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In this article, Vachek sets out his general linguistic theory of the relationship between spoken and written utterances. He argues that spoken language and written language constitute two independent, though complementary, norms. Spoken language reacts to a given stimulus in a dynamic way, i.e. in a ready and immediate manner, typically manifesting the speaker's emotional attitude. By contrast, written language reacts in a more static way: Not only is it characterized by preservability and "quick and easy surveyability", but it is also typically better suited to the expression of intellectual – rather than emotional – content. As regards the functional hierarchy between the two, the spoken norm is considered the unmarked member of the pair. That, however, does not imply subservience of the written language to the spoken, as both complement each other in their different functions.

One of the noteworthy features of modern linguistic research has been the growing interest taken in problems of written utterances, contrasted with their spoken counterparts on the one hand and with phonematically transcribed utterances on the other. […][1]

For all this interest, however, many of the problems cannot be said to have been definitely solved, and in some instances they do not even appear to have been adequately formulated. It is for this reason that the present writer has decided to review once more the field he has covered in a number of his earlier papers (some of them written in Czech, and therefore inaccessible to foreign workers in the field). In the following two chapters he presents what he believes to be a modest contribution to the solution of two partial problems which so far do not seem to have been satisfactorily settled. It will be seen that he also revises or modifies some of his earlier conclusions. The first of the two problems, a more general one, discusses the functional hierarchy of spoken and written utterances, the other one, more specific, deals with some important trends ascertainable in the development of Written English.

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I. On the functional hierarchy of spoken and written utterances

The fact that a relatively high number of important papers on problems of written English have appeared of late, should not be interpreted in the sense that the general interest in these problems is a matter of relatively recent date. Quite the contrary is true. The long series of scholars approaching these problems from a new, non-traditional angle, reaches far back into the early eighties of the nineteenth century. Already at that time, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, comparing the graphical system of various Slavonic languages, succeeded in pointing out a number of typical features characterizing each of the examined systems.[2] He aptly remarked that such characteristic features allow of a purely external identification of any concrete Slavonic context of some length as written in this or that particular Slavonic language (in other words, that such identification can be effected even by a person who is totally ignorant of the meaning of the concerned context and of the given language in general). Baudouin's observation concerning the possibility of such purely formal identification is demonstrative not only of his ability to view written utterances as structures *sui generis,* but also – at that time, at least – of his disregard of the correlative relations undoubtedly existing between the written utterances and their spoken counterparts.

Such relations were clearly observed and duly, if occasionally, noted later by a number of other scholars, among whom the names of Henry Bradley and Antonín Frinta should be particularly singled out. Bradley, though strongly critical of the modern "unphonetic spelling" of English, admits that it has "the merit of saving written English from a good many of the ambiguities of the spoken tongue".[3] Bradley has in mind here the well-known instances of the type *write — right — rite — wright* which remain differentiated in written utterances, while in the spoken utterances their phonematic make-up, */rait/* in our case, is identical. Some five years later Frinta credited the Czech spelling with an analogous merit. He even went an important step further than Bradley (whose book had obviously been unknown to him) in trying to define the function of spelling in a linguistic community. As he puts it, this function is, "in a way to speak quickly and distinctly to the eyes, so that the due idea can be mobilized without any difficulties".[4]

Leaving aside the fact that what Frinta says about spelling really refers to written utterances, one can hardly be in doubt that his above-quoted statement furnishes an important clue to the solution of some basic problems relating to written utterances, and especially to the relation in which they stand to their spoken counterparts. Unfortunately Frinta, like Bradley, never developed his illuminating remarks into a systematic theory. As a consequence, the vast majority of linguists of the twenties and early thirties continued to regard "writing" as a kind of imperfect quasi-transcription, hopelessly lagging behind scientifically accurate systems of phonetic transcription. Most of them have

expressed the belief (still held by many) that at some future date phonetic transcription is bound to replace conventional, traditional writing systems, on the simple ground that such transcription constitutes an infinitely finer, more consistent, and therefore more adequate, means for the fixation of spoken utterances on paper.

The fallacy of such belief will become obvious to him who realizes that the aim of the traditional writing system of language is not identical with that of its phonetic transcription. In one of his papers[5] the present writer hopes to have demonstrated the different aims of the two: while any system of phonetic transcription provides means for an optical recording of the purely acoustic make-up of spoken utterances, the traditional writing system increasingly tends to refer to the meaning directly without necessarily taking a *détour* via the corresponding spoken utterances.[6] This specific aim of traditional writing systems was undoubtedly implied by Frinta's statement about the "spelling" speaking quickly and distinctly to the eyes. Such quick functioning is obviously averse to any *détours,* and it can be more safely achieved, if the reference to meaning is as direct as possible. Clearly, the more direct such reference is, the less dependent an actual written utterance becomes upon its spoken counterpart.

This conclusion appears to have been fully realized, for the first time, by the Ukrainian linguist Agenor Artymovyč. In the early thirties of this century,[7] he called the attention of scholars to the systematic character of what he calls Written Language; what is even more important, he claims "writing" (die Schrift) not only to possess a systematic structure, but to be a system which to some extent is independent of Spoken Language.[8] Although in some of his theses Artymovyč undoubtedly went too far (as, e.g., in claiming for Written Language the autonomous status), he should always be remembered as the first scholar who was able to rise above the occasional observations of his predecessors and to view written utterances as systematic entities, governed by their own rules. Prior to Artymovyč, written utterances had been regarded as poor relatives, almost caricatures, of their spoken counterparts; he claims for them the status of respectable, co-equal partners.

Ingenious as Artymovyč's remarks were, they failed to specify the hierarchical relation of spoken and written utterances. We tried to establish these relations in one of our papers;[9] in our opinion Artymovyč failed to realize that the distinction between Written Language *in abstracto* and concrete written utterances should be formulated as one existing between a norm and its concretizations (or, manifestations). The existence of the written norm in language is amply evidenced by the unpleasant feeling one experiences in reading written utterances primitive in handwriting, in spelling (including punctuation), in the division of the text into paragraphs, or in the use of the space available for writing, etc. This enumeration of some of the primitivisms that can be met with has made it clear that the written norm of language should by no means be identified with its orthography; the facts covered by the concept of written norm considerably outstrip those covered by the concept of orthography. The difference of the two is not merely a quantitative one; essential qualitative differences are involved which will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

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The acknowledgement of the existence in language of a written norm besides the spoken norm (whose existence has never been doubted) is of fundamental importance. Seen in its light, our above-mentioned task of formulating the hierarchical relations existing between written and spoken utterances is best shifted to a higher level and restated as a task of formulating the hierarchical relations of the two language norms lying behind those utterances. It is obvious that speakers of cultural communities have a greater or smaller command of each of the two norms and that in their concrete utterances they sometimes make use of the means supplied by the one, but at other times switch over to the means supplied by the other. From this it follows that each of the two norms has its functional justification in the given cultural community. Under these conditions, it is clear that any hierarchic evaluation of the mutual relation of the two norms must be based on the recognition of the functions performed by them. As a consequence of this, two questions appear to be of fundamental importance:

(a) What exactly is the functional justification of each of the two norms?
(b) Does the answer to (a) allow of a functional subordination of one of the two norms to the other?

The answer to (a) has been prompted, to some degree at least, by Bradley and Frinta. In some cases written word-forms certainly speak more quickly and more distinctly to the eye than the corresponding spoken forms speak to the ear. In other words, the distinctness of perception of an isolated word form is often provided for more efficiently by the means of the written norm than by those of its spoken equivalent. As, however, consumers of written utterances are usually faced with the necessity of perceiving not isolated written words, but more extensive contexts, such as written sentences, paragraphs, pages and even books, it is imperative to view the problem from a broader angle than was the one adopted by Bradley and Frinta. A closer consideration of such longer written utterances reveals that, compared with their spoken counterparts, they prove to be "distinct" to a much higher degree than isolated written words. A concrete example will prove this.

Let us imagine a spoken utterance presenting a lecture which takes exactly one hour to deliver: A written utterance corresponding to it is a short paper comprising some 7 to 8 pages. The information supplied by the lecture and by the paper is virtually identical. There is, however, one important difference in the way in which the concerned information may be obtained from the two sources. In listening to the lecture, the person obtaining the information is bound to follow the speaker step by step, and under normal conditions it is virtually impossible for that person to check any of the previous points of the speaker's arguments by having their wordings presented again by the speaker. Likewise it is impossible to 'skip' some of the passages to come and to get hold of the speaker's conclusions before he has worked out his way to them through a jungle of arguments

and counter-arguments. Whether the listening person likes it or not, he is bound to follow the speaker's rate of developing the theme; one might also say that he is the speaker's fellow-prisoner within the dimension of time.

Contrary to this, in reading the equivalent printed paper the person obtaining the information finds himself emancipated from the chains of time, at least to a very high degree. The reading person, that is to say, may go through the paper in a quarter of an hour if his sole purpose is to obtain a very general kind of information about the problems discussed by the writer and about the solutions proposed. Or he may read it in a couple of hours, if he wants his information to be more accurate. Or again, he may study the paper for days (and possibly weeks), if he has embarked on the same problem as the writer and if he wants to check every detailed point of his line of arguments. Clearly the reading person, unlike the listening person, is fairly independent of the dimension of time, as he may quicken or slow down the rate of obtaining information according to the particular purpose he has in mind when obtaining it. Moreover, unlike his listening colleague, he can check any previous passage in the writer's line of argument whenever he feels it necessary, and he can skip any desired number of the following paragraphs in order to get an idea of the conclusion the writer is aiming at. The above facts may seem somewhat trivial, but it has been considered essential to register them here if the import of written utterances (and consequently, of the written norm of language) is to be realized in full. The conclusion that inevitably follows from those facts is that, as far as quickness and distinctness are concerned, written utterances really rank much higher than their spoken counterparts, and that with the increasing extent of the compared contexts the superiority of the written utterances becomes ever more obvious. It becomes particularly evident when a written utterance grows up to the size of a printed book[10] with a table of contents and possibly also with indexes of words, persons etc. The information presented by such an utterance can be surveyed in a manner so quick and so efficient as cannot be matched by any spoken utterance (or series of utterances) of comparable length. In answering our above question (a) one can assert, therefore, that quick and easy surveyability (if one may be pardoned for coining this new term) constitutes a functional feature which may fully justify the existence of the written norm in language, because in matters of surveyability the spoken norm of language cannot supply the language user with means that would serve the purpose with comparable efficiency.[11]

Apart from surveyability, the written norm can claim another feature that makes it highly useful and virtually indispensable. This other feature is the documentary, preservable character of written utterances, so strikingly contrasting with the ephemeral, easy-to-be-forgotten character of their spoken counterparts. This feature, which one may perhaps term 'preservability', has been appreciated by men since time immemorial, and in matters of law and in regulating human relations written pacts have always been preferred to oral agreements ("Littera scripta manet"). Most probably it was this very feature which was the most potent stimulus to call the written norm into being.

We have thus ascertained that in at least two functional features (or, perhaps better, in at least two kinds of situations) it is exactly the spoken utterances which are undoubtedly lagging behind their written counterparts. It is, however, high time to listen to the other party in the dispute. It will be only just to admit that in a fairly large number of situations it is the spoken norm of language which supplies the language user with more effective means that can be obtained from its written equivalent. It is a matter of common everyday experience that people find it more convenient to communicate in speaking than in writing. The reason of this is certainly the immediateness of the spoken reaction to the given stimulus: it always takes more time to resort to a written message than to express oneself orally. This immediateness is made possible, among other things, by the readiness of the organs of speech to function in any situation, while the instruments necessary for writing must usually be looked for, or at least taken out of the pocket and adapted for use.

The two outstanding features of spoken utterances appear then to be the immediateness and readiness of the reaction they provide. These features will be particularly appreciated if the stimulus (i.e., the extralinguistic situation upon which the utterance is to react) is felt to be urgent, as, e.g., if the language user wants to warn his partner of some imminent danger. It will have been observed that the stimulus enforcing a reaction by means of a written utterance is usually not very urgent. It should be added, however, that even in situations devoid of urgency language users regularly prefer to avail themselves of reactions based on the spoken norm, not of those based on its written equivalent, unless the requirements of surveyability *and/or* preservability should decide in favour of the latter. The regular preference of the former is undoubtedly due to reasons of technical order alluded to above (viz., greater readiness of the organs of speech compared with lesser readiness of writing instruments). But the fact of the preference undeniably points to some important theoretical consequences. In its light one is led to regard the spoken norm, and the spoken utterances based on it, as language facts of unmarked order, while the written norm and the written utterances unquestionably belong to the category of marked language phenomena.

The above conclusion already touches upon our question (b), concerning the hierarchic relation of the two norms. Before, however, this other problem is discussed at some length, it appears necessary to point out another important functional distinction which can be observed between the two discussed norms (and, analogously, the two kinds of utterances). This distinction lies in the fact that the spoken norm has at its disposal primary means not only for expressing the purely communicative component parts (the 'intellectual content') of the extralinguistic reality to be communicated, but also for expressing its emotional component parts; the means are, e.g., different patterns of sentence melody, varying rate of speech, differences of timbre in sounds, different degrees of intensity of sentence stress, etc. etc. The written norm, on the other hand, regularly lacks such primary means signalizing emotional component parts. If need is felt to express them (e.g. in books of fiction), this must be done by employing secondary means. Passages written in direct speech are thus often introduced or accompanied by descriptive

insertions (sentences or sentence groups) which should evoke the impression of the corresponding primary means found in the spoken norm. (Here belong phrases like *He asked bitingly; She said gently and sadly; He cried out stubbornly in a voice of authority;* etc.) As a result of their concentration on the purely communicative component parts of the transmitted information, written utterances are especially fitted to serve in those situations in which such concentration upon the 'intellectual content' (and, therefore, greatest possible restriction of emotional component parts) appears particularly desirable, e.g. in transmitting highly specialized information on scientific and allied subjects. On the other hand, everyday-life topics, simple narratives and the like, which are always more or less tinged with emotional elements, will be most efficiently conveyed by means of spoken utterances. It is also worth pointing out that concentration on 'intellectual content' is carried out most effectively in printed utterances which, unlike then-written counterparts, do not allow of direct identification of the author of the utterance from the material make-up of the utterance alone,[12] and are therefore "objectivized" to a distinctly higher degree than written utterances.

The facts that have so far been discussed here had served the present writer as a basis on which he built up, more than ten years ago, his definitions of the spoken and the written norms of language,[13] without, however, specifying his arguments in detail at that time, as has been done above. It may be found useful to give here what the present writer believes to be the improved version of the two definitions: The spoken norm of language is a system of phonically manifestable language elements whose function is to react to a given stimulus (which, as a rule, is an urgent one) in a dynamic way, i.e. in a ready and immediate manner, duly expressing not only the purely communicative but also the emotional aspect of the approach of the reacting language user.

The written norm of language is a system of graphically manifestable language elements whose function is to react to a given stimulus (which, as a rule, is not an urgent one) in a static way, i.e. in a preservable and easily surveyable manner, concentrating particularly on the purely communicative aspect of the approach of the reacting language user.

It will be noticed that the two definitions supply an answer to the above question (a), concerning the functional justification of the two norms of language. Our next task is to find out whether the above conclusions can open the way for answering the above question (b), concerning the hierarchic relation (co-ordination or subordination) of the two norms.

<p style="text-align:center">⋆ ⋆ ⋆</p>

A foretaste of the answer to our question (b) already emerged above when reference was made to the unmarked character of the spoken norm and the marked character of its written equivalent. This observation, however, should not be interpreted as a functional subordination of the written norm to its spoken counterpart, if subordination should imply inferiority. Our above analysis of the specific functions of the two norms

must have revealed two things with convincing clearness. One of them is the fact that in fairly advanced language communities higher cultural and civilizational functions (such as virtually all branches of literature and scientific research work, the operation of State administration, etc.) are simply unthinkable without continual recourse to written utterances. It is, then, obvious that the development of a community's higher culture and civilization is unquestionably conditioned by the existence in its language of a written norm, *the* vehicle of higher needs and wants of the community. It would, then, be completely out-of-place to brand the written norm as an inferior kind of structure. — The other thing that has come to light in the course of our discussion is even more important. It is the undeniable fact that in any kind of extralinguistic situations to which the language user finds it necessary to react, one of the two norms is found to supply much more adequate means than the other (and possibly the sole means applicable in that kind of situation). One is thus faced here with something that might almost be called a sort of complementary distribution of the two norms with respect to different kinds of extralinguistic situation. The conclusion to be drawn from this fact is that without the co-existing written norm the spoken norm of language would hardly be able to cope with numerous tasks imposed upon language in fairly advanced cultural communities. Under these conditions it would seem most unwise to regard as inferior that norm whose existence alone can guarantee that language will possess means enabling it to cope with all kinds of extralinguistic situation, and not with some of them only.

Besides, grammatical parallels show clearly that marked and unmarked character by no means implies superordination or subordination, respectively. The fact, e.g., that ModE progressive tenses must be regarded as marked counterparts of the simple tenses (14) does not stigmatize the former as functionally inferior to the latter: there are extralinguistic situations which can only be satisfactorily handled by making use of a progressive form. Rather one can regard the marked grammatical form as a kind of superstructure built up on the basis provided by its unmarked counterpart: the functional *raison d'etre* of such superstructure appears to be the reference to a specialized kind of situation (in the case of the progressive form, to a specific kind of verbal action) which cannot be quite satisfactorily handled by the corresponding unmarked form. The above functional parallel is most instructive for the correct understanding of the relations existing between the written and the spoken norm: it will be readily admitted that the former, too, constitutes a kind of superstructure over the latter, and that the *raison d'etre* of the former undeniably lies in performing specialized functions the means for which cannot be equally well provided for by the latter. In other words, the question of the hierarchic relation of the spoken and written norms must not be answered in terms of subordination or superordination, but in terms of more general or more specialized applicability.

What has just been said is at the same time our answer to the earlier formulated question (b). A number of objections might be raised against it, the most important of which will be briefly considered here. Particular attention must be paid to the argument stressing the non-existence of the written norm in many language communities; in the

opinion of those who avail themselves of this argument, such non-existence furnishes a proof of the dispensability, and so of inferior status, of the written norm. But the argument is far from convincing; the only thing that can be said about the language communities lacking the written norm is that so far they have failed to develop all latent possibilities of language. In other words, if such language communities dispense with the written norm, this should not be regarded as an example of the ordinary state of things, but rather as a defective state (in most instances, of course, such defects are only temporary). The matter can be put still more differently by stating that all languages tend to develop to an optimum stage at which they will have developed their latent structural possibilities in full. And it is this optimum stage alone which can furnish the analyst with materials capable of an adequate evaluation of the two discussed norms.

Incidentally, it is worth stressing that this optimum stage cannot be said to have been reached by a language community at the moment when that community was only embarking on its first attempts to record its spoken utterances in writing. As has already been pointed out elsewhere,[15] such early attempts (if they have not been imposed upon our languages by expert phoneticians) really constitute hardly more than imperfect, cumbersome quasi-transcriptions, sharing, however, one fundamental feature with genuine phonetic transcriptions. They are, that is to say, manifestations of a system of signs of the second order: they stand in no direct relation to the extralinguistic reality, but only in an indirect one, effected *via* the spoken utterances (which, in their turn, are manifestations of a system of signs of the first order). Only after some time, when what is commonly called scribal tradition has emerged in the concerned language community, direct links begin to be established between the written utterances and the extra-linguistic reality to which they refer, and only then one can speak about the existence in that community of the written norm "in its own right"; it is only then that the optimum stage of the development of the given language has been reached.

Our final answer to the question (b), then, stresses the mutually complementary relation of the two language norms; it classifies one of them as a marked norm and the other as unmarked, but is deeply opposed to branding any of the two norms as inferior (functionally or structurally) to its counterpart co-existing with it in the given community.

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The above answer is by no means of purely theoretical interest; it will also be found to have deep practical significance, if all consequences are duly derived from it, especially from what has been said here about the mutually complementary relation of the two norms of language. Since these norms can only have any sense if they serve the needs of actual communication within the language community, and since this communication is being carried on by individual members of this community, it is obvious that any such member has (or, at least, should have) a good command of the means of both these norms, so that he may be able to switch from one of the norms to the other, according

to the situation in which he finds himself placed, and according to the kind of intention with which he reacts to the extralinguistic reality facing him in that situation. If one may venture to coin another new term, one might put the matter briefly by saying that a member of a cultured language community is (or, at least, should be) a "binormist".

The binormism of members of cultured communities again entails an important consequence. It is the necessity of a certain parallelism in the structures of the two norms;[16] clearly, without an appreciable degree of such parallelism an adequate command of the written norm is bound to be most difficult. In the practice of everyday life this necessity finds its expression in the demands calling for orthographical reforms. Most of the voices calling for them, however, are guilty of oversimplifying the relations existing between the two norms. It is usually demanded that written and spoken utterances should very closely correspond on the lowest level, i.e. that there should be a consistent correspondence of phonemes, which are the basic elements of spoken utterances, and graphemes, which occupy an analogous basically important place in written utterances.[17] It is for this reason that voices demanding reforms of traditional spellings usually regard "phoneticization" of such spellings as the only effective remedy that can do away with all their deficiencies. As a matter of fact, what is advocated by such voices is not a 'one-symbol-per-sound' principle but rather what may be called "phonemicization", i.e. an establishment of consistent correspondence between a particular symbol and a particular phoneme. Undoubtedly this kind of correspondence seems at first sight to be the most efficient and very easy to establish. The interesting point is, however, that in by far the greatest number of language communities the actual correspondence of phonemes and graphemes falls considerably short of the "desirable" state of things. Nor can the actual state of things be simply branded as primitively conservative; rather it can be demonstrated that exceptions to, and deviations from, the correspondence on the lowest level can usually be explained by correspondences on the higher levels of the two norms.

Two such correspondences on higher levels deserve particular attention. In a Czech paper published some 25 years ago,[18] the present writer showed in detail that most of the points in which Modern Czech conventional spelling violates the "one-grapheme-per-phoneme" principle can be easily accounted for by a tendency to preserve the optical make-up of a morpheme unchanged throughout the paradigm or in derived forms, even in those situations in which the phonematic make-up of the morpheme has appreciably changed. Here also belong, among other things, Frinta's instances of "unphonetic" writing (such as *let* 'the act of flying': *led* 'ice', both pronounced [let]) which he excuses by the function of spelling "to speak quickly and distinctly to the eyes". It should be observed that the difference of the word-final graphemes in such spellings helps to preserve the optical make-up of the phoneme found in the greatest part of the paradigm (see *letu, letem, lety* etc. as opposed to *ledu, ledem, ledy* etc.; note that in these forms the graphematic difference *t : d* is also phonematically justified). — In our paper referred to above in Note 5 (the Czech version of which had been published as early as 1942) an analogous tendency was demonstrated for English, where again graphematic uniformity of

morphemes is sometimes in sharp contrast with the diversity of their phonematic structures. See instances like *equal, equal*-ity — /i:kwəl, i:ʾkwol-iti/; *comfort, comfort*-able — /kʌmfət, kʌmft-əbl/; lack-*ed,* play-*ed,* want-*ed* — /læk-t, plei-d, wont-id/, etc. etc. (Similar instances of preserving the graphematic uniformity of morphemes might be drawn from Russian and some other languages.) All instances of this category reveal that sometimes a tendency may be observed in languages to underline the correspondence of morphemes[19] in the spoken and written norm, even if this underlining is done at the expense of correspondences belonging to the lowest level of language. It should be emphasized that the fact of correspondences on the morphematic level was also noted, independently of our findings, by the American scholar D. L. Bolinger.[20]

The other type of correspondence on a higher level which deserves registering here is based on still higher elements of language, viz. upon words,[21] spoken and written. In its purest form this correspondence type would imply the presence in the written norm of as many symbols as there are words in the corresponding spoken norm. Needless to say, this purest form of the correspondence can never be found in concrete language communities. Relatively closest to this purest form is the instance of Chinese with its "ideographic" script (although even in Chinese symbols sometimes refer not to 'ideas' but simply to groups of sounds). The non-existence of this type of correspondence in its purest form is clearly due to technical difficulties which would be connected with the acquiring of such a writing system by members of the concerned language community.[22] Still, some analogy of the described situation may be found in those written norms which are otherwise based primarily on the correspondence of phonemes and graphemes. Thus, in English and in French a fairly high number of homonymous spoken words may be found which in the written norm are differentiated by various graphematic make-ups. Here belong Bradley's instances like *right—write—rite—wright,* and many others, like *sea—see, I—eye* etc.[23] It may be convenient to speak here of the assertion of a "quasi-ideographic" principle (in contrast to the "ideographic" which may be found asserted, at least to a high degree, in Chinese).

A closer scrutiny of the existing written norms reveals that a vast majority of them embodies a sort of compromise among correspondences based on various language levels. Such compromise can also be ascertained in the written norms of Modern English, Modern Czech, and Modern Russian. In all these languages the correspondence on the lowest level (i.e. of phonemes and graphemes) had undoubtedly furnished the basis on which their written norms came to the built up. In none of these languages, however, was this correspondence free from interference of other factors. In Czech the correspondence on the lowest level has managed to assert itself on a relatively very wide scope, but its operation is sometimes limited by regard paid to correspondences on the level of morphemes.[24] In Modern Russian the interference of such correspondences on the morphematic level is still more conspicuous than in Czech. This is due to phonematic differences arising through the operation of dynamic stress but unregistered in writing (see, e.g., Nom. sg. *vod-a:* Acc. sg. *vod-u* – phonematically /vaʾd-a: ʾvod-u/. In ModE the

interference of correspondences on higher levels into the operation of the correspondence on the lowest level is still more powerful than in Russian. This follows not only from the preservation of the graphematic make up of some morphemes despite changed phonematic circumstances (examples of such preservation were given above), but especially from the above-noted instances of "quasi-ideographic" writings, so numerous in English and virtually unknown to Russian.[25]

A detailed analysis of the written norms of individual languages would most probably reveal that the originally heterogeneous elements composing these norms have become more or less harmonized and co-ordinated in them,[26] so that, as a rule, they do not strike the reader as chaotic agglomerations. It is, of course, true that voices demanding the reforms of current orthographic systems might be quoted as very strong arguments to the contrary. But such voices only show that something is wrong with the written norm; they do not necessarily prove that the co-ordination of its various elements has not been carried through. In order to be able to understand such voices one must realize which qualities of the written norm are of personal importance for any language user.

The first of the two qualities, surveyability ("speaking quickly and distinctly to the eyes"), was amply commented upon in the former part of the present paper. The other of the two commented qualities, preservability, does not count in this connection, because preservability is inherent in any kind of written norm, whether the latter is functionally adequate or not. But there is another quality of the written norm which is of particular personal importance to any language user, viz. the easiness or the difficulty with which it affects the person trying to acquire it (at the risk of coining another barbarous neologism, one might term it "learnability"). A written norm is easily learnable if the correspondences linking it to the corresponding spoken norm are relatively simple, and it is difficult to acquire when these correspondences become too complex. This may again sound like a truism, but there are two consequences that follow from it and which have not always been fully realized. One of them is the non-identity of two things which are often mistakenly identified, viz. of the written norm and traditional orthography (popularly, but by no means exactly, referred to as "conventional spelling").[27] As has already been pointed out elsewhere,[28] orthography is a kind of bridge leading from spoken to written utterances. More exactly, it is a set of precepts enabling the language user to transpose spoken utterances into written ones. (Conversely, what is popularly called "pronunciation", that means actual reading of printed texts, can be denned as a set of precepts enabling the language user to transpose written utterances into spoken ones.)

The other consequence to be drawn from the above truism is perhaps even more interesting. The two requirements imposed upon the written norm by the needs of the language user (i.e. the requirements of surveyability and 'learnability') are often found to be basically contradictory: what suits the needs of the reader is often felt as uncomfortable by the writer, and yet the requirements of both must be satisfied. It appears that the tension arising out of the difference of the two standpoints supplies the main motive for the demands of orthographical reforms especially in cultural language communities

of the present-day period in which the growing democratization of culture has been increasingly tending to stress the demands of the writing individual at the expense of his more passive reading colleague. Obviously the task of any orthographic reformer boils down to the task of complying with reasonable requests that want to make a given written norm more learnable, without jeopardizing the other function of that written norm, i.e. its surveyability. In other words, the above-mentioned co-ordination of originally heterogeneous elements of the written norm need not, and most probably should not, be given up in orthographic reforms, although, naturally, too complicated co-ordinations may (and most probably should) be replaced by simpler ones, if external factors make such replacement feasible.[29]

The task of the orthographic reformer appears thus particularly difficult in language communities whose written norms reveal a co-ordination that is particularly complex. Such undoubtedly is the case of the written norm of English. This is not only because its basic correspondence on the lowest level is abundantly interfered with by correspondences on the two higher planes, but also because even on the lowest level different ties may be established between graphemes or groups of graphemes on one hand and phonemes or groups of phonemes on the other, according as the former occur in words of domestic or of foreign character (see, e.g., relations like c — /k/; *ch* — /č/ in domestic words, c — /s/, *ch* — /k, š/ in foreign words). There can be no doubt that even in English some kind of co-ordination exists, but it is an extremely complex one. The reason of this complexity is well-known: it is mostly due to powerful external influences exercised upon English in the course of its history by languages whose written norms had been built up on correspondences often differing from those found in English. If, in addition to this, it is realized that the complex co-ordination typical of ModE has been sanctioned by long centuries of tradition, one can easily understand that doubts are often expressed as to the possibility of any "spelling reform" in English.[30]

It is not the present writer's intention to approach here the very difficult subject of the English spelling reform. — There is, however, another important issue that emerges from the preceding paragraph, viz. the problem of when and how (and, of course, why) the written norm undergoes changes in relation to its equivalent spoken norm during the development of the language comprising the two. Our Chapter II will undertake a modest attempt at tracing the changing relations of the two norms during the development of English.

[…]

Notes

Originally published in *Brno Studies in English* 1 (1959), 7–36 under the title "Two chapters on written English". The text reprinted here contains the first part of the article, subtitled "On the functional hierarchy of spoken and written utterances". The second part of the text, entitled "Some remarks on the development of the written norm in English", describes the phonological development of modern English and its divergence from the spelling. This chapter has been omitted.

1   Some less relevant contemporary references omitted.

2   Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, *Nekotorye otdely "sravnitelnoy grammatiki" slovyanskikh* [sic] *yazykov, Russ. Filol. Vestnik* 5 [1881], pp. 265–243 (see esp. pp. 277 ff.).

3   Henry Bradley, *The Making of English* (London, 1904), p. 212.

4   Antonín Frinta, *Novočeská výslovnost* [= Pronunciation of Mod. Czech] (Praha 1909), esp. p. 36.

5   Josef Vachek, *Some Remarks on Writing and Phonetic Transcription, Acta Linguistica* 5, (1945–1949), pp. 86–93.

6   The validity of this statement is clearly endorsed by the well-known fact that there are quite a number of people who can comfortably read and understand texts written in a foreign language without being able to speak that language at all.

7   Agenor Artymovyč, Pysana mova [= Written Language], *Naukovy Zbirnyk Ukrainskoho Vys. Ped. Institutu v Prazi* 2 (1932), pp. 1–8. See also his paper Fremdwort und Schrift in *Charisteria Gu. Mathesio quinquagenario... oblate* (Pragae 1932), pp. 115–117. Our quotation below is taken from the latter paper.

8   In Artymovyč's own words, "daß die Schrift jeder sog. Schriftsprache ein besonderes *autonomes* System bildet, zum Teil unabhängig ven der eigentlichen gesprochenen Sprache" (*Fremdw. u. Schrift,* p. 114; italics ours).

9   Josef Vachek, Zum Problem der geschriebenen Sprache, *Travaux du CLP* 8 (1948), pp. 94–104.

10   Printed utterances form a specific sub-category of written utterances (see J. Vachek, Written Language and Printed Language, *Recueil linguistique de Bratislava* 1, 1948, pp. 67–75), but, for the present moment at least, the difference of the two may be disregarded as non-essential; there will be an opportunity to come back to it further below.

11   The comparison of more extensive spoken and written utterances reveals another notable difference between the two, viz. the monodimensional character of spoken utterances (noted for the first time by P. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale,* Paris 1922, p. 103) as opposed to the regularly polydimensional character of written utterances. Such utterances as fill up more than one written or printed line, are

two-dimensional, the longer ones, such as extend over two pages, are three-dimensional. Undoubtedly, the polydimensional character of written utterances essentially contributes to their superiority over their spoken counterparts in matters of quick and efficient surveyability. (A more detailed discussion of this point can be found in J. Vachek's Czech treatise Psaný jazyk a pravopis [Written Language and Orthography], *Čtení o jazyce a poesii* (Praha) 1, 1942, pp. 231—306, see esp. pp. 242 ff.)

[12]   In other words, the author of a written utterance can be identified by his or her handwriting, whereas the printed utterance, effacing the differences of handwritings by the uniformity of printer's types, renders such direct identification impossible. (See also our paper referred to above, Note 10.)

[13]   See his papers referred to above, Note 5, p. 87, and the paper quoted in Note 10, p. 67. It should be noted that in their earlier version the definitions were somewhat inaccurate owing to their use of the terms "spoken language" and "written language"; the present version replaces these terms by the more correct wordings "the spoken norm of language", and "the written norm of language", respectively.

[14]   On this point see especially V. Mathesius, On some problems of the systematic analysis of grammar, *Travaux du CLP* 6, Prague 1936, pp. 95–107 (esp. p. 102).

[15]   See our paper referred to above, Note 5, p. 91.

[16]   This necessity was duly stressed by J. Berry in his Oslo lecture (The Making of Alphabets, *Reports for the Eighth International Congress of Linguists*, Oslo, 1957, pp. 5–18) in which he insists that any system of writing should be based "on some attempt at a systematic correlation with the spoken language". He voices this demand, as he puts it, "despite eloquent pleas, especially by Bolinger, Vachek and others, that writing can and should be considered as basically a visual system independent of the vocal-auditory process" (p. 6). Berry overlooks, however, that the same necessity had been emphatically voiced by the present writer in the very two papers which are referred to in Berry's Note 6.

[17]   The parallelism of phonemes and graphemes was consistently, if not always quite adequately, developed by E. Pulgram, *Phoneme and Grapheme: A Parallel,* Word 7, 1951, pp. 15–20.

[18]   Josef Vachek, Český pravopis a struktura češtiny [= Czech Spelling and the Structure of Czech], *Listy filologické* (Prague) 60, 1933, pp. 287–319.

[19]   The above instances have also made clear that by the term morpheme is meant here, in accordance with the conception prevailing in linguistics, the smallest utterance element that refers to some meaning and cannot be analyzed into smaller elements of the same quality.

[20]   D.L. Bolinger, Visual Morphemes, *Language* 22, 1946, pp. 333ff.

[21]   By the term word is meant here an utterance element that refers to some meaning and that, acting as one indivisible whole, can more or less freely change its position

with regard to other elements of the utterance, or at least can (again acting as one indivisible whole) be separated from those elements by the insertion of some additional, more or less freely interchangeable utterance-element.

[22] It was exactly these difficulties that had acted as a motive for the decision of the Chinese authorities to introduce alphabetic (i.e. more or less phonematic) writing, despite the complications of the Chinese language situation which are most likely to follow the reform. See esp. B. Karlgren, *Sound and Symbol in Chinese,* Oxford 1925; also M. Swadesh in *Science and Society* 1952.

[23] See also the interesting remarks by V. Fried, Je reforma anglického pravopisu vůbec možná? [= Is English Spelling Reform Possible?], *Časopis pro moderní filologii* (Praha) 39, 1957, pp. 257–270.

[24] More detailed information on the compromise solution found in the written norm of Czech can be obtained from the paper referred to above, Note 18.

[25] Before the orthographic reform of 1917, Russian possessed a very limited number of instances of word-pairs distinguished in writing on the ground of the 'quasi-ideographic' principle, e.g. мир 'peace' — мір 'world', Есть 'to eat' — есть 'is', etc. In Czech the quasi-ideographic principle can be ascertained in a limited number of cases (see, e.g., *vír* 'torrent' — *výr* 'owl', phonematically /vi:r/ in both instances; *bílí* 'he whitewashes' — *býlí* 'weeds', i.e. /bi:li:/, etc.). Cf. B. Havranek, Influence de la fonction de la langue littéraire sur la structure phonologique et grammaticale du tchèque littéraire. *Travaux du CLP* 1, 1929, pp. 106–120 (esp. p. 111 f).

[26] The remarkably harmonized, co-ordinated character of the elements entering into the structure of the Czech written norm was discussed in detail in our paper referred to above, Note 18.

[27] It would be most useful if the term 'spelling' could be reserved for only one of the meanings covered by it today: it should refer to individual graphemes, manifesting the written norm, by phonic means available in manifestations of the spoken norm (see, e.g., *a* /ei/, *b* /bi:/, *c* /si:/ etc.). An exact functional antipode of spelling so defined can be identified in phonetic (or phonematic) transcription whose task is to refer to individual sounds (or phonemes), manifesting the spoken norm, by graphical means based on manifestations of the written norm. For more details, see our paper quoted above, Note 5; it should be pointed out that some of the arguments found in it have been slightly revised and modified here.

[28] In our paper quoted above, Note 5.

[29] Interesting specimens of various kinds of external factors which do not allow of an establishment of (theoretically possible) simpler orthographical systems are mentioned in Berry's paper referred to above. It should be pointed out that Berry, too, takes a fully justified liberal view in admitting exceptions to the rigorous application of the correspondence on the lowest level; he speaks of "a marked trend towards tolerance of synthetic writing systems and away from the illusory concept of the

'pure' phonetic or phonemic transcription" (p. 14). For all these sound observations, Berry's attitude remains more or less pragmatic, lacking the firm ground of linguistic theory. Incidentally, the above-mentioned tension arising out of the contacting requirements of the reader and writer only reflects a tension on a higher level, i.e. in the substance of the written norm itself. Its task "to speak quickly and distinctly to the eyes" acts as a centrifugal force, making for a conspicuous differentiation of written utterances from their spoken counterparts. On the other hand, the necessity of preserving a fair amount of correspondence between the written and the spoken norm co-existing in the same language community acts as a centripetal force, not allowing the differentiation of the two kinds of utterances to exceed certain limits.

30 See V. Fried's paper quoted above, Note 23.

Comprehension questions

1. What are some of the benefits of the "unphonetic spelling" of modern English?
2. What does Vachek mean when he argues that written language and spoken language are two functionally different norms?
3. Which of the norms is subservient to the other? Why (not)?
4. What are the major functional features of spoken language?
5. What are the major functional features of written language?
6. Explain the mutual relationship between intellectual content and the emotive content of utterances.
7. Why is there a tension between surveyability and learnability in written language? How is this related to problems faced in orthographic reforms?
8. What does the quasi-ideographic principle of English mean?
9. Find out about the main attempts and proposals made in the past for the reformation of English spelling.