FINAL REPORT ON A STUDY IN GENERATIVE ORTHOGRAPHY

Marc L. Schnitzer, La Universidad de Puerto Rico,
Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

The primary contact which many non-native speakers have with the English language is visual. Thus, there exist many competent readers of English who are ignorant of pronunciation. In the past, English pronunciation has been taught in a case-by-case fashion, without regard to principles relating orthography to pronunciation.

This is a report on the efficacy of teaching the pronunciation of English polysyllables to non-native speakers by means of ordered rules which use standard orthographic representations as underlying forms. These rules were tested on two groups consisting mainly of francophones. Both groups were asked to read lists of English words ending in nineteen different suffixes representing fifteen different word classes. The experimental group applied ordered quasiphonological rules to selected words from each of the fifteen word classes being tested. The control group performed repetition exercises on these same words.

A two tailed Mann-Whitney U-test shows that the absolute improvement and relative improvement of the experimental group as compared to the control group are significant at the .02 and .002 level, respectively.

Pedagogical and psycholinguistic implications are noted.