Bad Writing

developing a complex orthography: the tale of writing in Zevy
A quick history of Zevy writing
the symbols of zevy writing

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{p} & \text{b} & \text{t} & \text{d} \\
\text{v} & \text{s} & \text{z} & \text{r}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cc}
\text{k} & \text{g} \\
\text{h}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{א} & \text{ז} & \text{ט} & \text{כ}
\end{array}
\]
early zevy writing: one-to-one sound correspondence

“a boring shoe in a brown box”

brown    box    in    boring    shoe
early zevy writing: one-to-one sound correspondence

“a boring shoe in a brown box”

A scribe in a different dialect might write the same words differently (just as they speak them differently)
early zevy writing: one-to-one sound correspondence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>brown</th>
<th>box</th>
<th>in</th>
<th>boring</th>
<th>shoe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;a boring shoe in a brown box&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A scribe in a different dialect might write the same words differently (just as they speak them differently)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>circle</th>
<th>under</th>
<th>square</th>
<th>in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;in the square under the circle&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
modern zevy writing: complex sound correspondence

“a boring shoe in a brown box”

“in the square under the circle”
Deep vs shallow orthographies

Shallow orthographies tend to represent sounds more directly, e.g. Swahili.
Deep vs shallow orthographies

Deep orthographies tend to pull from some combination of these:
- surface sounds
- allophony
- phonemes
- word-by-word memorization
- morphophonology
- sound changes
- source languages

Shallow orthographies tend to represent sounds more directly:
- e.g. Swahili

E.g. English, French
Deep vs shallow orthographies
we have both in english! sort of...

Deep

low-fidelity
What do you think, though?
The kids are bopping to KIDZ BOP
I have said enough!

Shallow

lo-fi
what do u think tho
The kids are bopping to KIDZ BOP
nuff said

phonemes
word-by-word memorization
morphophonology
sound changes
source languages

surface sounds
allophony
Three principles of deep orthographies

1. Don’t get it write the first time


3. Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed
Principle one: Don’t get it write the first time
Don’t get it write the first time

• Not everything that’s spoken needs to be written down
  • Humans are great at noise correction!
    • Even in speech, listeners can “hear” sounds that were lost

• Writing has the further advantage that the reader can reread!

it’s all thanks to me, the phoneme restoration ghost
Don’t get it write the first time

- Writers are lazy!
- *Especially* when writing by hand
  - Jotting down quick notes?
  - Transcribing long texts?

Yikes! Take shortcuts!

Work less, relax more 😎
Don’t get it write the first time

- Writers are lazy, less is more
- This creates a tension between the writer and the reader that may be familiar:

**Ease of articulation**
Speech: easy to say
Writing: easy to transcribe

**Ease of perception**
Speech: easy to hear
Writing: easy to read
Don’t get it write the first time
Examples in natural languages

• Abjads!

Can we skip the vowels? I bet the reader will do just fine!

Sure! Works well enough for me

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Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy
Don’t get it write the first time

How this played out in early Zevy

1. Spaces? What spaces?

eneu keki
“special pair”

ene ukeke
“famous coat”
Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy

1. Spaces? What spaces?
2. Ligatures galore, even across words! Because… no spaces, remember?

ene ukeke
“famous coat”

eneu keki
“special pair”
all the vowel ligatures!

Many of these only occur across word boundaries, rather than inside a word, but all are common because ligatures can span words.

*Technically speaking, morpheme
all the vowel ligatures!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel</th>
<th>Ligature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ae</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ao</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ea</td>
<td>ea</td>
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<tr>
<td>ee</td>
<td>e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ei</td>
<td>ee</td>
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<tr>
<td>eu</td>
<td>eo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ie</td>
<td>i</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii</td>
<td>i</td>
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<td>iu</td>
<td>i</td>
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<td>io</td>
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<td>ua</td>
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<td>ue</td>
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<td>uu</td>
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<td>uo</td>
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<tr>
<td>oa</td>
<td>o</td>
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<tr>
<td>oe</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oi</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ou</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oo</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

only these two remain unjoined!
vowel ligatures!

For most ligatures, the position of the second character shows whether it comes first or second.
vowel ligatures!

For most ligatures, the position of the second character shows whether it comes first or second.

But:
The tail of the “u” character always comes first.
vowel ligatures!

For most ligatures, the position of the second character shows whether it comes first or second.

The tail of the “o” character always comes last.
vowel ligatures!

For most ligatures, the position of the second character shows whether it comes first or second.

But:

The tail of the “u” character always comes first.

Taken together, these rules create three pairs of sounds that are each spelled identically.

The tail of the “o” character always comes last.
Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy

1. Spaces? What spaces?
2. Ligatures galore, even across words! Because… no spaces, remember?
3. Let’s keep the tails consistent, not the sound order

atu at
“instantly go”

atau “your son”
Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy

1. Spaces? What spaces?
2. Ligatures galore, even across words! Because… no spaces, remember?
3. Let’s keep the tails consistent, not the sound order

atu at
“instantly go”

atuat, a tuat, atuat, atu at, atua t

atuau, a tua, at ua, atu a
atuau, a tau, at au, ata u

atu at
“your son”

atuat, a tuat, at uat, at uat, atua t

atuau, a tua, at ua, atu a
atuau, a tau, at au, ata u
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How this played out in early Zevy

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4. While we’re at it, let’s not write long vowels when we don’t have to

eneu keki
“special pair”

ene ukeke
“famous coat”
Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy

All of these are long vowels, but only word-internal are marked.
This is because vowels are always long at the end of a word.
Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy

1. Spaces? What spaces?
2. Ligatures galore, even across words! Because… no spaces, remember?
3. Let’s keep the tails consistent, not the sound order
4. While we’re at it, let’s not write long vowels when we don’t have to
5. Look, we can save time by abbreviating postpositions!

kou suun bobu me
“in the square under the circle”
spatial abbreviations!

- suun
  - under
  - below
  - bottom of

- muun
  - on
  - above
  - top of

- teen
  - to
  - towards
  - go to
  - -going
  - -bound

- deeden
  - from
  - come from

- me
  - in
  - inside
  - part of

- ni
  - with
spatial abbreviations!

**Problem**
Knowing how much space you need for the opening marker *ahead of time* is hard

**Solution**
Only write the first opening marker; all other markers have only the closing marker
### Spatial Abbreviations, Modified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>suun</td>
<td>under -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bottom of -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muun</td>
<td>on -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>above -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>top of -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teen</td>
<td>to -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>towards -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>go to -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deeden</td>
<td>from -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>come from -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>in -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inside -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>part of -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ni</td>
<td>with -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
spatial abbreviations, modified

- suun
  under -
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uh oh
spatial abbreviations, modified

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  below -
  bottom of -

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  top of -

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phew
Don’t get it write the first time
How this played out in early Zevy

1. Spaces? What spaces?
2. Ligatures galore, even across words! Because… no spaces, remember?
3. Let’s keep the tails consistent, not the sound order
4. While we’re at it, let’s not write long vowels when we don’t have to
5. Look, we can save time by abbreviating spatial relations!

= 

Lots of complexity built up very early on!
Three principles of deep orthographies

1. Don’t get it write the first time ✓


3. Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed
Principle two:

Standardize.
Standardise.
Standardize.
Standardise

- Individual scribes -> Printing press = Standards easier to enforce
- But… by whom?
Standardize
US vs UK (or both)

• -or (directly from Latin) vs -our (through Old French, now -eur in Modern French)

It's an hono(u)r to make your acquaintance on this colo(u)rful day, but I'm afraid I don't know the honorific for one of your level of glamour
Standardise

US vs UK (or both)

- *-re* (from French, Latin, or Greek) vs *-er* (matching the pronunciation)

The meter measured the metres it would take to get to the theater to perform theatre
Standardize

US vs UK (or both)

• -ize (directly from Greek) vs -ise (through French)

I realize that you must analyse the way you want to... improvize?
Standardise
How this played out in early Zevy

the cultural center of the Zevy linguosphere vs the administrative capital of the Zevy political sphere

the Bemi dialect “Literary” vs the Kuuvi dialect “Capital”

MATCH AT 5 O’CLOCK! GET YOUR TICKETS NOW
Standardise

How this played out in early Zevy

the Bemi dialect
   “Literary”

vs

the Kuuvi dialect
   “Capital”

STARRING IN

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/
Standardize
The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

1. The diphthong /ui/ existed in Old Zevy, but merged with /oi/ by Middle Zevy

2. Synchronous derivations and inflections that would create /ui/ were also spoken as /oi/ instead

3. Before the printing press, scribes varied in how they would render this in writing according to personal preference
Standardize
The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

- The Matrama publishing house set the direction when they made a decision to always respect etymology, using **oi** and **ui**
Standardize

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

- The Matrama publishing house set the direction when they made a decision to always respect etymology, using *oi* and *ui*

- Early iterations of the government drafting style was shifting in the opposite direction, using *oi* consistently

The **Bemi** dialect

“Literary”

The **Kuuvi** dialect

“Capital”
Standardize

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

The Matrama publishing house set the direction when they made a decision to always respect etymology, using *oi* and *ui*.

Early iterations of the government drafting style was shifting in the opposite direction, using *oi* consistently.

An exception! The *ui* ligature could be used to distinguish words which were homophones, such as *zui* "victory" vs *zoi* "sight" (both pronounced /zoi/).
Standardize

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

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- Similarly, they disambiguated **kou** "space" from **kuu** "circle"
Standardize
The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

the Bemi dialect
“Literary”

- The Matrama publishing house set the direction when they made a decision to always respect etymology, using *oi* and *ui*
- Since there was no *u* in the etymology of any of these words, Matrama resisted this change, preferring homonyms

the Kuuvi dialect
“Capital”

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The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

the **Bemi dialect**

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- Since there was no **u** in the etymology of any of these words, Matrama resisted this change, preferring homonyms
- Moreover, due to a different suffix, Bemi speech already had **koun** "space" vs **kou** "circle"

the **Kuuvi dialect**

“Capital”

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Standardize

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

**the Bemi dialect**

“Literary”

- The Matrama publishing house set the direction when they made a decision to always respect etymology, using **oi** and **ui**
- Since there was no u in the etymology of any of these words, Matrama resisted this change, preferring homonyms
- Moreover, due to a different suffix, Bemi speech already had **koun** "space" vs **kou** "circle"
- The clout of the publishing houses ultimately ended up winning the battle of etymology

**the Kuuvi dialect**

“Capital”

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- Similarly, they disambiguated **kou** "space" from **kuu** "circle"
Standardize
The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

the **Bemi** dialect

“Literary”

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- Since there was no *u* in the etymology of any of these words, Matrama resisted this change, preferring homonyms
- Moreover, Bemi speech already had **koun** "space" vs **kou** "circle"
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the **Kuuvi** dialect

“Capital”

- Early iterations of the government drafting style was shifting in the opposite direction, using *oi* consistently
- An exception! The *ui* ligature could be used to distinguish words which were homophones, such as *zui* "victory" vs *zoi* "sight" (both pronounced /zoi/)
- Similarly, they disambiguated **kou** "space" from **kuu** "circle"
- But through the education system, the capital added and enforced its disambiguating changes
Standardize
The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

- Today, Zevy exists in a situation of light diglossia
- The two dialects remain prominent and distinct in spoken language, and are roughly 90 percent mutually intelligible
- Meanwhile, there is a single written standard used throughout the Zevy linguosphere
Standardize
The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

the **Bemi** dialect
“Literary”

the **Kuuvi** dialect
“Capital”

Standard Written Zevy

• “fish” as **nui**, due to an etymological **u**, despite the fact that it had no homophones
  • a remnant of the transitional Literary standard

/ noi /
Standardize

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

the Bemi dialect
“Literary”

the Kuuvi dialect
“Capital”

Standard Written Zevy

• /zoi/ "victory" as zui, to disambiguate it from /zoi/ zoi "sight", despite the fact that it had no etymological u

• a remnant of the transitional Capital standard

/zoi/
Standardize

The Great Debacle of /oi/ and /ou/

the Bemi dialect
“Literary”

the Kuuvi dialect
“Capital”

Standard Written Zevy

- "circle" as kuu, which ironically became redundant as kou "space" was eventually supplanted by koun in both dialects
- a remnant of the interaction between the two transitional standards

/kou/

/koun/
Standardize fossilizing affixes

the **Bemi** dialect
“Literary”

the **Kuuvi** dialect
“Capital”

**Standard Written Zevy**

- other words like **teisun** “brown” retained the -un suffix of the Bemi dialect, even though the Kuuvi dialect reduced this to /u/ in speech

/teisun/ /teisu/
Standardize
ganging up on the smaller dialects

the Bemi dialect
“Literary”

the Kuuvi dialect
“Capital”

Standard Written Zevy

• long vowels, which existed in both major dialects, were written, but long consonants, which existed only in smaller dialects, were not written

/daka/  ✔  /dakka/  ❌
Bemi & Kuuvi
everyone else
Three principles of deep orthographies

1. Don’t get it write the first time ✓


3. Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed
Principle three:
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed

English: Great vowel shift
**Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed**

**Zevy: Impact of historically long vowels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Written Zevy</th>
<th>Middle Zevy</th>
<th>intervening period</th>
<th>Modern Zevy Kuuvi</th>
<th>Modern Zevy Bemi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dit “me”</td>
<td>/dit/</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>/dit/</td>
<td>/dit/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diit “change”</td>
<td>/diit/</td>
<td>/djit/ length to onglide</td>
<td>/zit/ affricatization + eventual fricativization</td>
<td>/dzit/ stopped at affricatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiri “rope”</td>
<td>/tiri/</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>/tiri/</td>
<td>/tiri/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiiri “perceive”</td>
<td>/tiiri/</td>
<td>/tjiri/ length to onglide</td>
<td>/tsiri/ affricatization</td>
<td>/tsiri/ affricatization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This merger of /d/ with /z/ before historically long vowels is a distinct marker of the Kuuvi dialect.
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed
Zevy: Impact of historically word-final consonants

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td><strong>dit</strong> “me”</td>
<td>/dit/</td>
<td></td>
<td>/dit/ [dih]</td>
<td>/dit/ [dɪθ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diit “change”</td>
<td>/diit/</td>
<td>Kuuvi generally renders /i/ as [i] in free-morpheme monosyllables, but Bemi does. Both tend towards [ɪ] in polysyllabic morphemes</td>
<td>/dɪt/ [zih]</td>
<td>/dɪt/ [zɪθ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dit su “by me”</td>
<td>dit suun “under me”</td>
<td>The vowel in the postpositions su and mu merges with the schwa in Kuuvi, but retains its distinct quality in Bemi</td>
<td>/dɪtsu/ [dɪθsə]</td>
<td>/dɪtsu/ [dɪθsə]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diit me “in change”</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>/zɪtme/ [zɪθmɛ]</td>
<td>/dztme/ [dztθmɛ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two dialects disagree on the value of /t/ at the end of phonological word...

...but agree on its value at the end of a phonological morpheme within
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed
Zevy: More impacts of historically long vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Middle Zevy</th>
<th>intervening period</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kuuvi</td>
<td>Bemi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>isiit</strong></td>
<td>/isiit/</td>
<td>/isjit/ length to onglide</td>
<td>/iɕit/ [iɕɪh]</td>
<td>/iʑit/ [iʑɪh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“seated”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>isi</strong></td>
<td>/isi/</td>
<td>/isji/ length to onglide</td>
<td>/iɕi/ [iɕɛ]</td>
<td>/iʑi/ [iʑɛ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sit”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>isit</strong></td>
<td>/isit/</td>
<td>/izit/ intervocalic voicing</td>
<td>/iʑit/ [iʑɪh]</td>
<td>/iʑit/ [iʑɪh]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“town”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>si</strong></td>
<td>from disi</td>
<td>irregular; hypothesized to have been hypercorrected by analogy with the similar abbreviation /tis/ from tide</td>
<td>/zi/ [zɪ]</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“am”</td>
<td>“I am”</td>
<td>/disji/ length to onglide</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>/ɕi/ [ɕɪ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/disii/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Bemi: intervocalic /ɕ/ is voiced
- Kuuvi: intervocalic /ɕ/ is not voiced
- Both dialects: intervocalic /s/ is voiced
- Kuuvi: pronunciation of copula is irregular
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed

Zevy: Sound mergers
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed

Zevy: Sound mergers

ei → ei → ai
oi → oi

eu → eu → ou

Kuuvi
“Capital” → /kəʊvi/
Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed

Zevy: Sound mergers

New homophones:
keimí = koimí
“fiction” “problem”

mau = mou
“strike” “puncture”
Three principles of deep orthographies

1. Don’t get it write the first time ✅


3. Watch words drift as you refuse to let go of the passed ✅
modern zevy writing: complex sound correspondence

ligatures

sound changes

spatial abbreviations

me

“a boring shoe in a brown box”

homophone disambiguation

unstressed vowel deletion

me

“in the square under the circle”
Questions?

Standardize.
Standardise.
Standardise.

Don’t get it
write the first
time

Watch words drift
as you refuse to let
go of the passed

Principles of deep orthographies

- surface sounds
- allophony
- phonemes
- word-by-word memorization
- morphophonology
- sound changes
- source languages

¿zehi mu?

And there’s more on Zevy at connotes.interlocutor.io

Fin!