

Analysis of Students' Spelling Mistakes

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the spelling errors made by Saudi students of English Language at Buraydah Private Colleges and Onaizah Colleges in Saudi Arabia. Two different writing tasks (narrative and comparative tasks) were used as data collection instruments in this study. Two groups of participants were selected for the study: each group was comprised of 60 students. They were enrolled in English language course at Onaizah and Buraydah Private Colleges and investigated their spelling mistakes (omission, insertion substitutions and transposition) for two consecutive terms. The results indicated a high percentage (35 %) of spelling errors in omission in first writing tasks of students. In addition to the analysis of results, an examination of the problem behind the spelling errors and the causes of these errors were also discussed.

Keywords:

Investigate, spelling mistakes, languages, mistakes and percentage, graphemes, omission errors, substitution errors, transposition errors, insertion errors, space inaccuracy and capitalization not in abstract.

Introduction

In written language, spelling is the arrangement of letters forming words. It is a convention that regulate the way of using graphemes. In other words, the spelling is the representation of speech sounds (phonemes) into writing (graphemes). The study of learners' spelling errors provides an opportunity to understand and facilitate in the learners' spelling difficulties (Al-Zuoud & Kabilan, 2013). Spelling mistakes made by Onaiza and Buraydah colleges' students were classified into different categories: insertion, omission, substitution, transposition, grapheme substitution, space inaccuracy and capitalization.

According to Fagerberg, exact spelling is essential in writing skills so as to express any message accurately. Therefore, correct spelling is vital because one wrong phoneme may change the meaning of an expression. (Fagerberg, 2006). Spelling is the learner's ability to write a word

correctly. Writing accurate spelling adds to the quality of overall writing texts. (S.N. Subhi, M.S. M.Yasin, . (2015).

In Saudi Arabia, English is taught as a foreign language where students are expected to master the four skills of the language: reading, listening, speaking and writing. According to Hildreth (1962), correct spelling is an evidence of good manners, while bad spellings may give the impression of inadequate education or carelessness. However, Saudi students at college level may encounter spelling problems for not being able to identify the space accuracy and capitalization distinctly, which is a serious problem affecting students to make mistakes.

Analyzing spelling errors made by students provide a deep understanding of the learning process. Error analysis is significant in diagnosing the difficulties experienced by students, so that such spelling problems made by students can be facilitated and solved, which help improve students' ability in writing, transforming them in to good spellers. Many studies, which focused on students' spelling mistakes, have been reviewed particularly in Saudi Arabia. Only few studies conducted were found to discuss the difficulties in spelling faced by students majoring English at Saudi universities. These studies discussed issues like sources of error, spelling and grammar together, and spelling and pronunciation among students learning English.

One of these studies was conducted by Al-Zuoud (2013), who investigated common mistakes made by Saudi students learning English in a written composition, classifying students' spelling errors according to Cook's classification of error. More studies are reviewed in literature review section. Cook (1999) categorized errors in to four categories: Substitution errors where errors occur when students substitute a letter by another one; omission errors where error occurs when omitting a letter to the target word; Insertion errors which occur when students add a letter to the target word; and transposition errors which occur when the students reverse the order of two or more letter.

Therefore, this study comes to analyze errors made by university student majoring English, investigating the problem and trying to understand them and could be dealt with more effectively. The study also provides suggestions that can help students enhance their spelling skills. Error Analysis in this study would reveal the sources of the spelling errors and the causes of their frequent occurrence. Having discovered the sources and causes, it would be possible to determine the remedy.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

The objectives are as follows.

- To identify, classify and analyze the different spelling errors and mistakes that constitute spelling problem for students of English at Buraydha and Onaizah Private Colleges.
- To explore the reasons behind students' errors which provide evidence of how language is learned.

- To identify learning strategies and remedial procedure that might help students as well as instructor to remedy the wrong ways of misspell.

1.2 Research Questions:

This study mainly focuses on analyzing the Buraydah and Onaizah Private colleges students' errors in spelling of English. The study also gives answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the common spelling errors and mistakes that Saudi students' make in their writing?
2. What are the reasons of common spelling errors that Saudi students make in their writing?
3. What techniques should be applied in order to overcome the spelling problems of students?

Review of Literature

This section reviews the literature related to spelling errors made by Saudi students at Buraydah and Onaizah Private Colleges. It was observed that students of English language face many spelling difficulties even while doing simple writing tasks. Usually these spelling difficulties refer to the linguistic differences in both languages English and Arabic.

According to Smith and Swan (2001), spelling errors among other Non-Arabic students are less as compared to the spelling errors made by Arabic students' because languages of Non-Arabic students have a lot of similarities with the English language.

One of the studies conducted by Othman (2018) it was revealed that the wrong use of vowels and pronunciation as well as the interference of first language are the main reasons for making spelling mistakes. It was concluded that teacher should pay more attention towards learner errors as teaching spellings is a very important part of language learning. According to AlBalawi's (2017), investigation of spelling error which he conducted on the introductory year students at WISE University in Saudi Arabia. He classified spelling errors into three main categories: omission, addition and substitution. His studies also revealed that the interference of first language caused spelling mistakes.

In another study on the same subject done by Al Jabri in 2006 on 114 Omani school students of fifth grade. Students were given 10 word spelling tests and the data was gathered. The results of this study exposed that most of the frequent spelling errors are the errors of omission and substitution and very few errors were made in transposition and insertion. In another study done by Al- Ta'ani in 2006, it was noted that most spelling errors occurred in the middle of misspelled words.

Hamed in 2016 collected data from 26 Saudi EFL university students using fifty-word dictation in order to investigate the nature of spelling errors made by Saudi students. The study indicated

that most of the spelling errors move around vowel sounds, diphthongs and words having silent letters. Moreover, learners also used the knowledge of their mother tongue on their English learning experience. The findings concluded that the most of the errors were the errors of substitution which were followed by omission, transposition and insertion. Another study about the types of spelling errors in English Composition was done at Hail University Saudi Arabia by M. Al-Zuoud (2015). 122 EFL undergraduate students were given the writing tasks. The results revealed that the errors of omission took the highest number among the students. It was also noted that the interference of L1 on L2 caused these spelling mistakes.

In addition to the above-mentioned studies, another study about spelling errors made by EFL students of English Language at Tafilah University in Jordan by Al- Saudi in 2013. The main focus of the study to discover and point out the types of errors made by students while answering essay questions. The results revealed that the irregularities in the spelling rules and pronunciation of English Language caused most of the mistakes. Al- Harrasi in 2012 did a study on Omani female school students to investigate common patterns of spelling errors among Omani students. To carry out his study, he used the dictation test which was comprised of one syllable words and multi syllable words. Spellings mistakes were examined according to the Cooks Classification (1999). The study put forward the causes for these reasons and it was stated that the substitution is the most common type of spelling error.

All the studies mentioned above are very much related and linked to the present study which is attempting to find out the causes and reasons of the spelling mistakes made by the Saudi female college students at private colleges in Qassim. But there is one sharp contrast of this study as compared to the other ones.

Methodology

4.1 Participants

For conducting this survey, 120 Saudi female college students were taken as sample for the study. Two groups of participants were selected for the study: each group was comprised of 60 students. They were enrolled in English language course at Onaizah and Buryadha Private Colleges, Qassim, KSA. Those students got them registered in consecutive two semesters for academic years (2019-2020).

4.2 Instrument of the study:

The data was derived from two writing tasks which were given to the students in the two semesters. In the first semester, students were asked to write a narrative paragraph while in the 2nd semester each student was asked to write a comparative paragraph. The basic objective of these two writing tasks is to determine the different kinds of spelling errors made by the Saudi

female college students. After the completion of the tasks, data was collected and analyzed for the academic years of 2019-2020.

Findings

The collected data was examined and analyzed according to Cook's (1999) classification of errors. He graded the spelling mistakes into different categories----- omission, insertion, substitution, and transportation. We picked up 60 samples randomly from the all collected data to fulfil the requirement of the study. Before we explain and discuss the findings of the study, it would be pertinent to discuss the types of errors one by one.

5.1 Omission Errors:

Such kind of errors are made by the students when they miss or leave out a letter from words. They make these mistakes because they do not know the actual spelling of the words. Lack of reading and writing practice could be the possible causes for such mistakes. Following are the examples of omission errors:

swiming instead of swimming

blak instead of black

forein instead of foreign

5.2 Insertion Errors:

Adding an extra letter to the word is termed as an error of insertion. For example, students write withe instead of with, frome instead of from, haveing instead of having and so on.

5.3 Substitution Errors:

Such errors occur when a letter or more is replaced by another one letter or more. Following are the examples of substitution errors:

Table 1: Analysis of task 1 (Narrative Paragraph)

Frequency examples of errors made by students at Buraydha Colleges.

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage	Mistakes	Words (correct)
Omission	38	35%	Befor Fok To Wich Palac Rite	Before Folk Too Which Palace Write

			Usaly	Usually
Insertion	20	19 %	Hoours Beautifull Frome	Hours Beautiful From
Substitution	31	29 %	Habby Blay Bitter There Beld Majesty	Happy Play Better Their Build Majesty
Transposition	18	17 %	Tow There Bigen bashel	Two Their Begin Bushel
Total	107	100 %		

Figure 1 points out the proportions of four different types of spelling errors made by female students of Buraydah Colleges in KSA.

Figure 1. percentage of the four types of spelling errors

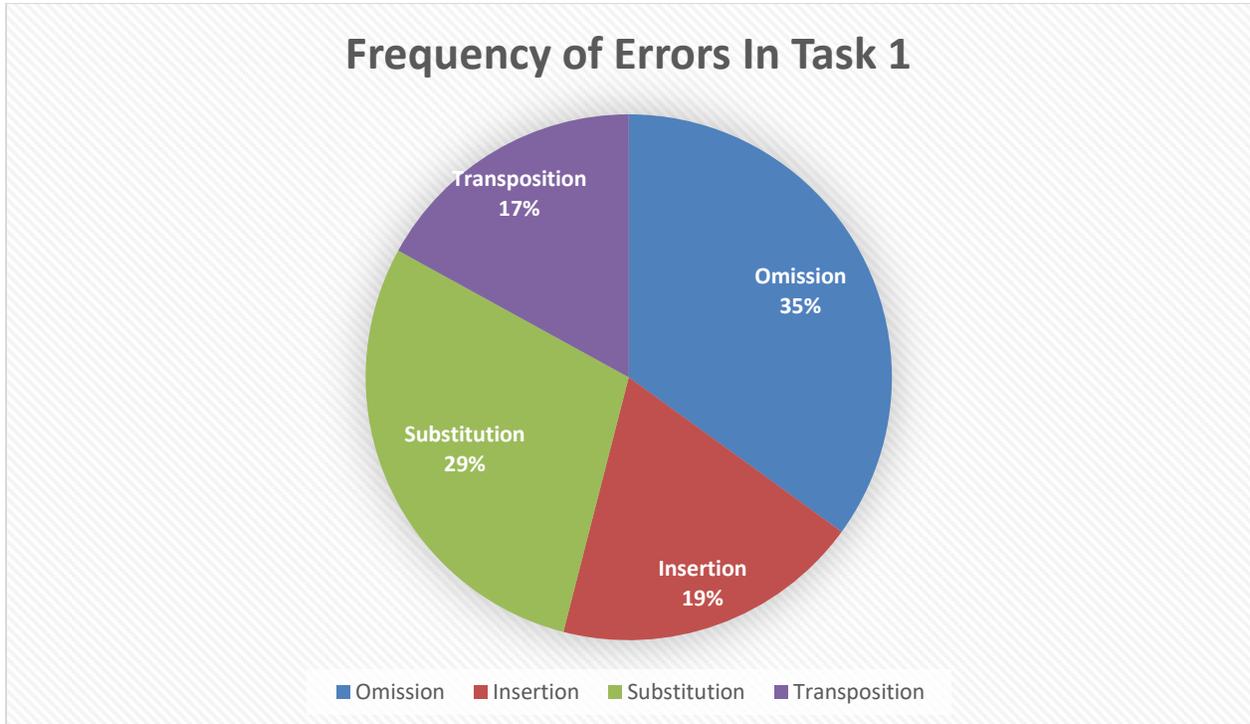


Figure 1 states that the most common type of spelling errors made by the Saudi female students is the mistake of omission. Mistakes of omission constitute the 35% of the total spelling mistakes. For example, students wrote fok instead of folk, befor instead of before and to instead of too. It has been noted that Saudi female students have made huge number of mistakes in insertion. They were totally unaware making these mistakes. For example, they spelled beautifull instead of beautiful, forme instead of form, hoours instead of hours etc. The least number of spelling errors were made in the category of transposition. Following mistakes were noted.

Two instead of two

There instead of their

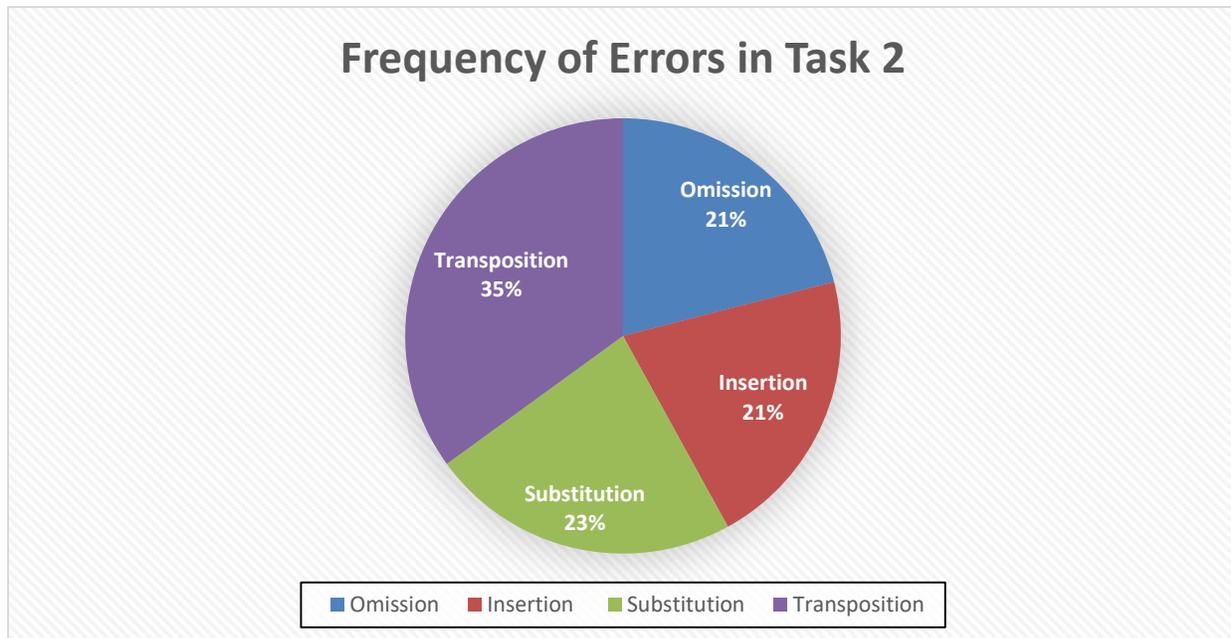
Bashel instead of bushel

Table 2: Analysis of task 2 (Comparative paragraph)

Frequency examples of errors made by students at Onaizah Colleges.

Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage	Mistakes	Words (correct)
Omission	27	21 %	Larg Diffrent Biger To Apear	Large Different Bigger Too Appear
Insertion	33	21 %	Usefull Verticall Babboons	Useful Vertical Baboons
Substitution	29	23 %	Defferences Largest Pray Midecine	Differences Largest Prey Medicine
Transposition	45	35 %	Tow Then Well Friend There	Two Than Will Friend Three
Total	127	100 %		

Figure-2



The second writing task was conducted at Onaizah Colleges. Students were given to write a comparative paragraph. The figure 2 points out the frequency of errors in writing task 2. While comparing with figure 1, it is noted that in writing task 2 the most number of spelling errors occurred in the category of transposition. Frequency of errors in the other three categories is very close to each other as shown in the figure 2. After the errors of transposition, most of the spelling errors were made by the students in area of substitution which is around 23%. Errors of omission and insertion are identical and take 21%.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have noted that most of the Saudi college female students are quite vulnerable to spelling mistakes. Learning a foreign language for Saudi female students is a daunting task. There are many reasons for making spelling errors. For example, there is great difference between English language and the learners' first language and these irregularities of spelling errors were pointed out in many previous studies (Cook, 1997; Okada, 2005). As we know English pronunciation is a very difficult task and this mispronunciation also effects the learners to make spelling mistakes. In addition to that, learners' interference of first language play a big role in making spelling errors. Practicing and exposing students to English language could be some possible solutions to overcome spelling errors.

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