

## Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?

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Helmut Richter :

- > Why should it not happen? Yet I consider it improbable. You need four
- > ingredients:
- >
- > 1) a language that has been written for enough time that sound changes
- > could be visible in spelling habits
- >
- > 2) a conservative and irregular orthography where sound changes do not
- > yield spelling changes shortly after
- >
- > 3) an influence of the spelling on the language
- >
- > 4) the absence of conservative dialects
- >
- > For point (2), conservative spelling is not enough. French and German
- > spelling are fairly conservative but also fairly regular. There is no
- > reason that a silent letter is resurrected in the pronunciation when
- > \*all\* letters in that position are silent.

I'm not sure which (of the above, and/or other) conditions should apply to the following case, as I'm not sure of the time and circumstances in which it happened. (Though not through the kids, I'd think; it would rather have been a 'normative' initiative in influential circles).

I mean the re-establishing of the final -r in French initiatives. At one time they were all lost in speech: "aime:", "fini:". Then it was agreed (some may remind me how) to try and restore the -er and -ir pronunciation. Only the -ir bit got through however: finir, ouvrir. AimeR, alleR didn't make it.

Also, in my Larousse etymo-dico (only centered on French and hardly ever referring beyond Latin BTW, typically F) I came along several words that have been "re-latinised" by restoring, spelling- and sound-wise, letters that by the time were gone in speech. This seems a case however, not of orthography restoring sounds, but of taking wrongly or rightly to ancestral Latin).

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- **References:**

- ◆ **Orthography supporting sound changes?**

- ◇ *From:* Joachim Pense

- ◆ **Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?**

- ◇ *From:* Helmut Richter

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