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Contents / Enhavo / Inhalt / Inhoud

Dimitrios Sotiropoulos — *The Social Roots of Greek Diglossia* 1

George Thomas — *The Role of the Lexical Variants in the Present-day Language Situation in Bosnia-Hercegovina* 29

Roger M. Thompson — *Language Planning in Frontier America: The Case of the Deseret Alphabet* 45

Reviews / Recenzoj / Buchbesprechungen / Recensies

José Agustin Balseiro — *The Hispanic Presence in Florida, Yesterday and Today, 1513–1976* Graeme S. Mount 63

Gerhard W. Baur und Hans-Rüdiger Fluck (Hrsg.) — *Warum im Dialekt? Interviews mit zeitgenössischen Autoren* Horst Dinkelacker 65

Anna Maria Boileau e Emidio Sussi — *Dominanza e minoranze. Immagini e rapporti interetnici al confine nordorientale* Guy Héraud 70

Language Planning in Frontier America: The Case of the Deseret Alphabet

by Roger M. Thompson
University of Florida

Those who study language planning in developing nations usually overlook a twenty-year-long attempt to modernize the English language that took place in frontier America.The Mormons under the direction of Brigham Young were creating a new utopian society in their isolated stronghold in the Rocky Mountains. One of their utopian endeavors was to prepare the English language for universal usage. Accordingly, the Board of Regents of the territorial university was assigned to function as a language planning commission. Although the improvement of English vocabulary was a concern, the Regents focused on spelling reform. In 1853 a committee comprised of some of the most influential writers, educators, and leaders in the society and the equivalent of a linguist designed a 38-character phonetic alphabet that they named the Deseret Alphabet.

During the initial promotion among adults, the alphabet seems to have been well received. Personal journals, letters, and church and governmental records were kept in the alphabet. It was also used in store and street signs. The promoters anticipated objections by emhasizing the economy and efficiency of the new system. Untimely delays came when the attention shifted in 1855 to promoting the alphabet in the schools. Although there was financial support from the legislature, suitable type for printing textbooks was difficult to secure. During a war with the United States government in 1857, the manuscripts for the textbooks were lost. Finally in 1859 the official newspaper, the *Deseret News*, began a year-long series of lessons and articles in the Deseret Alphabet. Because of the poor quality of type, the reception was cool, even among the chief backers.

The alphabet was revived in 1868. Two Deseret readers were printed in New York for use in the schools. The next year parts of the *Book of Mormon* were printed as a third reader. These were enthusiastically promoted by the territorial superintendent of schools. The manuscripts for other books were prepared. But unlike the earlier attempt to introduce the alphabet, this second attempt had little local support. The aspirations of the society had changed. There was now less interest in utopian projects and more interest in blending in with the rest of the United States, especially as communication was improving. What had been introduced twenty years earlier as a sign of progress that would revolutionize the English language was now seen as an attempt to isolate the local population from the rest of the English-speaking world.

Introduction

As demonstrated by Dennis Baron in his paper on Federal English in the last issue of this journal, the perfection of the English language, especially English orthography, was a recurring theme in intellectual

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circles on both sides of the Atlantic during the nineteenth century.[1] As Heath (1977) points out, in America these reform efforts were promoted by individuals like Noah Webster, private intellectual societies, or local academies rather than public institutions. A commonly overlooked exception to this pattern is the spelling reform promoted for twenty years by the Mormons in their isolated Rocky Mountain stronghold. For various sociolinguistic reasons, the New York *Harper's Weekly* predicted on September 5, 1857, that this new "Deseret Alphabet" would "be generally adopted, to the ultimate exclusion of the old type."[2] Therefore, its origin, history, and ultimate failure make an interesting case study in language planning.

Sociolinguistic Setting

The setting for this reform begins in 1847 when the first Mormon pioneers entered the deserts of the Great Basin. After being forced to leave Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, they were determined to find an isolated place or promised land to create a new utopian society that they called Zion. When their leader Brigham Young first saw the deserts of the American West, which others avoided in their haste to reach Oregon and California, he said, "This is the right place," and the work began.

The Mormon plan was to create a new socioeconomic, political, and religious order that would be an example to all and would eventually extend throughout the world. This new order, or Zion, was to be built in an orderly fashion by people gathered from around the world. Since the principles of cooperation and communal order were seen as the key to success, they adopted as their unofficial symbol the beehive and the honeybee. They named this symbol "Deseret," a word from their *Book of Mormon* that means "honeybee." Hence Deseret often appears in the names of their cooperative ventures.

The earliest pioneers to settle in the desert were generally the intellectuals and leaders of the new society and others who were anxious to follow their leadership. Although some of the leaders were sent throughout the world in an intensified search for converts to come build the Zion society, most stayed in Utah planning and experimenting with new agricultural, socioeconomic, and political systems to prepare for the tens of thousands that would gradually join them in the harsh climate of the desert.

Brigham Young, who also served as the governor of the territory, decided that this utopian society would best operate in a series of

rural villages that eventually stretched from Canada to Mexico and Colorado to California. As immigrants arrived in Utah, they were generally assigned to one of these various settlements. But it was soon apparent that such a far-flung utopia built upon a mixture of the world population could only be unified through literacy and a common language. Although the early pioneers were literate and even founded a university two years after they arrived, the census data indicate that the illiteracy rate increased dramatically as others joined them from around the world. The increase in the number of non-native speakers of English was also dramatic. By 1860 nearly one-third of the population was foreign-born with nearly 10 percent of the total population from Scandinavia alone.

Governor Young's solution was to declare English the official universal language and to promote spelling and language reform. The territorial Board of Regents, which supervised all cultural societies and all education in the territory, was assigned to serve as a language planning commission.[3] The Board was charged to purify the English language to prepare it for universal usage. The Regents focused on orthography because, as Brigham Young pointed out, it was "too full of absurdities to be tolerated by enlightened people."[4] The Mormons hoped that by so improving the language, it could more efficiently be taught to native and non-native speakers alike.

Developing the Alphabet

Although the Board of Regents originally was assigned the language planning function in 1850, the major thrust began in October 1853, when a committee was appointed to deal directly with spelling reform. Over the years membership on the committee changed, but generally the most qualified and influential men available were appointed. For example, the original chairman was Parley P. Pratt, a native of eastern New York, who was probably the most prolific writer among the pioneers. He was known as a journalist, editor, and poet. His brother, Orson Pratt, also a prolific writer, was one of the great Mormon minds of the time. Besides his work in theology and philosophy, he was known for his research in mathematics and astronomy at the university. Wilford Woodruff, from Connecticut, was a dynamic and persuasive orator. As a legislator and church leader, he spent much time touring the various settlements promoting various causes for Zion. These men had additional prestige among Mormons because they were members of the ruling Quorum of Apostles.

Another member of the committee, Robert C. Campbell from Scotland, served for many years as superintendent of territorial schools and became an ardent promoter of the educational value of the new alphabet. George D. Watt, the first Mormon convert in England, provided the linguistic input. Before coming to America, he had become proficient in Sir Isaac Pitman's shorthand or phonography. While with the Mormons in Illinois before they moved to Utah, he taught courses in phonography and was a stenographer for church leaders, often recording the discourses they presented. Watt was probably the person who first interested Brigham Young in the possibility of spelling reform. When the Mormons first went West, Watt was sent to England to study the latest revisions in Pitman's system. When he finally arrived in Utah, he was made the official church recorder.[5]

This committee worked many hours debating the most appropriate system of reform. Pitman's alphabet was strongly considered, as was a modified spelling using the current alphabet. After examining and discussing various proposals for many days, it was decided that a new society that was encouraging the abandonment of tradition should have its own alphabet, a Deseret alphabet. The principal designer seems to have been George Watt. The phonetic basis for the alphabet was Isaac Pitman's analysis of the English language, but in final form the Deseret Alphabet had thirty-eight rather than Pitman's forty letters (Appendix A). Some of the symbols were based on Pitman's 1837 alphabet, others on the table of ancient alphabets in the front of Webster's unabridged dictionary. But none of the original phonetic values was retained. Most of the letters were original creations of Watt and the committee.[6] The new Deseret Alphabet was officially adopted by Brigham Young and the Board of Regents on December 22, 1853.

Promoting the Alphabet

In 1854 and 1855 the alphabet was promoted among the adults. The initial response seems to have been enthusiastic. Adult education classes were held throughout the territory. Modern library collections of pioneer writings show that the alphabet was used in many diaries and personal records, in correspondence, in the minutes of many church and governmental meetings, and even on a tombstone.[7] Brigham Young's personal records were recorded in it for one year, and at one time he assigned a scribe to transcribe the official church history and his autobiography. Jules Remy, a French

traveler and naturalist, who with his English companion Julius Brenchley in 1855 spent three months studying the Mormons in Salt Lake while disguised as a prospector, reported that street markers and shop signs were written in the new script.[8] A missionary to the Hopi Indians reported success in using it to teach English and, with some modifications, to write the Indian language.[9]

The promotional approach was to emphasize the role of the alphabet in the idealistic cause of Zion. As with their other reforms, the Mormons felt sure that eventually the rest of the world would recognize the merits of the alphabet and adopt it after the Mormons had perfected its use. When George Watt addressed the Deseret Typographical Association, a local cultural organization, he noted the Deseret Alphabet was "a forerunner in that series of developments in philology which shall prepare mankind for the reception of a pure language."[10] In an editorial addressed to Mormons in England, it was pointed out that this spelling reform would help English become this "pure" and universal language.[11] Because of the optimism inherent in this new society, imperfections noted by critics were recast as advantages. Efficiency was the underlying theme.

The phonetic nature of the alphabet was praised because it would have a unifying effect on the many English dialects. Since there were no silent letters, less paper would be needed to print books. In fact when books finally were printed, they used 20 percent less paper than the same books in standard orthography. The lack of tails and stems that many thought made the characters monotonous was praised because such marks were "superfluous" and only caused the type to wear out sooner.[12] It was also pointed out that the shape of the letters and their phonetic nature made it possible to write "one hundred words per minute with ease, and consequently report the speech of a common speaker without much difficulty."[13]

To counter the objection that the system looked too foreign, it was pointed out that it was actually easier to learn. Campbell cited the example of a missionary who was illiterate until he had six lessons in the Deseret Alphabet. Now he was able to write letters with ease.[14] The fact that the cursive version was identical to the printed form was seen as an educational advantage. Less time would be needed to teach spelling, reading, and writing. Therefore it was highly recommended for children and those learning English as a second language.[15]

When some pointed out that it would no longer be possible to read the literature of the past, the reply was that such literature was permeated with error and undesirable features that could be elimi-

nated by having abstracts made of that which was worthwhile, thus saving the time of the reader.[16] When it was pointed out to Brigham Young that it would cost approximately one million dollars to redo the works for a library, he responded that it could be done a little at a time emphasizing condensations of the truth.[17] Years later he added that this approach would also protect the young people from "unwholesome" popular reading from the East such as the *Police Gazette* and *Last Sensation*.[18]

George Watt in a letter to Brigham Young proposed a modification with only thirty-three symbols that could be linked in a longhand version.[19] But Brigham Young rejected the revision, probably because he recognized that major revisons in the radical orthography at this stage of its promotion would break the momentum and kill any loyalty that had been generated in the general population.

Preparing Materials

With this initial success among adults, the attention shifted to promoting the alphabet in the schools. There were few professional teachers at the time. Schools ran for a few months during the winter and were generally limited to the lower elementary grades. Teaching was often done as a work assignment from local leaders. These teachers showed little interest in promoting the alphabet, since no textbooks or school materials were available. The Board of Regents and Governor Young recognized that the continued success of the reform lay in preparing materials for these schools. However, there was no book-binding equipment in Utah at the time and paper was in short supply. Wooden type had been prepared locally and illustrative cards of the alphabet were available for sale, but no books could be produced.[20]

In December 1855 the territorial legislature appropriated $2,500 to produce the necessary school materials. Orson Pratt was asked to secure metallic type and to direct a committee to produce textbooks. After considering England and New York as a source for type, Pratt sent an agent to St. Louis to secure it.

In February 1856 the textbook committee began its work. The work was much more time-consuming than expected. There were the usual problems inherent in a phonetic as compared to a phonemic or morphophonemic spelling. The members of the committee spoke differing English dialects, so the standard for correct spelling was difficult to establish. A committee on pronunciation with representation from Scotland, England, and New England

spent hours debating the correct spelling for words such as "rule" and "new" and came to no conclusion.[21] Because of a lack of linguistic sophistication, such matters as the representation of unstressed vowels in polysyllabic words and the phonetic value of vowels before /r/ were subjects of lengthy debates. It was finally decided to follow the pronunciation of Webster except "where custom invariably differs from that found in Webster's dictionary."[22] In practice, the spelling of the vowels in standard English often influenced the choice of symbol.

There was also the problem of confusing the name of the letter with the sound it represented. For example, the symbol for the voiced interdental fricative, /d/, was named "the." As such it was used both for the sound /d/ and the entire word "the." Similarly "lesson" was spelled "lesn" and "open" was spelled "opn" since the name of the letter "n" included the vowel sound. For the same reason "zest" was spelled "zst" and "be" was spelled "b." This practice of confusing phonetic values with the name of the letter varied from writer to writer throughout the history of the alphabet.

Because of the nature of education on the frontier, the committee decided that manuscripts for the elementary grades would suffice. Finally the manuscripts for the first and second reader were ready for the printer with stories about such things as pioneers, buffalo, grizzly bears, the Salt Lake Valley, and Utah.[23] But the type was delayed from St. Louis until 1857 because of disinterest on the part of the agent who had been sent to secure it. When the type finally arrived, Utah was in the middle of a crisis that severely threatened the Mormon plans of a utopian society.

Untimely Delays

Seeing this new Mormon society as a threat to the integrity of the nation, President Buchanan of the United States sent an army of 2,500 men to ensure the loyalty of Utahans and to remove Brigham Young as governor in the summer of 1857. The Mormons were determined to defend themselves this time. Although there were no battles, by using various guerrilla tactics, the Mormons delayed the U.S. Army from entering Salt Lake City for one year while they prepared to abandon and burn their cities and move southward, perhaps to Mexico. In 1858 the crisis was resolved. The pardoned Mormons returned to their homes and the army established a base near Salt Lake City.

But this year-long interruption broke the momentum of the

language planning efforts before anything had appeared in print. The printing press and type had been moved to central Utah and hidden during the crisis. When they were returned to Salt Lake City, the manuscripts for the Deseret readers were missing. Perhaps the invasion of the U.S. Army had caused a shift from the earlier idealism and dedication to building Zion or perhaps the committee members remembered the long tedious hours spent preparing the first manuscripts. In either case, those assigned to reproduce the materials refused to do so unless they were paid for their work this time. Since no salary money was available, nothing was produced.[24] Orson Pratt and George Watt were asked to prepare a speller based on Webster's dictionary. But they discontinued their work for monetary reasons and because they felt that books should be produced first.

The first printing in the Deseret Alphabet was further delayed until Febuary 1859, when the local newspaper, the *Deseret News*, ran a series of Deseret Alphabet lessons on the front page. In May 1860 extracts from the Gospel of Matthew appeared as did some articles and advertisements. The reception was not enthusiastic. One critic said it made the *Deseret News* look like a Turkish tax list.[25] Even Brigham Young was disappointed. The St. Louis type was so crude that a local printer apologized to Brigham Young and offered to prepare new type himself. Brigham Young, however, decided to defer further developments until the alphabet could be revised and better type procured from New York or England.[26] Before the end of 1860 a gold coin was produced with "Holiness to the Lord" written in the Deseret Alphabet encircling a lion. Then, except for six-months' worth of articles in the *Deseret News* in 1864, the alphabet was forgotten as attention turned to more pressing matters such as Indian problems and the establishment of villages and industries in the rapidly growing society.

Resurrecting the Alphabet

Although the alphabet seemed dead, spelling reform was still alive. Periodically it appeared on the agenda of the Board of Regents. They considered using a new Pitman alphabet being promoted by Isaac Pitman's younger brother Ben, who had emigrated to America. George Watt, while traveling in the East, investigated this and other new alphabets and had catalogs sent to Utah. Then in December 1867, the Board of Regents voted to adopt Ben Pitman's American Phonetic Alphabet in the schools.[27]

In February 1868, though, Brigham Young influenced the Board to resurrect "their own" Deseret Alphabet instead.[28] In May Orson Pratt was again assigned to prepare readers. The territorial legislature appropriated $10,000 and agreed to pay Pratt for his work. By October, 10,000 copies of the *Deseret First Book* and *Deseret Second Book* had arrived from the printing firm of Russell Brothers in New York City and were ready for use in the schools and for sale to the public for fifteen and twenty cents, respectively.

Brigham Young and the Board of Regents were pleased with the professional quality of the printing even though the alphabet had not been revised as planned since the printings in the *Deseret News* nine years earlier. The books contained simple illustrations selected from *Willson's Readers*, a popular series used in the territory (Appendix B). Available for one half of the first book was a teacher's edition written in standard orthography.[29] The *Deseret First Book* was thirty-six pages long and the *Second Book* was twice that size. The contents reflected pioneer thinking. There were readings on moral virtues and manners including the Lord's Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount. There were also elementary science and mathematics lessons and instructions on how to dig wells, ride horses, shoot guns, and care for fruit trees. Literature was represented by childhood verses such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star."[30]

Immediately Campbell, the territorial superintendent of schools, and Edward Stevenson made a tour of the settlements south of Salt Lake, meeting with teachers, trustees, and parents to promote the new textbooks. When they returned they reported their most favorable reception was in the communities with a heavy Scandinavian population.[31] Campbell predicted that before long, newspapers and "intellectual" journals would be using the alphabet.[32]

In 1869 Orson Pratt took his transcription of the *Book of Mormon* to New York and supervised the printing of 8,000 copies of the first quarter of it for use as a third reader for advanced students. Only 500 copies of the complete *Book of Mormon* were printed. Manuscripts for other books, including the New Testament, a catechism, and a phonetic speller, were ready for printing as soon as book sales generated enough revenue to support further publications.

The End of the Reform

But in spite of the enthusiastic reports, the alphabet was dead. Few of the books were sold, and by 1870 the *Deseret News* had stopped advertising them. By the time the legislature had appropri-

ated $6,000 to pay Orson Pratt for his work, almost $20,000 had been spent on the project, an educational fortune at the time. The death notice came when superintendent Campbell, the most ardent supporter of the revival, recommended in 1870 that the *National Series* of textbooks be adopted by the schools over several other choices, not even mentioning the *Deseret Readers*.

The nature of the school system had changed. The public was no longer satisfied with utopian language experiments in part-time elementary schools with volunteer or poorly trained teachers. Now they demanded secondary and higher education with a professional teaching staff and a curriculum that compared in quality to the best schools in the eastern United States.[33] The census data indicate that the number of teachers had grown from 230 in 1860 to 816 in 1870. The coming of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 just after the revival of the Deseret Alphabet began made the materials for such an expanding educational system readily available at a relatively low cost.

In 1872 the church leaders suggested that special Sunday School classes be held to read the *Book of Mormon* in the Deseret Alphabet, but the public response was negative. Later in the 1870s a political party used the Deseret Alphabet in its campaign literature, and some ballots were printed in the alphabet for one election. The spelling reform movement itself finally died with Brigham Young in 1877, not long after Orson Pratt had been sent to England to purchase type for Pitman's Alphabet.

Conclusion

Why was there so little popular support for reviving the alphabet when the first attempt earlier seemed on the verge of success? Although the usual problems inherent in adopting a phonetic spelling for the English language, such as esthetics, dialect conflicts, disguised morphologies, and cost, can be pointed to, the answer lies in the dramatic change in the public mood.

The 1850 census indicates that when the reform began, less than 20 percent of the estimated 60,000 Mormons lived in Utah and nearly two-thirds of these Mormons lived near Salt Lake City. These tended to be the members who were most anxious to follow their leaders. In this small, fairly compact, and isolated society, there was intense interaction between the leaders, the intellectuals, and the people, making it easy to promote new ideas and build their utopian Zion.

However, twenty years later the composition of the society had changed. Because the church helped to finance their passage to Utah through its Perpetual Immigration Fund, nearly all of the 110,000 Mormons had gathered to the West from around the world by 1870 regardless of the intensity of their faith. Because of the policy of settling the immigrants in small villages spread throughout Utah and the surrounding states and territories, less than 20 percent lived near Salt Lake. A large number of non-Mormons also began moving into the area after the coming of the U.S. Army in 1858, the expansion of the mining industry, and the advent of the transcontinental railroad. This heterogeneous population was spread so thinly that more than three or four dynamic leaders were needed to promote such idealistic causes as spelling reform among people more concerned with surviving in their new desert villages. Such leadership was nearly gone. Most of the original promoters were now dead or were involved with other projects. Even the Board of Regents, which had been serving as the language planning commission, had turned its attention in 1869 from language planning to reviving the territorial university in response to public demand.

Most importantly, the new generation of intellectuals viewed the alphabet as an attempt by the aging original pioneers to isolate the territory from the rest of the English-speaking world rather than as an effort to perfect the English language. The newly completed railroad made such isolation impractical since it was now possible to receive publications from California and the eastern United States within days rather than months at a fraction of the cost to produce them locally. The new generation wanted integration politically, economically, and educationally with the rest of the United States and the English-speaking world.[34] The communal Zion promoted by the original pioneers was considered antisocial and out of place in the modern world of capitalism. In short, the Deseret Alphabet now, rather than being hailed as a sign of enlightened progress, was viewed as a way to maintain a life-style of the past that, with improved communication, the new generation wished to leave behind.

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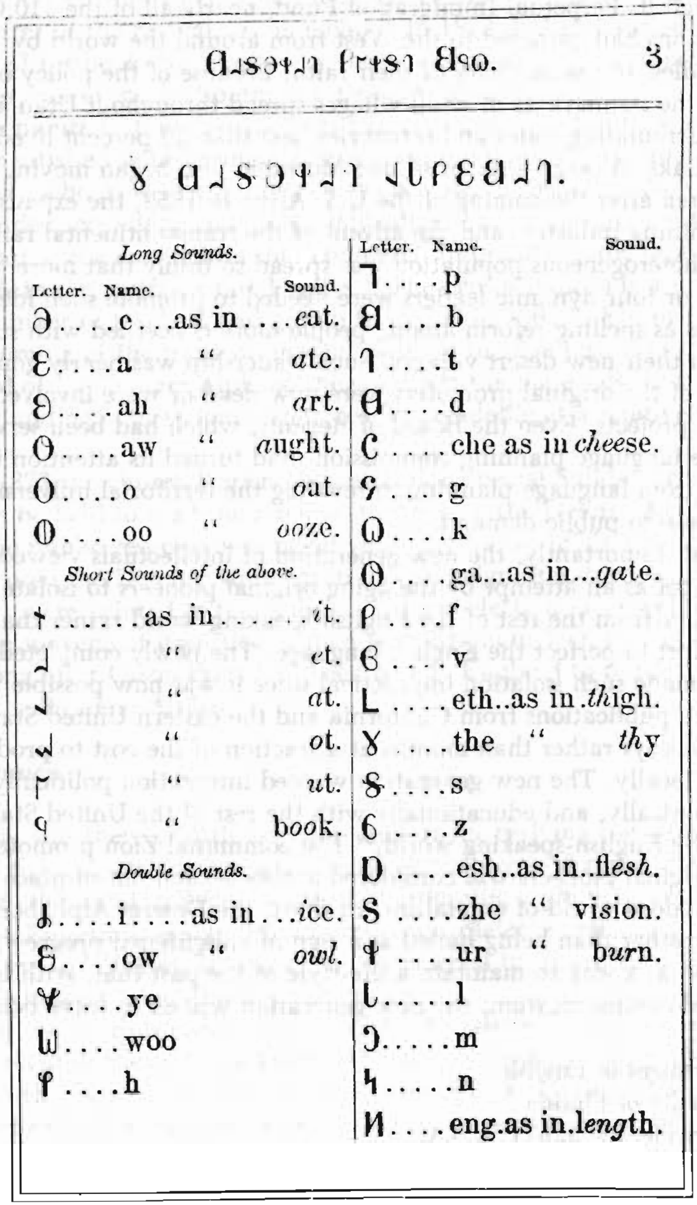
APPENDIX A. THE 1868 VERSION OF THE DESERET ALPHABET



𐐔𐐯𐑅𐐨𐑉𐐯𐑌 𐐙𐐲𐑉𐑅𐐻 𐐒𐐳𐐿. 3

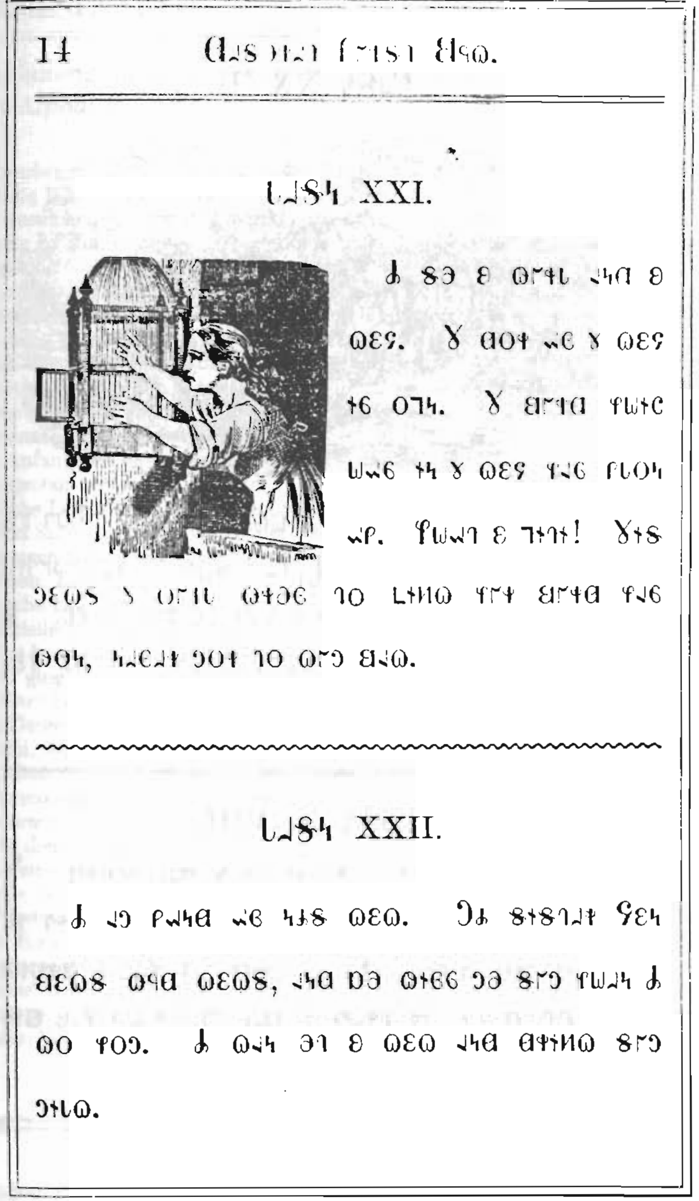
𐐜 𐐔𐐯𐑅𐐨𐑉𐐯𐐻 𐐈𐑊𐑁𐐩𐐺𐐯𐐻.

Long Sounds.

Letter.	Name.	Sound.
𐐀	e	as in *e*at.
𐐁	a	" *a*te.
𐐂	ah	" *a*rt.
𐐃	aw	" *au*ght.
𐐄	o	" *o*at.
𐐅	oo	" *oo*ze.
Short Sounds of the above.		
𐐆		as in *i*t.
𐐇		" *e*t.
𐐈		" *a*t.
𐐉		" *o*t.
𐐊		" *u*t.
𐐋		" b*oo*k.
Double Sounds.		
𐐌	i	as in *i*ce.
𐐍	ow	" *ow*l.
𐐏	ye	
𐐎	woo	
𐐐	h	

Letter.	Name.	Sound.
𐐑	p	
𐐒	b	
𐐓	t	
𐐔	d	
𐐕	che	as in *ch*eese.
𐐖	g	
𐐗	k	
𐐘	ga	as in *g*ate.
𐐙	f	
𐐚	v	
𐐛	eth	as in *th*igh.
𐐜	the	" *th*y
𐐝	s	
𐐞	z	
𐐟	esh	as in fle*sh*.
𐐠	zhe	" vi*s*ion.
𐐡	ur	" b*ur*n.
𐐢	l	
𐐣	m	
𐐤	n	
𐐥	eng	as in le*ng*th.

APPENDIX B. TWO LESSONS FROM *THE DESERET FIRST BOOK*



14 𐐔𐐯𐑅𐐨𐑉𐐯𐐻 𐐙𐐲𐑉𐑅𐐻 𐐒𐐳𐐿.

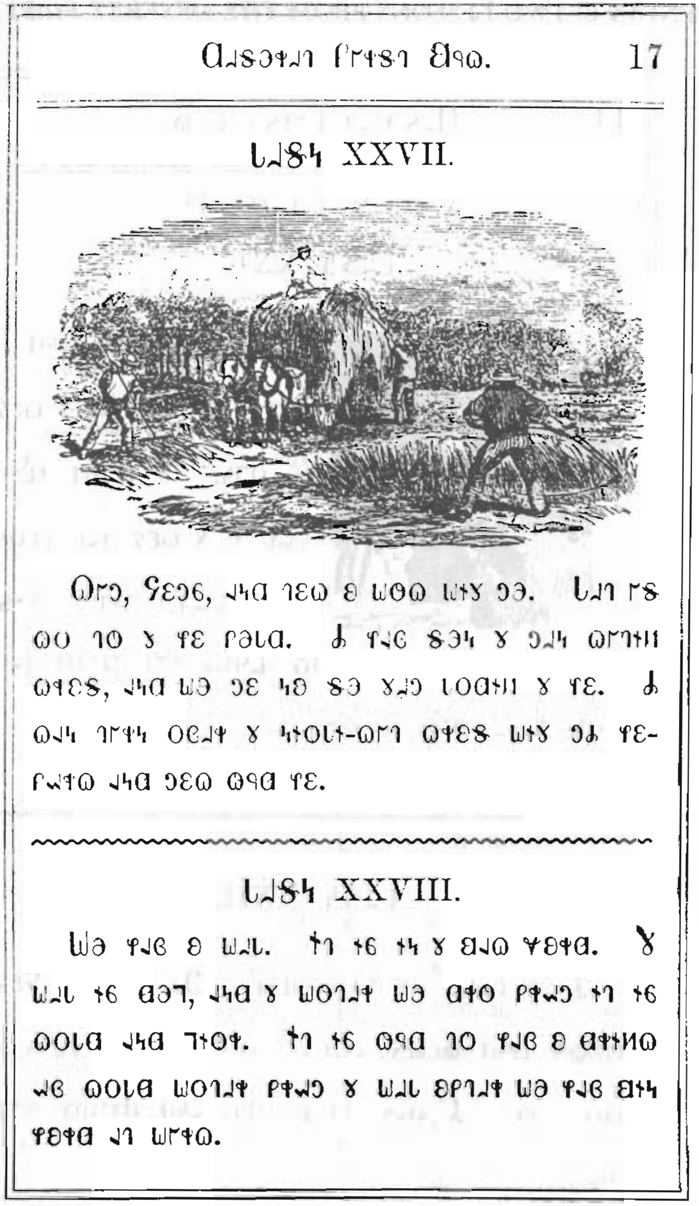
𐐢𐐯𐑅𐑌 XXI.

𐐌 𐑅𐐨 𐐩 𐑀𐐲𐑉𐑊 𐐰𐑌𐐼 𐐩 𐐿𐐩𐐾. 𐐜 𐐼𐐬𐑉 𐐱𐑂 𐑄 𐐿𐐩𐐾 𐐮𐑆 𐐬𐐹𐑌. 𐐜 𐐺𐐲𐑉𐐼 𐐸𐐶𐐮𐐽 𐐶𐐱𐑆 𐐮𐑌 𐑄 𐐿𐐩𐐾 𐐸𐐰𐑆 𐑁𐑊𐐬𐑌 𐐱𐑁. 𐐐𐐶𐐱𐐻 𐐩 𐐹𐐮𐐻𐐮! 𐐜𐐮𐑅 𐑋𐐩𐐿𐑅 𐑄 𐑀𐐲𐑉𐑊 𐑀𐑉𐐨𐑂 𐐻𐐬 𐑃𐐮𐑍𐐿 𐐸𐐲𐑉 𐐺𐐲𐑉𐐼 𐐸𐐰𐑆 𐑀𐐬𐑌, 𐑌𐐯𐑂𐐯𐑉 𐑋𐐬𐑉 𐐻𐐬 𐐿𐐲𐑋 𐐺𐐰𐐿.

𐐢𐐯𐑅𐑌 XXII.

𐐌 𐐰𐑋 𐑁𐐱𐑌𐐼 𐐱𐑂 𐑌𐐴𐑅 𐐿𐐩𐐿. 𐐣𐐴 𐑅𐐮𐑅𐐻𐐯𐑉 𐐖𐐩𐑌 𐐺𐐩𐐿𐑅 𐑀𐐳𐐼 𐐿𐐩𐐿𐑅, 𐐰𐑌𐐼 𐑇𐐨 𐑀𐐮𐑂𐑆 𐑋𐐨 𐑅𐐲𐑋 𐐸𐐶𐐯𐑌 𐐌 𐑀𐐬 𐐸𐐬𐑋. 𐐌 𐐿𐐰𐑌 𐐨𐐻 𐐪 𐐿𐐩𐐿 𐐰𐑌𐐼 𐐼𐑉𐐮𐑍𐐿 𐑅𐐲𐑋 𐑋𐐮𐑊𐐿.

Lesson 21
I see a girl and a cage. The door of the cage is open. The bird which was in the cage has flown off. What a pity! This makes the girl grieve to think her bird has gone, never more to come back.



Lesson 27
Come, James, and take a walk with me. Let us go to the hay field. I have seen the men cutting grass, and we may now see them loading the hay. I can turn over the newly cut grass with my hay-fork and make good hay.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Sprachplanung an der amerikanischen Westgrenze: der Fall des Deseret-Alphabets

Die Forscher der Sprachplanung in den Entwicklungsländern übersehen gewöhnlich den zwanzig Jahre langen Versuch, die englische Sprache zu modernisieren, der zur Zeit der westlichen Expansion Amerikas gemacht wurde. Die Mormonen schufen unter der Leitung Brigham Youngs in ihrer isolierten Festung in den Rocky Mountains eine neue utopische Gesellschaft. Eine ihrer utopischen Zielsetzungen war, die englische Sprache zum universalen Gebrauch vorzubereiten. Demzufolge wurde dem Vorstand der territorialen Universität die Funktion eines Sprachplanungsausschusses zugewiesen. Obwohl ihnen an der Verbesserung des englischen Wortschatzes gelegen war, konzentrierte sich der Ausschuss auf die Rechtschreibungsreform. Im Jahre 1853 entwickelte ein Komittee, dem die einflussreichsten Dichter, Lehrer, und gesellschaftlich hoch angesehene Leute angehörten, ein Alphabet bestehend aus 38 phonetischen Zeichen, das sogenannte Deseret-Alphabet.

In der Anfangszeit seiner Vorbereitung unter den Erwachsenen scheint das Alphabet positiv angenommen worden zu sein. Persönliche Tagebücher, Briefe, und kirchliche und amtliche Dokumente wurden in diesem Alphabet verfasst. Es wurde auch für Laden- und Strassenschilder verwendet. Die Förderer des Alphabets kamen eventuellen Einwendungen zuvor, indem sie die Wirtschaftlichkeit und Effizienz des neuen Systems unterstrichen. Zu grossen Verzögerungen kam es, als sich 1855 die Aufmerksamkeit auf die schulische Durchsetzung des Alphabets wendete. Obwohl das gesetzgebende Organ eine finanzielle Unterstützung gab, war es schwer, passende Typen zum Druck der Lesebücher bereitzustellen. Während eines Krieges mit den Vereinigten Staaten im Jahre 1857 gingen die Manuskripte der Lehrbücher verloren. Die amtliche Zeitung *Deseret News* begann schliesslich 1859 eine einjährige Reihe von Lektionen und Artikeln im Deseret-Alphabet. Wegen der schlechten Qualität des Drucks war die Aufnahme kühl, sogar unter den Hauptbefürwortern des Alphabets.

Das Alphabet erfuhr 1868 einen neuen Aufschwung. In New York wurden zwei Deseret-Lesebücher zum Schulgebrauch gedruckt. Im nächsten Jahr wurden Teile des *Buches Mormon* als drittes Lesebuch gedruckt. Der Territorialintendant der Schulen verbreitete diese Lehrbücher mit Begeisterung. Die Manuskripte anderer Bücher wurden vorbereitet. Aber in Gegensatz zum ersten Versuch, das Alphabet einzuführen, gewann der zweite Versuch wenig örtliche Unterstützung. Die Zielsetzungen der Gesellschaft hatten sich verändert. Man interessierte sich weniger für utopische Projekte und mehr für eine Integration mit den übrigen Vereinigten Staaten, vor allem wegen der Verbesserung des Kommunikationswesens. Was zwanzig Jahre vorher als Zeichen des Fortschritts und als Revolution der englischen Sprache angesehen worden war, wurde nun als Versuch der Isolierung der örtlichen Bevölkerung vom Rest der englischsprechenden Welt gewertet.

RESUMO

La Lingvo-Planado ĉe la Okcident-Usona Limo: La Kazo de la Alfabeto Deseret

La studantoj de la lingvo-planado en la evolulandoj ofte pretervidas la dudek jaran klopodon modernigi la anglan lingvon, kiu okazis en la okcidenta Usono dum la 19-a jarcento. La Mormonoj sub la gvidado de Brigham Young kreadis utopian socion en sia izolita fortikaĵo en la Ŝtonegaj Montoj. Inter ilian utopiaj planoj estis la preparado de

la angla lingvo kiel universala lingvo. La Estraro de la teritoria universitato ricevis la taskon, funkcii kiel lingvoplana komisiono. Kvankam ĝi ankaŭ volis pliboniĝi la anglan vortostokon, la Estraro ĉefe traktis la ortografian reformon. En 1853 komitato, entenanta la plej influajn verkistojn, edukistojn, kaj sociajn estrojn, kaj ankaŭ filologon, kreis tridekokkarakteran alfabeton, la Alfabeton Deseret.

Dum la komenca disvastigo ĉe la plenkreskuloj, la alfabeto ŝajne estis bone akceptita. Estis verkitaj en la alfabeto personaj taglibroj, leteroj, ekleziaj, kaj registaraj dokumentoj. Ĝi estis ankaŭ uzita en vendejaj kaj strataj indikiloj. La disvastigantoj antaŭvidis kontraŭargumentojn, substrekante ĝian ŝparemon kaj efikon. Bedaŭrindaj prokrastoj estiĝis, kiam en 1855 la atento transiris al la disvastigado de la alfabeto en la lernejoj. Kvankam ekzistis financa subteno flanke de la leĝfarantoj, taŭgaj tipoj por la presado de lernolibroj estis malfacile akireblaj. Dum milito kontraŭ la usona registaro en 1857, perdiĝis la manuskriptoj de la lernolibroj. Fine en 1859 la oficiala gazeto *Deseret News* komencis jarlongan serion da lecionoj kaj artikoloj en la Alfabeto Deseret. Pro la malbona tipkvalito, ilia akcepto estis frida, eĉ ĉe la ĉefaj subtenantoj.

La alfabeto reviviĝis en 1868. Du Legolibroj Deseret estis presitaj en Novjorko por enlerneja uzo. La postan jaron, partoj de la *Libro Mormona* estis presitaj kiel tria legolibro. La teritoria estro de lernejoj entuziasme aŭspiciis ilin. Oni pretigis la manuskripton de aliaj libroj. Sed, kontraste al la pli frua klopodo enkonduki la alfabeton, la dua klopodo gajnis malmulte da loka subteno. Ŝanĝigis jam la aspiroj de la socio. Estis jam malpli da interesiĝo pri utopiaj projektoj, kaj pli da intereso pri unueciĝo kun la cetera Usono, aparte ĉar pliboniĝis la komunikado. Simbolo de progreso, revoluciigon-ta la anglan lingvon antaŭ dudek jaroj, nun ŝajnis klopodo izoli la lokan enloĝantaron disde la cetera anglalingva mondo.

NOTES

1. This is a revised version of a paper presented in the Language Planning and Policy section of the Sixth International Congress of Applied Linguistics, August 9–15, 1981, in Lund, Sweden. I would like to thank the Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, for access to original documents in their possession and Don L. F. Nilsen of Arizona State University for copies of the Deseret readers and the *Book of Mormon* in the Deseret Alphabet.
2. "The New Mormon Alphabet," *Harper's Weekly* 1 (September 5, 1857): 566.
3. The role of the Board of Regents in promoting English language reform is detailed in Chamberlin (1960).
4. "Regency," *Deseret News*, November 24, 1853. The *Deseret News*, the official Mormon newspaper in Salt Lake City, reflected the views of the leaders of the church.
5. The role of George Watt in the Deseret Alphabet and other language-oriented enterprises is discussed in Stringham and Flack (1958).
6. A letter to Franklin D. Richards from T. W. Ellerback, secretary to Brigham Young, written February 24, 1885, in answer to his inquiry about the origins of the alphabet. Olsen (1952) and Monson (1953) found few similarities in their comparisons of the Deseret Alphabet and other nineteenth-century phonetic alphabets.
7. For pictures of the tombstone and other items printed in the Deseret Alphabet, see Weller and Reid (1958).
8. Remy and Brenchley (1861: vol. 2, 184).
9. Marion J. Shelton to George A. Smith, *LDS Journal History*, November 30, 1859, quoted in Beesley (1975). The *Journal History* is an account of pioneer events and official correspondence that was prepared as the events took place by clerks employed by the church.

10. *Deseret News*, August 15, 1855. This declaration was then adopted by the society and was later approved by the territorial legislature.
11. "Language," *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star* 17 (April 29, 1854): 257–260. The *Millennial Star* was the church's counterpart to the *Deseret News* for England, often reprinting editorials or articles from its sister publication in America.
12. Letter to Franklin D. Richards from T. W. Ellerback, February 24, 1885.
13. "The New Alphabet," *Deseret News*, January 19, 1854.
14. *Deseret News*, October 12, 1855.
15. "Eleventh General Epistle of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to the Saints in the Valleys of the Mountains, and those scattered abroad throughout the earth," *Deseret News*, August 15, 1855.
16. A talk by Brigham Young recorded in the minutes of the Board of Regents, November 29, 1854 (quoted in Chamberlin 1960: 35).
17. *LDS Journal History*, January 23, 1859.
18. *Deseret News*, March 25, 1869.
19. George D. Watt to Brigham Young, August 21, 1854, LDS Archives, Brigham Young Collection.
20. A detailed history of the problems in obtaining type for the Deseret Alphabet can be found in Wentz (1978).
21. *LDS Journal History*, November 30, 1858. Later the problem of determining the correct spelling was unofficially resolved by assigning one person, Orson Pratt, to do all the transcriptions.
22. *Deseret News*, February 25, 1856.
23. *LDS Journal History*, February 6, 1856.
24. At first Brigham Young suggested that clerks be hired to do the work, but he soon dismissed them because "it was business for women and that the Regency had no funds to pay for the labor" (*LDS Journal History*, April 14, 1859).
25. Ashton (1950: 76).
26. *LDS Journal History*, February 16, 1859.
27. *Deseret News*, December 19, 1867.
28. *Deseret News*, February 4, 1868.
29. Frisby and Lee (1947) are the only ones to report the existence of this teacher's book. The date of publication they give is five years previous to the publication of the readers themselves.
30. Transliterated samples of the readers can be found in Frisby and Lee (1947).
31. *Deseret News*, December 10, 1868.
32. Robert L. Campbell, *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools, 1869*, quoted in Beesley (1975: 18).
33. For a more complete picture of this change, see chapter 4, "Educational Developments in the Sixties: 1860–69," in Chamberlin (1960).
34. Anderson (1942), chapter 10, "Revival of Gentile Opposition."

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