

## Re: World's worst software. What's decent?

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**From:** Chuck Harris (cf-NO-SPAM-harris\_at\_erols.com)

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Bill Sloman wrote:

> *Teenagers are are special case – they use aberrant language with the fixed intention of not being understood by the*

> *previous generation. See also "thieve's cant".*

Yes, their intention is to obscure, but look at how the teens quickly change the language that THEY understand. That is evolution at work.

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> *The fact that the U.S. is geographically bigger than England doesn't signify in this context – England has more*

> *different dialects than the US, and a greater variation between the dialects, while Australia, which is about the*

> *same size as the continental U.S.A. has hardly any perceptible regional dialect variation.*

It sounds like you are agreeing with me:

USA large -> few dialects

Australia large -> few dialects

England small -> many dialects

Regions with a large number of dialects are a brewing pot for language change.

Regions with few dialects are an indication of a stable language.

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>> *That being so, it can be argued that what you speak in England is the aberration.*

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>

> *Not really. English is spoken in a lot of places beside England and the U.S.A. and no single dialect has any particular claim to pre-eminence.*

England certainly has pre-eminence to the English language, they are where the language developed. Do they \*control\* the language? No, inspite of their former role in the spread of the language.

The only country that I am aware of that claims eminence over a language is France. But then, they are the center of the known universe ;-)

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> *The aberrant spelling to which the OP was objecting, is a slightly different case. Noah Webster "reformed" American*

> *spelling in 1828*

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> <http://www.ctstateu.edu/noahweb/biography.html>

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> *while the rest of us have stumbled on using Dr.Johnson's spellings. Since English spelling embodies some six*

> *different schemes for coding the phonetics of English into the Latin alphabet, there is probably room for a lot more*

> *reform than Noah Webster's idiosyncratic variations.*

Noah Webster, and Benjamin Franklin wanted to make English spelling phonetic. Their results failed and never gained popularity. I have seen copies of their "reformed" dictionary, and I cannot recall even one of their phonetic spellings that made it into the modern dictionary. Well, that isn't exactly true, if you look at the pronunciation guides, they are really close to what Webster and Franklin proposed.

In today's US English, 60% of the words in the dictionary are pronounced differently from their phonetic pronunciation.

Ample evidence that Webster and Franklin's idea failed.

Where Webster and Franklin did succeed, was in making spelling more uniform. They took a language where spelling varied greatly depending on where you were educated, and provide a reference of American spellings. These spellings were not the simple phonetic spellings that they wanted to have adopted, but rather, the spellings that were commonly used by Webster, Franklin, Jefferson and others. It is interesting to notice that the spellings used by Jefferson in his writings exactly match those in the current American English dictionaries.

-Chuck Harris