

## Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?

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*Source:* <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-01/msg00723.html>

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- *From:* "Seán O'Leathlóbhair" <jwlawler@xxxxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* 8 Jan 2006 10:29:12 -0800
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Peter T. Daniels wrote:

> Aidan Kehoe wrote:

>

>>> So you switched the topic, without notice, from spelling pronunciation  
>>> to "language shift." They may look to you like the same thing, but they  
>>> most assuredly aren't.

>>

>> The topic was how spelling pronunciation interacts with sound changes. I  
>> haven't seen anything ruling out language shifts between related dialects  
>> and the changes of sound inherent in that as "sound changes" in the  
>> specialised sense, and indeed the definitions I've seen leave room for such  
>> an interpretation; please provide something ruling this out, if you have it.

>

> No. Scientists don't bother thinking up explanations for why every  
> imaginable contingency does not occur. You provide an example of it  
> happening, and we'll try to explain why it does.

Depends on the science. Mathematicians frequently study why things don't happen. A famous example being Fermat's Last Theorem. A huge amount of effort has been expended over the years to prove that something does not happen. Squaring the circle and trisecting angles are other examples of a lot of effort spent on proving something impossible.

If a scientist (hard sciences anyway) said that something could not happen, I would expect him to be willing to explain why he thought that. It seems very strange to me that in linguistics, you are allowed to say that something cannot happen yet refuse to justify your claim. Do you see a difference between "has not happened yet" and "cannot happen"? If you are merely saying that something has not happened then I would feel it sufficient to justify it by saying: "Can you show me a case when it did happen?". But if you are saying that something cannot happen then I would expect a better justification.

> And spelling pronunciations have nothing whatsoever to do with sound  
> change.

>

> I cleaned up your fucking curly quotes, and your paragraph isn't any  
> more sensible.

Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?

> --

> Peter T. Daniels [grammatim@xxxxxxx](mailto:grammatim@xxxxxxx)

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Seán O'Leathlóbhair

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• *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ [Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?](#)  
◇ *From:* Colin Fine
- ◆ [Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?](#)  
◇ *From:* Peter T. Daniels

• *References:*

- ◆ [Orthography supporting sound changes?](#)  
◇ *From:* Joachim Pense
- ◆ [Re: Orthography supporting sound changes?](#)  
◇ *From:* Helmut Richter
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