

WRITING AND ITS HISTORY: A CRITICAL STUDY

The development of written language, from its beginning to today, has passed through several stages:

The first stage: pictographs. Pictures were used to reflect certain ideas; multiple images could be used to express complex or abstract ideas. The second stage: ideograms. Ideas were expressed indirectly by using signs that represent the words of the idea that they wanted to express. The third stage: syllabic writing, in this phase pictures were used to express phonetic syllables whose meanings were not represented by the pictures themselves. The syllabic phase is regarded as the real start in the spelling of words as disconnected from the image, and is considered a great development in the history of writing.

The Fourth stage: phonetic symbol, or alphabetic writing. This phase was based on the allocation of one symbol for one sound. The symbols used in writing became equal to the number of sounds that make up the language. This decreased the number of symbols used in writing to around thirty, depending on the language. This development is characterized by ease of use in representing the spoken language. Most of the writings used today represent this fourth stage.

While this current stage of writing has many advantages, several written languages still suffer from a lack of similarity between the written language and spoken language. I will argue that there is much to be gained in ease and efficiency of writing by altering the current spelling systems of major languages such as English or French to make the spelling of words more intuitively connected to their pronunciation. Although this course of action would present significant challenges, I will further show how these challenges can be largely mitigated.

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