

次の英文はSimon Horobin, *Does Spelling Matter?* (2013) からの抜粋に基づいている。これを読んで次の設問に答えなさい。

(I)  に入るもっとも適切な語を下から選び、記号で答えなさい。

(A) confidently (B) happily (C) obediently (D) peacefully

(II) 下線部(2)を日本語に訳しなさい。

(III) 下線部(3) “this gaffe” について日本語で簡潔に説明しなさい。

(IV) 下線部(4)を日本語に訳しなさい。

(V) 下線部(5)を日本語に訳しなさい。

(VI)  に入る、もっとも適切な語を下から選び、記号で答えなさい。

(a) ecological (b) economic (c) educational (d) etymological

(VII) 下線部(7) “orthographic protests” とあるが、その主張の内容を20字以内の日本語で説明しなさい。

(VIII) Mark Twain (マーク・トウェイン) のつづりに対する見解をてがかりに、第4段落で言及されているTony Blair (トニー・ブレア) の “a blind spot” について、100字以上120字以内の日本語で説明しなさい。

(IX) 次の日本語を英語に訳しなさい。

作家の才能と単語のつづりの知識は必ずしも一致しない。

Dan Quayle\*, former Vice President of the United States of America, made a spelling mistake that was to haunt his political career. In 1992 he presided over a spelling contest at a school in New Jersey, where he read out words written on flashcards which the children then wrote on the blackboard. One of the words he was given to read out was *potato* and twelve-year old William Figueroa duly wrote the word on the board. “You’ve almost got it,” replied Quayle, “but it has an ‘e’ on the end”. The boy corrected his effort, ( 1 ) adding the additional “e”. There is, however, no “e” on the end of *potato*; an “e” is added in the plural *potatoes*, but it is not found in the singular. Speaking on a TV show a few days later, William Figueroa (now known as the “potato kid”) said that he knew Quayle was wrong, but thought he should follow the Vice President’s instructions.

Dan Quayle’s error earned him worldwide derision and his howler was front-page news throughout the USA and the UK. <sup>(2)</sup> He evidently considered it a defining moment of his political career: he and George Bush Senior\* were voted out of office less than five months later. When he launched his unsuccessful bid for the presidency in 2001, his largest obstacle was termed the “potato factor”. He devoted an entire chapter of his autobiography to the incident, claiming that the word was incorrectly spelled on the flashcard, and complaining at the media’s handling of it. But this was not Dan Quayle’s first orthographic blunder: the family Christmas card of 1989 reportedly carried the slogan “May our nation continue to be the beakon of hope to the world,” with the misspelling *beakon* for *beacon*.

The potato incident is a nice example of the way that spelling mistakes are treated today. There is a tendency to view correct spelling as an index of intelligence, moral fiber and general trustworthiness. People who cannot spell properly are considered to be ignorant and slovenly, and certainly should not be trusted with running the free world. But it is perfectly possible to be very intelligent and a poor speller, just as it is perfectly possible to spell accurately and not be terribly bright. After all, correct spelling is really as much a question of rote learning as intelligence. In the case of Dan Quayle, I suspect that the appeal of <sup>(3)</sup> this gaffe to the media was as much about the word itself as the misspelling. He could, of course, have tried to defend his misspelling, by pointing out that this used to be an acceptable variant spelling, and that the plural does have an “e”. What’s

more, it is a very common spelling mistake: try typing it into an Internet search engine and see how many hits you get.

A similar gaffe that made headline news in 2001 was made by then Prime Minister Tony Blair\*, when he misspelled *tomorrow* three times in a memo. There was a characteristic attempt by the New Labour spin doctors to cover this up, blaming it on his flamboyant handwriting, which was prone to extra misleading loops, but the Prime Minister finally owned up that he “had a blind spot about the spelling of ‘tomorrow’”.

But what is the significance of a spelling error? Should we be worried that our world leaders cannot spell words like *potato* and *tomorrow*? Is spelling such a reliable indication of intelligence and moral worth that we should be using it to judge the competence of our political leaders?

<sup>(4)</sup> Even our great literary authors are not safe from censure of their spelling habits. Comments by the editor of an online edition of Jane Austen’s\* unpublished manuscripts about Austen’s attitude to style and punctuation led to a series of sensational articles in the press, expressing shock at her inability to spell. On 23 October 2010, articles appeared under the headlines: “Jane Austen could write – but her spelling was awful” and “How Jane Austen failed at spelling”. One of the fascinating aspects of this response is the way that the journalists ignored the comments about style, focusing instead upon the relatively trivial matters of spelling and punctuation. Should such details matter? After all, these were unpublished manuscripts, not intended for publication. While we have an obsession with the idea of correct spelling, and judge it an important index of intelligence and education, is it appropriate to apply those same standards to an author writing in the early nineteenth century? <sup>(5)</sup> Furthermore, standards of spelling have changed over time, so that what we consider to be incorrect today may well have been viewed as acceptable in the past.

Even if correct spelling might appear to be an arbitrary and irrelevant social yardstick, there is an ( 6 ) argument for the importance of correct spelling. Charles Duncombe, an entrepreneur with various online business interests, has suggested that spelling errors on a website can lead directly to a loss of consumers. This is because spelling mistakes are seen by consumers as a warning sign that a website might be fraudulent, leading shoppers to switch to a rival website in preference. Good spelling is vital if

you want to run a profitable online retail company.

While bad spelling tends to incur heavy condemnation in modern society, good spelling is seen as being a highly praiseworthy virtue, as witnessed by the success of the spelling contest. The huge popularity of spelling contests in the USA is focused on the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., where 265 children, selected from some ten million contestants who take part in regional spelling contests, compete for \$20,000 in total prize money. The contest is broadcast live and the winner becomes an overnight celebrity, typically appearing on numerous talk shows and even meeting the President.

The BBC's version of this popular American phenomenon was *Hard Spell*, a show broadcast on TV, in which 100,000 British school children competed to win the title of *Hard Spell* champion. The winner of the 2004 *Hard Spell* competition, thirteen-year old Gayathri Kumar, successfully spelled words like *troglogyte*, *disequilibrium*, *nyctophobia* and *subpoena*, to defeat fellow finalist Nisha Thomas, who stumbled over the spelling of *dachshund*. Being able to spell such obscure words is indeed an impressive achievement, but one wonders how useful this skill will prove in later life other than as a dinner party trick. A knowledge of the spelling of these words is, of course, quite different from an understanding of their meaning and an ability to use them in correct contexts. Interviewed for the BBC following her success, Kumar explained that she prepared by learning lots of specialized plant, food, and medical terms, highlighting the importance of a good memory to success in spelling.

Because of its tacit support for the English spelling system and its idiosyncrasies and anomalies, the Scripps National Spelling Bee is regularly the target of <sup>(7)</sup> orthographic protests. In 2010 protesters turned up dressed in full-length yellow and black bee costumes, distributing leaflets calling for spelling reform, and badges proclaiming: "enuf is enuf, but enough is too much", "I'm thru with through" and "I laff at laugh". Are these protesters right? Should we really be maintaining such an unnecessarily complex spelling system, and rewarding correct spelling in the ways we do? The following are some of the most commonly misspelled words in the English language: *accommodate*, *embarrassment*, *occasionally*, *supersede*, *separate*, *desiccate*. When I lecture on this topic to undergraduates at Oxford

University, I read out these words and ask them for the correct spelling. It is striking how many students misspell at least half of these common words.

Many intelligent people struggle with English spelling, while others will find it comparatively easy to master. Learning to spell correctly requires remembering numerous unusual and peculiar spelling forms. Some people are just better at this form of rote learning than others. As Mark Twain\* provocatively observed in a speech at the opening of a spelling contest in 1875:

Some people have an idea that correct spelling can be taught, and taught to anybody. That is a mistake. The spelling faculty is born in man, like poetry, music, and art. It is a gift; it is a talent. People who have this talent in high degree need only to see a word once in print and it is forever photographed upon their memory. They cannot forget it. People who haven't it must spell more or less like thunder, and expect to splinter the dictionary wherever their orthographic lightning happens to strike.

Anyone who has struggled with the irregularities and eccentricities of English spelling will have some sympathy with Mark Twain's view.

\*Dan Quayle (1947- ): Former American Vice President

\*George Bush Senior (1924- ): Former American President

\*Tony Blair (1953- ): Former British Prime Minister

\*Jane Austen (1775-1817): British novelist

\*Mark Twain (1835-1910): American novelist