

ANALYSIS OF THE MOST COMMON SPELLING ERRORS IN ENGLISH FOR SAUDI STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF FOUNDATION YEAR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Most second language learners of English, including Saudi learners at universities, face some challenges with English writing, especially in spelling. These difficulties are attributed to several causes, such as the differences between English and Arabic. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the most spelling errors made by the first year Saudi female students. Also, to define the main factors behind the weakness of students' spelling. Additionally, to suggest some effective teaching approaches to improve spelling instruction. This study adopted Cook's classification of errors, which categorized errors into four categories: substitution, insertion, omission, and transposition. Participants of this study are 80 female students and ten English language teachers. The

data was collected through writing a task and a survey. The analysis of errors revealed that errors of omission were the highest proportion of errors with a percentage of (41.55%), whereas substitution spelling errors occur as the lowest frequency with a percentage of (24.65%). Followed by insertion errors with a percentage of (19.72%). The lowest percentage of errors were related to errors of transposition with the proportion of (14.08%). The major cause of the students' spelling errors was the linguistic differences between English and Arabic.

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INTRODUCTION

Saudi universities are currently in a race to obtain higher levels of students' learning outcomes in order to fulfill the Saudi vision of 2030. English language is a critical foundation for the majority of graduate and postgraduate programs in Saudi universities. Most universities in the kingdom have started some English programs to develop student English language proficiency. The majority of Saudi students face different difficulties when they start studying the English language at the university level, due to the low level

of English language skills they achieved in high schools. Although some students had prepared by studying some intensive courses before they attended universities in order to meet their university requirements, the majority did not have such a chance.

In fact, learning a new language is a big challenge. Students during the learning process should master the four basic skills of a language (listening, writing, reading, and speaking). It has been noted that so many English language learners, including Arabic learners, have issues with spelling in English that affects English sentence structure and causes the mispronunciation of words.

In general, teaching writing skills is one of the most complex and difficult areas of language teaching and learning in the context of Saudi students. Spelling is a significant challenge for most beginner learners of English. It is an important element of writing. Hildreth (1955) mentioned that correct spelling is necessary for good manners and bad spelling may create the impression of bad education.

This study attempted to explore the difficulties faced by students with spelling competence. It is focused in particular on the spelling proficiency of first-year female students at the University of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. In an attempt to identify errors among their spelling errors that can help explain the difficulties they face with English spelling. Students in foundation year face many challenges when they write in English, especially in spelling. Most of the students failed the first-year English courses for several reasons, and spelling appears to be the main difficulty they face. Teaching or learning English as a second or foreign language is challenging where learners are expected to commit errors. We have to study the main difficulties that students face in English writing. This study classified and analyzed the most common types of spelling errors in English writing committed by first-year female students at university, defended some factors that were behind the weakness of students' spelling, and provided some effective teaching approaches to improve spelling instruction .

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.

This study has three certain limitations: Firstly, only written text was used in the data collection for this study. Therefore, this study did not implement an examination of spelling errors made by listening. Secondly, the study was only conducted with a small group of first-year female students. In the meanwhile, most university students face the same challenges in English writing. Thirdly, the data was collected in Saudi Arabia, thus the findings can only be attributed to Saudi or Arab students of similar conditions and

backgrounds. Similar research on ESL Saudi students can produce different results due to variations in the environment, teachers, instruction, instructional methods used by the teachers, and other linguistic and cultural variables.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

This study aims to investigate the following research questions:

1. *What are the most types of spelling errors committed by foundation-year level students?*
2. *Why do foundation-year level students make spelling errors in English writing?* [1]
3. *What are the most effective teaching approaches that may improve spelling instruction?*

LITERATURE REVIEW .

English Writing for Second Language Learners.

Speaking and writing are both productive skills since they require learners to produce language. L2 writing has always been used to practice or test speaking skills; however, it has lately become an essential requirement for students pursuing professional and academic programs . Despite its importance in the SLA field, L2 writing has not received that much focus until recently. Due to the dominant role of speaking skills in the 1960s that was supported by the audio-lingual method, the role of writing in learning an L2 was limited and vastly ignored (Matsuda, 2003, pp. 15-16). Matsuda also mentioned that, unlike speaking, L2 writing did not get the researchers' attention and became an issue until the last decade. The early appearance of writing in L2 courses was under the umbrella of controlled composition in which writers' compositions were limited to the sentence-level structure. Furthermore, Matsuda stated that, unlike speaking, L2 writing did not attract the attention of researchers until the last decade and became a problem. Governed composition, in which writers' compositions were limited to the sentence-level structure, was the first form of writing in L2 classes.

According to behavioral theory, this method was thought to be ideal because it helped to prevent the learner's errors, according to Pincas (1982), (as cited in Matsuda, 2003, pp. 19- 20). Later attempts, such as guided composition and organizational structure, were made to provide more freedom in the L2 composition (Matsuda, 2003). Matsuda further said that in the late 1970s, the emphasis on texts shifted to Vivian Zamel's 1976 concept of writing as a process. In addition to textual features such as syntax and discourse structures, Zamel claimed that writing in L2 should be viewed as a process. Many educators have begun to shift their methodological focus away from the written

text and toward the writing process itself. As a result, many intervention strategies, such as involving different drafts and emphasizing the importance of feedback, were introduced to this field.

Errors Analysis .

Before we proceed to error analysis, we should differentiate between errors and mistakes. Though errors and mistakes both have the same meaning: they cause something to fail. Whether the term "error" is commonly used in computer or program systems, while the term "mistakes" is commonly used in everyday conversation. The term 'error' is highly acceptable in formal or technical contexts, according to an article titled 'Difference between Error and Mistakes' accessed on June 15th, 2014. The word 'error' is more appropriate in scientific or highly technical contexts. In the world of computing and programming, the term 'error' is more appropriate to describe a mistake or flaw, particularly in coding and processes. 'System Error' is better than 'System Mistake'. On the other hand, 'mistake' is more commonly used in informal English conversation. Though the word 'error' may still be used in exchange, it will often sound artificial or technical. It would be awkward to say something like, "It was an error." "I'm sorry!", to your friend. However, "It was all a mistake," is a more natural-sounding statement. "I'm sorry!"

According to Brown (2000), mistakes and errors are technically distinct phenomena. A mistake is a performance error that is either a random guess or a 'slip' in that it is the failure to correctly use a known system. Mistakes and errors must be distinguished carefully. A mistake can be self-corrected, whereas an error cannot.

In terms of errors analysis, Corder (1967) described (EA) as a method in which a researcher or an instructor collects samples of the learners' language in order to detect, explain, and classify the errors in terms of their causes and existence. The importance of EA in SLA can be summed up in three statements: (1) it acts as a red flag for the learners' L2 knowledge; (2) it can be used by the learners as a guide to explore L2 rules; and (3) it facilitates teachers and researchers in defining L2 learning processes (Corder, 1967; as cited in Hamid and Doan, 2014).

There are several studies conducted on Error Analysis. Among them, Stapa and Izahar (2010), conducted an error analysis study that focused on subject-verb agreement. Twenty post-graduate teacher trainees majoring in English Language Studies at a Malaysian college participated in this study. All participants had studied English for at

least 16 years and considered it to be their second language. The teacher candidates were expected to write one factual essay and one argumentative essay to help in the data collection for this report. Each essay had a time limit of 40 minutes. Surprisingly, this study concluded that even at the postgraduate stage, ESL learners experienced difficulty with subject-verb agreement.

Similarly, Dipolog-Ubanan (2016) conducted a study to examine error analysis among students. The study involved 30 students from Mainland China whose first language (L1) was Mandarin with English as their second language. The researcher's tools in this study were surveys and interviews. Also, the students were required to write a paragraph of 150 words in English, and the researchers examined the errors in their writing regarding lexis, syntax, and grammar. They also conducted interviews with the students, in which they asked about the challenges they had with writing. The results showed that the most common writing errors made by Chinese students were in word choice, word form, and grammar. Additionally, the majority of Chinese students believed that mastering grammar was the most difficult aspect of learning English.

Another study carried out by Nair et al. (2018) on error analyses and contrastive analyses to investigate the types of writing errors made by students. However, 120 students from six rural schools in Pahang, Selangor, and Melaka were examined to see just what types of writing errors they made. They reported that the main issue with Malaysian students' writing was an inability to use proper English grammar, including the use of inaccurate articles. Students have struggled with subject-verb agreement and the use of the verb to be. Gedion et al. (2016) On the other hand, conducted a study to examine the syntactical errors in descriptive writing among students in a polytechnic college. In this study, the researchers collected data from the descriptive essays written by the students. According to the study, most students made errors in spelling, followed by errors in punctuation, sentence fragments, syntax, preposition, and verbs.

Spelling Errors .

Spelling is the way writers can express their ideas clearly (Cook, 1992). It is one of the most important factors of successful writing and the basic element of English language learning in general. Good writing is effectively based on spelling. Therefore, perfect spelling is the main target of both students and teachers in universities when teaching English. Spelling has been and will always be the key to our society's success, and we need to provide a solid spelling foundation for all students. Feeling comfortable

with spelling contributes to confidence in all aspects of language. Correcting spelling is a fundamental and important process in education, as it is a key feature in the growth of an individual's culture and the social need to convey and express ideas and to take a stand on the ideas of others.

Previous Studies that Addressed Spelling Errors for A native Speaker and Non- native Speakers.

Bowen (2011) highlighted the study of spelling as a matter of writing, not as a consequence of studying isolated words. Given the significance of spelling in the development of effective written texts, language programs focus primarily on teaching listening, speaking, reading, writing, developing vocabulary and grammar. His research makes it clear that most studies failed to address spelling instruction and focused most on four main skills.

However, Khan and Itoo (2012) examined the most common spelling errors made by 36 Saudi students from their first - year at Najran University. Also, the data was collected by giving students a paragraph-writing test. Moreover, the errors in this study were categorized into phonological and orthographic categories and each category was divided into subcategories: deletion, addition, substitution, and reversal. The result showed that deletion was the most frequent error. However, the addition was the least frequent error.

Also, Khan (2013) examined the spelling errors committed by 20 Saudi students at the Khulais campus, which has recently been a branch of Jeddah University. In order to analyze the spelling errors caused by the embedded vowels problem and to provide the appropriate solutions. The students were given a dictation test and then they were given corrective tutorials for two weeks. In the end, they were given a post-test to evaluate the impact of the intervention tutorial on their spelling. The results showed that there were more vowel-related spelling errors than consonant-related errors. However, the researcher approved this issue to L1 negative transfer since there are differences between Arabic and English. Arabic has only three short and long vowels and short vowels were omitted in the written texts, unlike English.

Furthermore, Altamimi, et (2018). Conducted a study to investigate spelling errors in Arabic and Non-Arabic contexts. The main aim of the study was to classify the main spelling errors in Arabic and Non-Arabic Contexts. The researchers revealed that interlingual and intralingual - related errors where interlingual errors were caused by the

interference of the primary or mother language. Intralingual errors, on the other hand, were caused by the target language's method and instruction. According to the study, one of the most challenging problems for Arab learners is English spelling and vocabulary, which leads to a high percentage of spelling errors and mistakes. Furthermore, the study shows that spelling errors have a detrimental effect on students' writing abilities and written comprehension. Moreover, a number of findings indicate a positive relationship between students' reading abilities and their effect on their spelling and writing proficiency. Students' desired language proficiency will be influenced in all ways and features if they successfully solve their errors and improve strong spelling skills.

More recently, Fitria, T.N. (2020) conducted a study that analyzed the most types of spelling errors that were written by the students of SITE AAS Surakarta in the academic year 2017/2018. The researcher used a descriptive qualitative approach. The data was from 24 students of SITE AAS Surakarta. The study findings showed that there were some spelling errors found in the student findings. The result was as follows: 20 data (40%) omission, 14 data (28%) substitution, 10 data (20%) insertion/addition, and 6 data (12%) transposition. While the most common spelling errors were in the aspect of omission.

Cook Classification of Spelling Errors.

Cook (1999) has studied the proportions of spelling errors made by second-language students. Errors in spelling were categorized according to OSIT (Omission, Substitution, Insertion, and Transposition).

1. Omission errors: Errors occur when students are ignoring a letter in the target word.
2. Substitution errors: Errors that occur when a letter is replaced by another letter.
3. Insertion errors: Errors occur when students add a letter to the target word.
4. Transposition errors: Errors that occur when two letters or more are reversed by the students.

Previous Studies in The Arab Region Based on Cook's Classification of Spelling Errors.

There are a few studies that have investigated spelling errors among Arabic students at universities that analyzed errors according to Cook's classification. In one of these studies, Benyo (2014) investigated English spelling errors made by first-year students at Dongola University to identify the reasons behind these problems. Two spelling tests (pre-and post-intervention) were conducted on two separate campuses for

200 Sudanese EFL students in order to collect the results. The students were given the pre-intervention exam during their first year. After two months of the second semester, the post-intervention spelling examination was conducted. Benyo revealed that students face challenges with English vowel sounds as well as some non-Arabic English words. His study also indicated that the lack of understanding and overgeneralization of English spelling rules by the students could be another major cause of their spelling errors.

Also, Alhaisoni Al-Zuoud and Gaudel (2015) highlighted the types of spelling errors in the English composed by 122 EFL undergraduate students at the University of Hail in Saudi Arabia. Data was collected during the preparatory year by writing tasks of 53 males and 69 females. The results of their study showed that the largest errors among students were omission errors. And most spelling errors were based on the misuse and pronunciation of vowels. The study concluded that errors in spelling occur as a result of both the L2 and L1 interference phenomena.

Moreover, Abalawi (2016) studied the spelling errors committed by Saudi (female) students who were learning English as a basic requirement to begin their academic studies at the University of Prince Fahad Bin Sultan. His study used Cook's error classification for characterizing errors into four categories: substitution, omission, insertion, and transposition. There were 80 female students involved in his study whose first language was Arabic. Error analysis showed that omission errors (59 percent) constituted the largest proportion of errors, while transport spelling errors existed as the lowest rate with a 4.3 percent median (36 errors). The major cause of the learners' spelling errors was the wrong use of vowels and pronunciation. The findings of this study emphasized more focused attention to learners' spelling errors, as spelling learning is an essential aspect of language learning. Abalawi has suggested some recommendations and pedagogical implications for future research and teaching, which is significant.

Furthermore, Hameed (2016) studied the spelling errors created in English writing by Saudi students. The study included 26 university participants from Saudi EFL, and the data was collected through a fifty-word dictation. The student response analysis found a concentration of errors among vowel sounds, diphthongs, and words with silent letters. Approximately 93 percent of the answers turned out to be wrong. The results of his study showed that the most errors made by students were substitution errors followed by omission transposition, and then insertion.

In addition, Arabia, S. (2016) presented a study at Prince Fahad Bin Sultan University that investigated the spelling errors committed by Saudi female students. The

participants were studying the English language as an essential requirement to begin their academic studies. Data was collected from 80 female students through writing tasks and English spelling tasks. The findings of this study revealed that errors of omission constituted the highest proportion of errors by a percentage of (59%), while transportation spelling errors were less frequent, with a percentage mean of 4.3 percent (36 errors). The misuse of vowels and pronunciation was the primary source of spelling errors in students' writing. The result of this study emphasized more focused attention to learners' spelling errors, as spelling teaching is an essential aspect of language learning. Also, the researcher suggested some recommendations and pedagogical implications for future research and teaching.

Similarly, AlBalawi (2017) conducted an English language university student spelling error study at Tabuk University in Saudi Arabia in the English language department. The study findings showed that the participants made a variety of spelling errors impacting the continuity of their published educational content. Three main categories include these errors; omission, addition and substitution. Furthermore, the findings indicated that these spelling errors can be attributed to interferences in the mother tongue in which they relate to the differences between first language and second or foreign language systems. Albalawi provided future recommendations in order to examine the phenomenon from other perspectives such as age and grade.

Likewise, an investigation of spelling errors with university students was carried out by Al-Oudat (2017). The study was conducted on 65 students. The data was used for the participants' essays on the "Technical writing" course. The data was analyzed based on Cook's classification of spelling errors. The study findings show four categories of spelling errors; substitution errors, insertion errors, omission errors, and transformation errors. The results revealed that the difference between English and Arabic writing is one of the main causes of student error.

More recently, Harb,(2020) conducted a study of error analysis at World Islamic Sciences and Education University (WISE) in Jordan. The participants of this study consist of 50 students studying the English language at university. Also, the data is collected through reviewing students' answer sheets on the three exams (the first, the second, and the final exams) that were given to them during the semesters. Moreover, the data was analyzed by reviewing all the mistakes made by students and classifying them according to Cook's classification of spelling errors (1999), which includes omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition. The findings of the study revealed that all the students

committed different types of errors in spelling. However, the total of errors made by students was 110. The highest error percentage was an omission, which was a percentage of 38 percent (42 errors). Following that were errors of insertion with a percentage of 28 percent (31 errors), errors of substitution with a percentage of 19 percent (22 errors), and errors of transposition with a percentage of 15 percent (15 errors). However, the analysis found that transposition and substitution errors were less common than the first two types of errors. The findings reveal that omission errors had the highest score among the other categories of errors. The researcher revealed that students majoring in English at university (WISE) committed spelling errors for several reasons, such as interference from students' first language. Students have a loss of focus when answering exam questions. Students learning English as a second language can experience spelling difficulties. Thus, more repetition and exposure to how students spell and pronounce terms could be the best solution.

All of the above findings are relevant to the current study trying to achieve similar goals and analyzing errors in the spelling of the Arab EFL in their English writing. However, a literature review on spelling errors showed a lack of research that investigated the challenges faced by Saudi university students; therefore, this study was designed to investigate the most common spelling errors in English writing for the foundation year female students at Jeddah University. And define the main factors behind students' spelling weakness. Also, to suggest some effective teaching approaches to improve spelling instruction.

METHODOLOGY .

Population and Sample of The Study.

The participants of this study were all from the spring semester 2020/2021 in Saudi university . There were 80 first-year female students whose first language was Arabic. The age range of students who participated in this study was aged between (17-20) years. In addition, 10 English language teachers participated in this study from the same university.

Instruments of The Study.

In this study, the researchers used two instruments to collect the data. Quantitative approaches (a survey and writing task) were consecutively applied in order to find the results of the study.

A Survey.

The first quantitative instrument used in this study was a survey. It contained 19 items. The researcher conducted a survey designed especially for the teachers to highlight the reasons that mainly relied upon the students' weakness in spelling. Also, some effective teaching approaches were highlighted that may improve spelling instruction.

An English Writing Task.

The second quantitative instrument applied in this study was an English writing task. This was taken from five classes of a first-year female student from university in Saudi Arabia. The participants were asked to write a well-organized essay about sports in Saudi Arabia . The task was done by teachers with previous agreement with the researcher. This instrument has been chosen in order to investigate the most spelling errors among students. The researcher listed the number of wrong words. Then it was allocated to four types of spelling errors: omission, insertion, transposon, and substitution. Afterward, the figures were examined descriptively, and percentages were calculated accordingly.

Data Collection.

The study started with conducting an online survey for 10 English language teachers from the university for a two-week period. The survey was sent via email to the teachers. It consisted of 19 questions. Each survey took about 15 minutes to finish, followed by a writing task for 80 participants from foundation-year level students. It lasts for 30 minutes to complete the test. The participants were asked to write a well-organized essay on one chosen topic. They were asked to write approximately 150 to 200 words. The data was collected and analyzed during the spring semester of 2021. The data was collected on four different days since they were from various classes. The students' writing was collected by their teachers. Then, the data was sent to the Research Department Unit at the university. They are responsible for the receipt and transmission of the data. After that, they send all students' writing tasks to the researcher via mail.

Data Analysis.

An English Writing Task Analysis.

This study classified errors according to Cook's classification of spelling errors (1999) (omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition). Moreover, the researchers

recorded the frequency of each error type and their percentages of the total. In this study, the data was analysed with the assistance of the JASP computer program.

Survey Analysis.

The researcher designed a survey in order to investigate teachers' perceptions of the reasons behind spelling errors of first-year students at university and their perceptions of some effective teaching approaches that may improve spelling instruction. The survey elements were designed from the research questions and from some significant ideas identified in the related literature. It involved two sections. In section one, teachers were asked to provide some background information, such as years of experience, the level they teach, and the size of their classes. In section two, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with 19 statements regarding factors that were behind spelling errors and their attitude to spelling instruction that may improve spelling on a 5-point scale (Strongly Agree; Agree; neutral, Disagree; and Strongly Disagree). The purpose for having a 5-point scale was to give teachers as many options as possible and to get reliable answers. The data in this study was analysed with the assistance of the JASP computer program.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION.

First Research Question in The Study.

What are the most types of spelling errors committed by foundation-year level students?

This study categorized errors that were committed by students according to Cook (1999) classification of SL errors as OSIT (Omission, Substitution, Insertion, and Transposition). The total number of spelling errors were found in students' writing was 142 errors as shown in Table 1. There were various amount of spelling errors. According to this study, the errors of omission had the highest percentage of errors. There were 59 omission errors committed by students on writing tasks. Followed by substitution errors with the number of 35 spelling errors. The third place after omission and substitution were insertion errors with 28 errors. Finally, the lowest number of errors that were found in this study was in transposition with a number of 20 errors. According to the percentage of errors that were committed by students, errors of omission were the most frequent spelling errors that were made by participants amongst other types of errors. According to this study, the percentage of errors of omission was 41.55%. Followed by the substitution errors with a percentage of 24.65%. Then insertion errors with a percentage of

19.72%. The lowest percentage of errors was found in the errors of transposition with a percentage of 14.08%.

Table 1. Type of Errors That Found in Students Writing .

Type of Error	Number of Errors	Percentage
Omission	59	41.55%
Substitution	35	24.65%
Insertion	28	19.72%
Transposition	20	14.08%
Total	142	100.00%

The findings of this study revealed that omission errors were the most frequent errors that were committed by students in their writing, followed by substitution errors, then insertion errors. And finally, transposition errors, which were the lowest, were made frequently. The result of this study contributed to some other previous studies, such as a study conducted by Alhaisoni Al-Zuoud and Gaudel (2015) which highlighted the types of spelling errors in English Composing of 122 EFL undergraduate students at the University of Hail in Saudi Arabia. Data was collected during the preparatory year by writing tasks of 53 males and 69 females. The results of their study showed that the largest errors among students were omission errors. And most spelling errors were based on the misuse and pronunciation of vowels. The study concluded that errors in spelling occur as a result of both the L2 and L1 interference phenomena. Also, Arabia, S. (2016), a study at Prince Fahad Bin Sultan University investigated the spelling errors committed by Saudi female students. The participants were studying the English language as an essential requirement to begin their academic studies. Data was collected from 80 female students through writing tasks and an English spelling task. The findings of this study revealed that errors of omission constituted the highest proportion of errors by a percentage of (59%), while transportation spelling errors were less frequent, with a percentage mean of 4.3 percent (36 errors). The misuse of vowels and pronunciation was the primary source of spelling errors in students' writing. The result of this study emphasized more focused attention to learners' spelling errors, as spelling teaching is an essential aspect of language learning. Also, the researcher suggested some recommendations and pedagogical implications for future research and teaching. Moreover, Harb,(2020) conducted a study of error analysis at World Islamic Sciences and Education University (WISE) in Jordan. The participants of this study consist of 50 students studying the English language at university. Also, the data was collected

through reviewing students' answer sheets on the three exams (the first, the second, and the final exams) that were given to them during the semesters. Moreover, the data was analyzed by reviewing all the mistakes made by students and classifying them according to Cook's classification of spelling errors (1999), which includes omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition. The findings of the study revealed that all the students committed different types of errors in spelling. However, the total of errors made by students was 110. The highest error percentage was an omission, which was a percentage of 38 percent (42 errors). Following that were errors of substitution with a percentage of 28 percent (31 errors), errors of insertion with a percentage of 19 percent (22 errors), and errors of transposition with a percentage of 15 percent (15 errors). However, the analysis found that transposition and substitution errors were less common than the first two types of errors. The findings reveal that omission errors had the highest score among the other categories of errors. The researcher revealed that students majoring in English at university (WISE) committed spelling errors for several reasons, such as interference from students' first language. Students have a loss of focus when answering exam questions. Students learning English as a second language can experience spelling difficulties. Thus, more repetition and exposure to how students spell and pronounce terms could be the best solution.

Second Research Question in The Study.

Why do foundation-year level students make spelling errors in English writing?

One major importance of this study lies in the fact that it investigated teachers' opinions about some factors behind the spelling weakness of English among students.

Seriousness of Spelling Errors Issues.

Most teachers indicated that most students in the first year at university committed many spelling errors. Also, they indicated that some students avoid using some words, because they are not sure of their spellings, which puts strains on their language flow, affecting their overall language proficiency. Moreover, the average of teachers claimed that students lose their marks due to a lack of spelling. Furthermore, some teachers indicated that the bad spelling of students' writing makes it almost impossible to read their answers. The results of this study lend support to the other researchers who found that Saudi students face many difficulties with English spelling (Khan & Itoo, 2012; Khan, 2013; Alhaisoni, Al-Zuoud, & Gaudel, 2015).

Possible Causes of students' Spelling Weakness.

According to most teachers, the main cause of students' spelling errors is students' carelessness. The second main cause of spelling errors is the irregularity of English and the linguistic differences between Arabic and English. The third main cause of spelling errors, according to teachers, is that students do not have sufficient knowledge of spelling rules and techniques, and that affects their proficiency in spelling.

Third Research Question in The Study.

What are the most effective teaching approaches that may improve spelling instruction?

Most teachers indicated that using long words can be broken into smaller parts or syllables to make it easier for students to learn and memorize them. Also, learning the rules of word-formation might be a great help to solve some spelling problems. Moreover, students can get used to some mnemonics (memory tricks), e.g. a piece of pie, to help keep the spelling of new words stuck in the minds of spellers for a long time. Furthermore, students can keep a list of new or difficult words and resort to them from time to time. Finally, some teachers believe that the dictionary is a useful learning aid for practicing the structure of words.

CONCLUSIONS .

Based on the findings of this study, it is possible to conclude that the most common type of spelling error committed by first-year female students at a Saudi university was an omission. Followed by substitution. Then insertion, and finally transposition of errors, which was the lowest proportion of error . These findings correspond with some previous studies. However, according to this study, there were various factors behind this issue. The main cause of spelling errors, according to teachers, is the irregularity of English and the linguistic differences between Arabic and English. The second main cause of spelling errors was that students did not have sufficient knowledge of spelling rules and techniques and that affected their proficiency in spelling . Therefore, some teachers have suggested some techniques that might improve students' spelling. Future studies should focus on incorporating spelling instruction with the skills and sub-skills of writing, reading, vocabulary, and pronunciation to improve students' spelling performance .

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