written in numeric form; a billion is more concise than 1,000,000,000.. another reformer may suggest another rule, or no rule

similarly, vulgar fractions would perhaps always be expressed in their numeric form.. even so, they still require an alphabetic spelling if only to provide the format for pronunciation.. thus: a quarter, a half, a hundredth ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{100^{\text{th}}}$) have, in Yur26, the alphabetic expression a kwoorter, a haaf, a hundredc ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{100^c}$), given that unvoiced th = c.. similarly, decimals will presumably always be expressed in numeric form

abbreviations

here are a few examples of how some common abbreviations could look in a 1-1-26 system.. in the following examples using Yur26, the sequence is: ts abbreviation -> ts long form (or deemed long form*) -> Yur26 long form -> Yur26 abbreviations

gender titles:

mr. -> mister -> mister -> mr.
mrs. -> missis/missus -> misis -> mss.
miss -> miss -> mis -> ms.
ms. -> mz* -> muz -> mz.

phonemic alphabets:

ipa -> international phonetic alphabet -> intern'asyonal fon'etik alphabet -> ifa
epa# -> European phonemic alphabet# -> yurop'iyān fon'emik alfabet## -> yfa##
(# currently non-existent; ## Yur26)

international organizations:

un -> United Nations -> yuwn'ayted neisyonz -> yn
nato -> North Atlantic Treaty Organization -> norc atl'antik triyti organaiz'eisyon -> nato

negatives (ts->Yur26):

can; can not; cannot; can't -> kan; kan not; kan'ot; kaant
do; do not; don't -> duw; duw not; dount
will; will not; won't -> wil; wil not; wount

english names

names suffer the same or more spelling problems as common words.. tradition has tended to preserve name spellings on an evergreen basis, sometimes with absurd results.. for instance, the cornish town of mousehole is pronounced "musel"; gloucester is pronounced "gloster"; hermione is pronounced "herm'aani" and dalziel "di'el".. because of a personal affinity and for legal reasons, these spellings will probably need to be preserved.. but it would be short-changing true reformists (and probably a copout) to ignore the phonemic spelling of each.. this is not an easy issue to resolve, but i tend to favour respelling each name and retaining both until such time as natural attrition takes care of the original

imported names and words

these are habitually mispronounced and mis-spelt, especially when transported to english-speaking countries.. the proper process, in my view, is to respell the original, using the international or european phonemic code (such as yur26), then retain the spelling in the importing country and automatically the correct pronunciation.. for instance, again using yur26, if the spanish name "jaime" is respelt "khaime", then this is the international spelling which would be retained in all countries which use the european alphabet (with, where applicable, the country-specific stress marker adaptation).. of course, the original pronunciation would also be retained in all importing countries

thus, paris would be respelt "pari" (regular stress on last vowel in french), becoming pari in english to reflect the irregular stress location of english (regular stress on 1st vowel).. names which have been distorted, during importation to english-speaking countries, would be restated to respelt the name of origin.. for instance, new york became nova iorque in portuguese.. this would be respelt "nyu yoork", exported intact to portuguese-speaking countries and spelt+pronounced the same as the original.. there would be no need to retain "nova iorque", just as there would be no need to retain "munich", when münchen is respelt "myunkhen".. whilst there would be sentimental reasons to keep the original (as well as the new international) spelling in the country of origin, the importing country has no such reasons.. for common use, "munich" would be retained in the latter

new dictionary

all new phonemic spellings will need to be documented in a dictionary, which will presumably take a similar format to a foreign language dictionary, ie with 2 sections.. the phonemic dictionary will have one section showing, alphabetically, ts spellings (with their 1-1-26 counterparts).. the other section will be written in alphabetic order of the 1-1-26 spellings, showing the ts counterparts.. for the dictionary to be comprehensive and practical, i would favour incorporating all the features of a normal oxford-type or webster-type dictionary.. this will make the book bigger, but will save having to refer to 2 separate dictionaries for spelling+meaning queries.. such a dictionary will resolve the current problem of trying to determine the ts spelling of a word, by reference to a dictionary, when the spelling is not logical (where does one look?).. for instance, "isle" starts with the "a" phoneme; unless one's already got a clue as to its spelling, one will be searching forever

having decided the basic format of the new dictionary, it is necessary to decide on the detail of other features, such as:

ts modifications:

should the ts section be changed to simplify stress marking and eliminate capital letters? present dictionaries mark primary stress with an apostrophe trailing the stressed syllable.. this is complicated, in that:

(a) the syllable boundaries are largely unknown by the average dictionary user (thus, such a marking system cannot be used in normal communication)

(b) if a default rule were set, there would be no need (as is now) to mark stress where this is in the regular location

a much simpler system, such as used in the latin-based languages (dictionary and common communication), ignores syllables and marks irregularly located stressed vowels.. yur26 uses a similar method, albeit simpler still, which is universally applicable to most english spelling systems, including ts

should capital letters be abandoned?

yur26 also eliminates capital letters, as being an unnecessary complication.. the exclusive use of lower case letters is also a feature that all english spelling systems can adopt

regional dialects:

should there be a separate dictionary for each of the american and british dialects?

a 1-1-26 system can be organized to respect the different dialects within the same spelling system.. most differences between standard american and standard british can be accommodated by a pronunciation guide within the dictionary which describes the characteristics of these 2 main blocs.. there is no need, in my view, to reflect these differences through mass optional spellings.. however, in a limited number of cases optional spellings perhaps cannot be avoided (eg: aluminum/aluminium, missile, either) and 2 optional spellings are necessary.. a further issue is the different forms of pronunciation in other parts of the world, exacerbated by the widespread geographical use of english either as the 1st 2nd or default international language.. again, my view is that the basic dictionary, incorporating the above-mentioned occasional spelling options, will suffice if complemented by a regional extension of the proposed pronunciation guide

schwa marking:

should the unstressed vowels in the respellings be somehow marked?

the 1-1-26 format of yur26 assumes emphatic pronunciation and spelling of unstressed vowels, even though these are often slurred/eroded to a schwa in common use.. this approach resists the temptation to over-simplify spelling, through the application of an almost catch-all schwa symbol.. there are several reasons for this:

(a) the schwa sound is like a grunt, unclear to the untrained mind; in the chaotic spelling of english words, it is likely that – unsure of the pronunciation of a particular written word – many default to the schwa-pronunciation (the lazy option?).. has this process been institutionalised over the centuries?

(b) there is no rule, even in closed communities, as to when the schwa sound should or should not be invoked; it's optional, and even selective, at the choice of the individual; for instance, when repeating to clarify a word, the original schwa inclusion is often dropped in favour of the emphatic pronunciation

(d) in highly phon'emic languages, eg: spanish, the incidence of schwa-type pronunci'ation is minimal or non-ex'istent; this sugg'ests that a highly phon'emic version of english would, by em'erging irr'elevance, consign schwa to a junior role

(e) if the schwa appr'oach were ad'opted, the emph'atic option would be lost to post'erity; the opposite would not be the case - the unstressed vowels in an emph'atic dictionary spelling can be easy marked to show the schwa optional pronunci'ation

it is this last comment that all'ows the best of both worlds and that is the yur26 appr'oach.. even then, the author will need to det'erminate which unstressed vowels are regularly schwa-pron'ounced and which are not (the latter being ign'ored for marking purposes).. one possible marking option would be to simply undersc'ore the relevant unstressed vowels.. i do not sugg'est this process be transf'erred into common written communic'ation

implementation

this final section is limited to brief comments on various aspects of implement'ation of a new phonemic 1-1-26 spelling system:

death and birth, or parallel running?

should ts cease to ex'ist on a certain day, rather like changing over to driving on the other side of the road or changing to decimal currency, or should any new system be run in parallel?

unl'ike the dogm'atic rules of driving and money, needed to av'oid total breakdown of transport and trading, a new spelling system could be run in parallel.. in fact, this may be the only way vested interests would agr'ee to this needed modernis'ation of comp'atible verbal/written communic'ation.. in add'ition, it would app'ear not to be adv'isable to give ts the sudden kiss of death as such a move would be inh'erently dangerous, during what would be a pr'olonged trans'itional period

how can the public be educated and trained?

this iss'ue ranges from school educ'ation for children, thru ad'ult educ'ation to teaching foreign students, and those resp'onsible for the europ'ean version of those languages with a different structure, eg mandarin

it is my view that the choice of a 1-1-26 system, which is appl'icable and acc'ceptable acr'oss europ'ean languages, can (and is perh'aps the only way to) prov'ide the impetus to drive an intern'ational educ'ation program

should previous public'ations be rewr'itten?

over time, ts english is likely to bec'ome red'undant.. but, at least, the language its'elf will pres'umably not; just the spelling

on the reasonable ass'umption that all previous public'ations should be preserved, and the impracticab'ility of conv'erting them to a modern spelling, it seems the only sol'ution will be to ind'efinitely ret'ain the ts->phon'emic conv'ersion rules, even when alm'ost everyone will have no further interest in the former.. fortunately, the change refers to spelling only so all other aspects of the language (grammar, meanings etc) rem'ain int'act.. unfortunately, the rationalis'ation of english spelling requ'ires major surgery and that will be painful for many decades