

SPELLING ERRORS AND LINGUISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Ivan and Peter Fónagy, C.N.R.S. (Paris), Department of Psychology, University College (London)

Through a sample of 10 000 spelling errors made by Hungarian children we attempted to make inferences about the linguistic consciousness of these children (Fónagy, I. and P., 1971).

Results

- (1) Spelling errors may reflect changes in functional relevance and might be indicative of phonetic change.
- (2) The omission of vowels, rare after 8 years, seems to result from a tendency to associate graphemes with syllables.
- (3) The correspondence between looser pronunciation and greater number of consonants omitted could be interpreted in terms of correspondence between the degree of phonetic distinctness and the degree of consciousness.
- (4) Consonant substitutions can be predicted by the phonetic assimilation laws. Errors showed no tendency on the part of the child to trace back superficial phonetic structures to possible underlying systematic phonemic ones.
- (5) Word separation errors reflect the child's consciousness of semantic units.

Reference

Fónagy, I. and P. (1971): "How to make use of spelling errors (in Hungarian)", *Nyelvör* 95, 70-89.