

The Most Common Spelling Errors Among Learners Of English of San Juan Elementary School: Management Of Causes and Remedies

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Abstract — Many learners of English, including learners in schools exhibit difficulties with English spelling. These difficulties are attributed to a number of causes, such as the irregularity of the orthographic system of English and mother tongue interference. The purpose of the present study is to investigate the spelling errors made by students who are studying English language as an essential requirement to begin their academic study in San Juan Elementary School in San Roque, Agdao, Davao City. This study adopts Cook's classification of errors, which categorized errors into four categories: substitution, omission, insertion, and transposition (OSIT). Participants of this study are 16 students whose first language is Cebuano. The data were collected through writing tasks and English spelling tasks. An analysis of errors established that errors of omission (59%) constituted the highest proportion of errors whereas transportation spelling errors occur as the lesser frequency with a percentage mean of 4.3%. The major cause of the learners' spelling errors is due to the wrong use of vowels and pronunciation. The findings of this study emphasized more focused attention to learners' spelling errors, as spelling teaching is an essential aspect of language learning. In the light of the study findings, the researcher suggested some recommendations and pedagogical implications for future research and teaching.

Keywords — *Spelling error, omission errors, substitution errors, transposition errors, insertion errors*

I. Introduction

I have constantly noticed that learners often find difficulty in spelling or pronouncing very simple monosyllabic words. Learners commit many errors when they try to create a piece of writing, especially in spelling. Wrong spelling makes it difficult for learners to express their ideas because they cannot spell words correctly. It provides information to the teachers on learners' errors. Teachers can make use of this information to correct their learners' errors, and to improve their teaching as well as focus on those areas that need reinforcement. There is no doubt that spelling accurately is a basic and an essential skill for every learner of English, which enables writers to express their thoughts and feelings in a standard manner. In this study, errors are categorized into four categories: substitution, omission, insertion, and transposition. That is, substitution errors: errors that occur when students substitute a letter by another one; omission errors: errors occur when students omit a letter to the target word; insertion errors: errors occur

when students add a letter to the target word; and transposition errors: errors that occur when the students reverse the order of two letters or more.

This study collects the errors in spelling of learners of San Juan Elementary School. Learners in 3 levels (grade 4, 5 and 6) were involved in the study. The method of Cook identified the errors in spelling. The purpose of this study is not merely to analyze the students' errors but also to determine the problems and try to understand them so that they could be tackled more effectively and to provide suggestions on how to help students improve their writing skills. Error analysis in this study would reveal the sources of these spelling errors and the causes of their frequent occurrence. Once the sources and causes are discovered, it would be possible to determine the remedy.

The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the most common spelling errors that learners made in their writing?
2. What are the reasons of the errors that learners made in their writing?
3. What are the ways that could help teachers to improve learners' performance in English spelling?

Azzam (2019) examines the spelling errors made by children, aged 6 to 11 years. The result indicates the misspellings of Asian speaking children persisted through primary school, pointing to the difficulties involved in mastering the English written language. The spelling errors centered around context sensitive rules, additions and omissions of letters. Aqel (2019) concludes that the spelling errors committed by Asian learners learning English are almost the same as those errors committed by other Asian learners of English, which can be attributed to Asian influence which is evident in the replacement of the —bll for —pll, deletion of silent consonants, and vowel deletion finally. Other reasons are attributed to inter language errors resulting from overgeneralization of L2 rules and ignorance of L2 rules.

EL-Hibir and Taha (2020) conducted a study on spelling errors; they found that the discrepancy between the writing system and the pronunciation of English makes orthography far from phonemic. They add that spelling errors result not only from the inconsistencies in English spelling and pronunciation but also from the influence of the student's mother tongue. Cook (2017) asserts, "Unlike native speakers, students may not know the actual system of English, and will appear to use the wrong letter". Writing well is really a big challenge for both native and non-native students. He deals with the learners spelling difficulties and suggests three main problems that are single words, pronunciation-based, and spelling-correspondence problems. Single word problems come from the fact that English consists of many individual words and so learners have to study some words individually. Pronunciation-based problems occur when learners do not know the English sound system and therefore use the wrong letters. Spelling-correspondence problems.

Cook (2017) also specifies four types of spelling errors that learners of English commonly make. These are omissions (leaving letters out), substitutions (replacing letters with incorrect ones), transpositions (reversing the position of letters), and insertion/additions (including extra letters). In their study of spelling errors, Swan and Smith (2019) has found that spelling problems of the Asian learners are due to the linguistic differences between Asian and English, whereas the low rate of spelling errors has been scored by other learners from non-Asian backgrounds, whose languages share more similarities with English.

Phenix (2021) divides spelling difficulties into two categories: 1) linguistics, which are related to the nature of the language and 2) personal, which relate to the different stages of development learners go through. He describes these stages as follows: Pre-phonetic – learners use a mixture of pictures, shapes, letters or signs. Semi-phonetic – learners use letter names to represent sounds. Phonetic – learners use known sounds to write words and they become aware of word boundaries and leave spaces between words. Visual – learners use most letters correctly, if not in the right order; they use vowels in every syllable. Mature – learners use a full range of strategies to spell words and they are able to make analogies from known spelling patterns; they are able to recognize incorrect spellings.

Figueredo and Varnhagen (2020) in their study of the difference in spelling errors and correction of the Canadian students classify the spelling errors into three types: phonological, orthographic, and morphological. They come up with the result that the participants made more phonological errors compared to orthographic and morphological errors. Al-Jarf (2019) in her study of the spelling difficulties that face learners in studying EFL, deals with the correlation between the spelling and listening comprehension of students and a decoding test in the Asian context.

Similarly, Al-Jabri (2019) investigates the spelling errors of learners in two rural schools. He has found that the most frequent errors committed were also errors of omission and substitution, while the errors of transposition and insertion were less frequent. Abu-Rabia and Taha (2020) investigate the spelling error profiles of students in grades 1 - 6. They conclude that phonological spelling errors predominated in all grades over other error categories and represented 50% of the total errors. Al-Taani (2020) presents a study of spelling errors in students' writings at the secondary school level in the United Arab Emirates. He focuses on the position of spelling errors and finds that most spelling errors occur in the middle of misspelled words. He recommends that more time should be allocated to the investigation of spelling errors of this type.

Again Al-Jarf (2019) examines spelling errors in one of the universities in Saudi Arabia. She claims that important influences in English spelling errors were the Arabic spelling system. Hamdan & Amayreh, (2021) investigate the source of spelling errors of consonants among elementary Bedouin pupils by conducting a qualitative study using writing tasks. The results of the study show that this phenomenon occurs even at the end of elementary school, while full proficiency in the standard form of Arabic may be achieved only at a later age.

Fender (2019) conducts a study on the spelling of Arabs and non-Arab ESL students and finds that Arab students tend to have lower success level spelling skills, as well as difficulties in spelling patterns of general and multisyllabic words. Dehham and Mohmmmed (2021) consider that the most difficult aspects of English spelling for Iraqi learners are the complex correspondence between sound and letters. Al-Jayousi (2021) is a comprehensive study that investigates the spelling problem among Arab learners of English in UAE public schools. It identifies the most common types and causes of their spelling errors and measures how much progress they achieve in spelling proficiency as they move to higher grades. In 2021, Al-Saqqaf and Vaddapalli conducted a study of Arabic and English vowels and came up with a result that the mispronunciation of some of these vowels may have its impact on the students' writing.

Among the recent studies are Subhi & Yasin (2019) which investigate the spelling mistakes and errors made by the Iraqi learners who are studying English language as an essential requirement to begin their academic study in Malaysian universities. The results indicate a high percentage of spelling errors in Iraqi students writing a composition. Furthermore, the results of analyzing the problems behind the spelling errors and the causes of these errors are also discussed. The study concludes that more attention in writing drills and activities must be paid to vowels using, multisyllabic words and errors that occur in the middle of the words.

Alhaisoni et al, (2019) report the types of spelling errors made by the beginner learners of English in the EFL context as well as the major sources underpinning such errors in contextual writing composition tasks. The findings suggest that spelling errors are mainly the outcome of anomalies existing in the target language of the learners as well as L1 interference from their internalized Arabic language system. Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf (2019) investigate the problems that university Arab learners face in spelling English vowels. The study has primarily focused on monosyllabic words and concluded with important implications for future research and for teaching.

A review of literature on spelling errors shows that still there is a need for more studies to investigate the difficulties that Asian learners face on spelling when learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, the present study is important for investigating the different types of spelling errors committed by learners to determine the cause of these errors. In addition, the findings would give the teachers and curriculum designers some useful insights to adopt suitable strategies and develop effective practices in order to solve the problems of spelling errors. The classification and data analysis of spelling errors in this study are based mainly on Cook's (2017) classification: 1) Omissions (the deletions of some letters), 2) Substitutions (replacing one letter with another), 3) Insertions (adding extra letters), and 4) Transpositions (reversing the position of letters).

One theory about spelling development that has been particularly influential in South America and some areas of Europe is the constructivist theory put forward by Ferreiro and Teberosky (1992). These researchers proposed that, from an early age, children build their own hypotheses about how writing works. Children test their hypotheses against the writing that they

see, discarding or modifying some hypotheses and developing others. One hypothesis that young children are thought to construct, according to this theory, is that letters in printed words stand for syllables in spoken words.

II. Methodology

The qualitative method is utilized to explain, clarify and elaborate the meanings of different aspects of the human life experience. Therefore, researchers can interpret people's experiences because they are involved in human activities. The principle of 'no harm' to participants ought to be considered by researchers, who should be aware of the potential harms that might be inflicted upon study subjects. Obviously, sometimes a conflict between the right to know (defended on the basis of benefits to the society) and the right of privacy (advocated based on the rights of the individual) may happen (Bloor & Wood, 2019).

Participants of this study are 16 learners in San Juan Elementary School, whose first language is Cebuano or Bisaya. All participants are enrolled in an intensive English language program (FYP) as part of their new curriculum. The English language Program aims at preparing students to gain the necessary English Language proficiency and study skills to further their academic studies. Students are also offered Mathematics, Information Technology as well as English for Special Purposes which will prepare them for their undergraduate courses and for their future professional life. The English program is part of the new curriculum. Learners are required to pass the English program courses before proceeding onto another course. After passing successfully, the learners would be upgraded to the next higher level.

The data were collected through writing tasks and English spelling tasks. The participants were asked to write a well-organized essay on one of seven familiar topics. They were asked to write approximately 150 to 200 words and the time was sufficient. The suggested topics were: 1) Shopping 2) National Day 3) My Family 4) Summer Holiday 5) Friendship 6) Dubai City 7) My hobby

Participant-students were asked to spell a number of words. Spelling continued until all students had reached a ceiling of at least 15 consecutive errors on the spelling words. Some students reached a ceiling earlier than others but testing continued until it was clear that the ceiling had been reached by all students. Spelling scores were totaled and then converted into a percentage score out of 80.

This study is devoted to exploring types of the English spelling errors committed by 16 learners of the English program. For analyzing the data, the following analytical procedures were used to: 1) Identifying the deviant forms. This was done by a detailed analysis of the output. 2) Analyzing and classifying spelling errors found in the writing samples. 3) Establishing a frequency count of such errors and the sources of the errors.

The researchers classified errors according to Cook's classification of spelling errors (2017) (omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition). Moreover, the researchers recorded the frequency of each error type and their percentages of the total. Cook developed this type of classification in 1999, and there was no need to measure reliability for this instrument again.

III. Results and Discussion

Most common spelling errors that learners made in their writing

The spelling errors analyzed according to the four categories suggested by Cook (2017); the percentages in the table based on 16 learners. The table illustrates that all of the learners committed different types of spelling errors in their writing. It is apparent that out of 16 total spelling errors, the type of errors committed by the largest numbers of learners is the omission. Omission type of errors scores the highest percentage mean of 59% (8 errors), in the second rank, the errors of substitution with a percentage mean of 28.9% (5 errors). This result matches the results of other studies such as Al jarf (2019), Smith (2021), Al haysony (2019), Al-haisoni et al. (2019) Golshan (2019). In the present study, the spelling errors of insertion occupy the third place with a percentage mean of 8% (2 errors). Transportation spelling errors occur as the lesser frequency with a percentage mean of 4.3% (1 error).

Reasons of the errors that learners made in their writing

Based on Cook's OSIT (2017), the reasons for the errors made by learners are the following: omission errors (the students tend to write what they pronounce, so they delete any English letter that is not pronounced); substitution errors (replacing one or more letters with one or more incorrect letters); insertion errors (addition of redundant letters in a word); and transposition errors (disordering the letters).

Ways that could help teachers improve learners ' performance in English spelling

Students seem to have an overwhelming spelling problem that affects their overall language proficiency and particularly in terms of spelling errors. Considering the results of the present study, several instructional implications can be suggested for teaching English spelling to learners. Furthermore, it appears that little is done to overcome this problem. Teachers need assistance in helping students overcome spelling problems.

Discussion

Errors made by students of a second language are classified into two groups, interlingual and intralingual errors. First, interlingual errors are those that result from language transfer and are caused by the student's native language. Errors in the second language are caused by the interference of the student's native language. These errors reflect the student's inability to separate

the native language and the second language. Other researchers noted that students' mistakes in the second language are caused by several things. These include transfer, overgeneralization and communication strategies.

Transfer refers to the effect of the native language on second language learning. In the transfer, some patterns are borrowed from the native language. In Overgeneralization, patterns can be extended from a second language by analogy. Overgeneralization is a common process in the native language and the second language in which students extend the use of a grammar rule of the linguistic item beyond their accepted uses, generally making words or structures follow a more regular pattern. A communication strategy means expressing meanings using words and grammar, which are already known. Intralingual errors are those that result from the defective learning of the second language, rather than the transfer of the language.

Spelling difficulties with students can be divided into two groups. First, linguistics, which are related to the nature of the language. Second, personal, which are related to the different stages of development that students go through. Besides describes these stages as follows:

First, before phonetics, students use a mixture of images, signs, shapes and letters. Second, semi-phonetics, students use letter names to represent sounds. Third, in the phonetic stage, students use familiar sounds to write words and realize the limits of words and leave spaces between words. Fourth, visual students use most of the letters correctly, if not in the correct order; they use vowels in each syllable. Fifth, mature, which means that students use a full range of strategies to spell words and can make analogies from known spelling patterns; They are able to recognize incorrect spellings. There are many studies conducted on spelling errors and different types of errors and different types of difficulties.

Knowing how to spell, but not worrying about how, for some students, the problem is not the lack of spelling ability but the confusion about the importance of spelling correctly. Teachers must be careful when dealing with such errors. She listed some strategies that teachers can follow for general correction.

1. First, teachers should ask them what ideas they are using when they spell. Then, you should use your answers as a starting point to clear up the confusion.
2. Second, when analyzing or correcting spelling errors, they must take into account the expectations appropriate to the age and experience of the writer.
3. Third, they should be sure to point out the many good strategies they observe in student spelling. Then, they should encourage their students using phrases like these, I like the way they test unknown words, I see that they know how to spell many high frequency words, I see that they are learning to use common spelling patterns and I notice that you care about your audience and that's why you've corrected your writing.

There are four types of spelling mistakes that English students usually make. These are omissions and means leaving letters; substitutions, which means replacing letters with incorrect letters; insertions, which means including additional letters; and transpositions, which means reversing the position of the letters and additions.

Since the end of the 20th century, students' spelling has been the subject of controversy by researchers and teachers, while some propose that it should be transformed to make it more accessible to children and that teaching should focus on writing processes and not spelling; others consider this an extremely important and indispensable component for good communication, since it eliminates lexical, semantic and syntactic ambiguities and, as such, it is linked to processes of understanding and production of language and more when it is a second language.

It is considered that in the end, this controversy lies not so much in the questioning about the importance that should be given to spelling, but in the way it should be taught. So after the synthesis of the results, these allowed us to derive some conclusions and give some supported recommendations.

Regarding the use of spelling as a determining factor in the teaching of English grammar and according to the results obtained in the observations and analysis of the findings found in the visits made to both students and students. teachers and taking into account the established objectives and research questions, we reached the following conclusions:

To the teachers of the public schools. . .

1. That they continue to focus on the spelling of their curriculum due to the fact of how closely spelling is related to fluency and reading comprehension.
2. Some teachers feel that spelling is not an essential component in the curriculum. Spelling is a critical element not only in fluency and reading comprehension, but also in the entire curriculum in all subjects. When teaching spelling, teachers tend to ask themselves what is the best and most effective approach for their students. Teachers contend that traditional spelling books are no longer useful and should be abandoned, while others believe that traditional spelling books are useful tools if used properly.
3. Other recommendations for educators is that spelling instruction can be integrated into other subject areas, as well as systematically teach spelling through sequences of word study created to adapt to the varied development of students.
4. That the texts they use in the classroom are spelling books with meaningful learning that takes place within the tasks of the real world. Some examples may consist of newspaper articles or writing letters. These examples could help improve the spelling skills of our students, therefore, the improvement in spelling skills will also help improve the fluency and reading comprehension skills of our students.

To the students of the public schools. . .

1. It is suggested that students write their own texts and, at random, choose a fragment. Once corrected, count errors or have a choice of what they should improve, this will allow you to have a better spelling domain.
2. That they study grammar rules well, since English is not the same as other languages and it will be more difficult to eradicate this problem in the future.
3. Let them read articles and watch TV shows in English, so they can compare one thing with the other and have greater mastery when writing something in English or Cebuano.
4. Students must follow a plan to solve this problem.
5. Let them use the unit's word list to study the words carefully.
6. They should practice writing the difficult words at home many times to remember the words correctly.
7. They should listen to the words carefully and try to differentiate between different letter sounds.

IV. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the students' spelling pattern follows the pronunciation pattern. In another word, the students tend to write what they pronounce, so they delete any English letter that is not pronounced. This type of errors can be attributed to the poor phonological awareness skills and this makes it difficult for the students to develop understanding of the relationships between sounds and letters. Beginner writers, at an early stage of spelling and writing, depend heavily on their phonemic awareness and orthographic knowledge to spell (Dlaska & Krekeler, 2019). So the findings of this study correspond with Aqel (2019) who states that the reason for the omission of spelling errors is the discrepancy between English orthography and pronunciation. Moreover, based on the results obtained in this study show that the mother tongue interference is one of the main causes for omission spelling errors, and this finding is consistent with findings of other prior studies in the spelling literature. Al-Jarf (2019) who considers the third most common source of spelling errors is the transfer of the Arabic spelling system to English due to the difference in orthographic complexity between English and Arabic. This study is also in line with Alhaysoni et al. (2019) who states that the reason for the occurrence of the omission errors is interlingual, which can be attributed to the distinction found between English and Pilipino.

The results of this study show that students get especially confused with phonemes, such as (/p/ & /v/), so the present study findings align with Allaith and Joshi (2021) who investigate the

impact of the Asian phonological system on the English spelling system. They found that the Filipino phonological system has an impact on the English spelling system, which corresponds to different studies that examined the same issue but with different L1s. Similarly, Ryan and Meara (2021) findings show that learners of English struggle more than any other non-native speakers of English with English vowels. They have found that speakers suffer in processing English words. This difficulty might be because Filipino writing does not represent short vowels or it may be a result of Filipino lexical structure and the orthography of Filipino.

This study is also in line with Aqel's (2019) that the substitution spelling errors are attributed to the discrepancy between English orthography and pronunciation. This tendency is reinforced due to the influence of the Filipino system in which the spelling pattern follows the pronunciation pattern. Also Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2020) state that most of the spelling errors students made were because of their —mispronunciation, lack of awareness and regular spelling patterns.

Also the findings of this study emphasize that in order to master the English writing/spelling system, an association between English phonemes and written graphemes should be applied (Al-Jarf, 2019). This study shows that the main sources of spelling errors are attributed to the fact that English and Filipino have totally different scripts; not only this but also Filipino has regular spelling according to its pronunciation while English does not. In this way, the present study agrees with Haggan's (2019). The results of this study are also in harmony with the findings of Alhaisoni et al. (2019) in his analysis of spelling substitution errors, claiming that there is a strong correlation between the articulations and the spelling of words.

Suggests several practices and activities like fostering the use of full cues in reading, encouraging visualization of words and syllables, providing a print-rich environment, providing computers for spell-checkers and materials for word banks, and teaching spelling patterns and etymology. Ample time to read, write and use words in a meaningfully connected text is essential in developing good spelling ability.

To sum up, the findings of this study emphasizes more focused attention to this essential aspect of language learning. Teachers are likely to differ in their approach to handling spelling. While some might prefer to adopt a more explicit approach and teach the students the different phonemic structures (analytic-linguistic approach), others might choose to take a less direct approach by introducing pronunciation within meaningful communicative activities (integrative approach) (M. Hismanoglu & S. Hismanoglu, 2020). English language teachers should take into consideration that learners also differ in their ability to self- assess their language skills and difficulties (Dlaska & Krekeler, 2019).

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