Exercises

1. A. "Write" the following words and phrases, using pictograms that you invent:
   a. eye
   b. a boy
   c. two boys
   d. library
   e. tree
   f. forest
   g. war
   h. honesty
   i. ugly
   j. run
   k. Scotch tape
   l. smoke

B. Which words are most difficult to symbolize in this way? Why?

C. How does the following sentence reveal the problems in pictographic writing?
   "A grammar represents the unconscious, internalized linguistic competence of a native speaker."

2. A rebus is a written representation of words or syllables that uses pictures of objects whose names resemble the sounds of the intended words or syllables. For example, ☯️ might be the symbol for "eye" or "I" or the first syllable in "idea."

A. Using the rebus principle, "write" the following words:
   a. tearing
   b. icicle
   c. bareback
   d. cookies

B. Why would such a system be a difficult system in which to represent all words in English? Illustrate with an example.

3. A. Construct non-Roman alphabetic letters to replace the letters used to represent the following sounds in English:
   t r s k w tʃ i æ f n

B. Use these symbols plus the regular alphabet symbols for the other sounds to write the following words in your "new" orthography.
   a. character
   b. guest
   c. cough
d. photo
e. cheat
f. rang
g. psychotic
h. tree

4. Suppose the English writing system were a syllabic system instead of an alphabetic system. Use capital letters to symbolize the necessary syllabic units for the following words, and list your “syllabary.” Example: Given the words mate, inmate, intake, and elfin, you might use: A = mate, B = in, C = take, and D = elf. In addition, write the words using your syllabary. Example: inmate—BA; elfin—DB; intake—BC; mate—A. (Do not use more syllable symbols than you absolutely need.)

a. childishness
b. childlike
c. Jesuit
d. lifelessness
e. likely
f. zoo
g. witness
h. lethal
i. jealous
j. witless
k. lesson

5. In the following pairs of English words, the bold-faced portions are pronounced the same but spelled differently. Can you think of any reason why the spelling should remain distinct? (Hint: Reel and real are pronounced the same, but reality shows the presence of a phonemic /æl/ in real.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I am</td>
<td>iamb</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. goose</td>
<td>produce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. fashion</td>
<td>complication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Newton</td>
<td>organ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. no</td>
<td>know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. hymn</td>
<td>him</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. In the following pairs of words, the bold-faced portions are spelled the same but pronounced differently. Try to state some reasons why the spelling of the words in column B should not be changed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. mingle</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>The g is pronounced in longer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. line</td>
<td>children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Each of the following sentences is ambiguous in the written form. How can these sentences be made unambiguous when they are spoken?

*Example: John hugged Bill and then he kissed him.*

For the meaning “John hugged and kissed Bill,” use normal stress (*kissed* receives stress). For the meaning “Bill kissed John,” contrastive stress is needed on both *he* and *him.*

a. What are we having for dinner, Mother?

b. She’s a German language teacher.

c. They formed a student grievance committee.

d. Charles kissed his wife and George kissed his wife too.

8. In the written form, the following sentences are not ambiguous, but they would be if spoken. State the devices used in writing that make the meanings explicit.

a. They’re my brothers’ keepers.

b. He said, “He will take the garbage out.”

c. The red book was read.

d. The flower was on the table.

9. Match the ten samples of writing and the ten languages. There are enough hints in this chapter to get most of them. (The source of these examples, and many others, is *Languages of the World* by Kenneth Katzner, 1975, New York: Funk & Wagnalls.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>sonar</td>
<td>resound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>cent</td>
<td>mystic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>crumble</td>
<td>bomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>cats</td>
<td>dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>stagnant</td>
<td>design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>serene</td>
<td>obscenity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>Cherokee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>German (Gothic style)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Greek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Korean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j.</td>
<td>Twi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.
10. The following appeared on the safety card of a Spanish airline. Identify each language.

1. *Para su seguridad*
2. *For your safety*
3. *Pour votre sécurité*
4. *Für ihre Sicherheit*
5. *Per la Vostra sicurezza*
6. *Para sua segurança*
7. あなたの安全のために
8. *Для Вашей безопасности*
9. *Dla bezpieczeństwa pasażerów*
10. *Za vašu sigurnost*
11. *Γιά την άσφαλεια σας*
12. *Kendi emniyetiniz için*
13. *من أجل سلامتك*

11. Diderot and D’Alembert, the French “Encyclopedists,” wrote:

The Chinese have no alphabet; their very language is incompatible with one, since it is made up of an extremely limited number of sounds. It would be impossible to convey the sound of Chinese through our alphabet or any other alphabet.

Comment on this.

12. Here are several emoticons. See if you can assign a meaning to each one. There is no one correct answer because they haven’t been in the language long enough to become conventionalized. One possible set of answers is printed upside down in the footnote.6

a. >:-(
b. :-#
c. 8:---
d. :D
e. :-o
f. :-o

g. |-
h. :)  

13. Just as words may be synonyms (*sad, unhappy*), so may emoticons. Thus :-

and :-) are both used to mean “just kidding.”
A. If you are a user of electronic communication, try to think of three instances in which different emoticons have approximately the same meaning.

B. Emoticons may also be ambiguous, that is, subject to different interpretations. You may have discovered that in the previous exercise. Cite three instances in which a single emoticon may be given two different interpretations.

14. Make up five or ten emoticons along with their meaning. Don’t just look them up somewhere. Be creative! For example, 3:>8 to mean “bull!”

15. Punctuate the following with periods, commas, semicolons, and capital letters so that it makes sense:

that that is is that is not is not that is not is not that is that is is not that that is not

16. Think of three (or more) “majority rules” sound-spelling correspondences, and then the several exceptions to each one that make learning to read English difficult. In the text we noted words like brave, cave, Dave, gave, slave, etc. in which a followed by “silent e” is pronounced [e], but have is exceptional in that the a is pronounced [æ]. Another example might be the ea spelling in beak, leak, peak, weak, teak, where it is pronounced [i], with exceptions such as steak or the president’s name Reagan, where the ea is pronounced [æ], or the past tense of read where it is pronounced [e].

17. Investigate nushu using the time-honored template of answering: what, who, where, when, and why. Using the Internet, a good library, or any other source, answer the questions:
   a. What is nushu?
   b. Who was involved with nushu?
   c. Where did nushu exist?
   d. When did nushu exist?
   e. Why did nushu exist?
   f. Speculative: Can you think of a situation in your own country that might give rise to a “nushu-like situation”?