

Writing it out! An orthographic Account of Spelling Errors among Selected Senior High School Students in Ghana

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Abstract

The study seeks to discuss the causes and various forms of spelling errors that senior high school students make in their writings. In doing so, two different types of instruments were used in this exercise, thus essay type and questionnaire with Corder's (1967) Error Analysis theory being its theoretical framework. The actual participants used for the study were two hundred (200) students who were randomly selected from four different public senior high schools which are grouped under Category 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'. The results from the essay type indicated that students' spelling errors emanated from the use of substitution, omission, insertion, transposition, wrongful splitting of words, wrongful amalgamation and other forms. Next data which were derived from questionnaire also recorded that the students' problem of spelling error was due to the fact that they often do not care about the spelling of words when they write, they ask friends, consult teachers and dictionaries when they have problem in spelling a particular word and also because of the dichotomous relationship between the written and the spoken forms of words in English language. Some recommendations were further provided in addition to the findings

Keyword: *writing, spelling errors, orthographic account, SHS students.*

Introduction

Writing has become important and integral part of human learning. It is seen as one of the means that people could communicate with others effectively. It is a tool that is used to define languages and for those languages to be identified from their sources of reality. The writing form is usually made up of signs and symbols which obviously become the basis of every language system. The signs and the symbols are often present in the form of letters which are obviously inscripted as the only means to keep information and records of the emerging issues in a society and its human activities. The major writing form that is mostly used by any living language may be a pictographic, syllabic, alphabetic, hieroglyphic and ideographic. These forms work independently in a language that they have been ascribed to. Each form represents a unique entity that is recognizable within the context of a given language system.

English language is highly inscripted under the alphabetic writing system. This system has become an independent writing form for English language over the years. Most of the things that alphabetic system can be used to achieve are developed through the multiple spelling forms. The alphabetic system of writing

only occurs when a vowel and a consonant item are given separate types of symbolic forms. Each symbolic form is brought together carefully under observed rules of the writing structure in the language to satisfy its spelling grapheme, thereby becoming the building blocks for which a bigger text can be developed.

Orthographic Spelling System in English

Learning a language without a special reference to its spelling system is regarded as a useless adventure. This is so because spelling plays a crucial role in the writing of every natural language since knowing the rules that govern its syntax, semantic and the vocabulary is not always enough to learn a language. In this relation, individual learners whose native languages use the same writing system (eg the Latin alphabet)

as that of their target language, their foreign language spelling processes may involve analogies not only between an unknown word and other known words of the target language, but also between spelling patterns from their own language and that of any other foreign language they maybe familiar with, and this level of complexity may be involved for all of the factors affecting the



spelling process
(Sönmez 2001:73)

Diachronically, English language has gone through several changes in its formalization process. As a result, its spelling form has been substantially influenced by the alphabets of other languages that it has come into closer contact with over the centuries. As such, the nature of its spellings has become practically ingrained to deal with in the writing process because of differences in terms of orthographic forms and the fact that most of these orthographic forms are not sourced from its straight jacket Anglo-Saxon originality.

English language only exists because it is both written and spoken by the community who owns or uses it. Its spelling system is developed out of twenty-six letters that are derived from Roman alphabet (Deacon 2017). These twenty-six letters are produced and often identified by specific orthographic symbols and signs. Each of these twenty-six letters occurs in a specific order with other letters in a combined system to form a word. The nature of spelling letters in English language cannot be seen as the only mental process of grammatical items, but as a transmission of mentally-processed form which exists in its written form (Sönmez 2001). This is so because the spelling system in English is seen as a deep form with irregular mapping relationship between the writing form and the pronunciation. As such, its respective writing process becomes obviously cumbersome and evenly unpredictable in any context for beginners and sometimes second language learners. Hence, it's eventual realization of wrong use of spelling words and the relative patterns.

Statement of the problem

Every writer is required to be diligent in whatever he or she writes. Such an individual is always expected to write with a high sense of error-free instinct in order to make the readers absorb the content and the import of the message written with relative ease, since a hint of spelling error could cause "misunderstanding in communication" (Mukhaiyar & Syarif 2013:65). However, this situation is obviously rarely in the writings of beginners and second language

learners who are users of English language in Ghana. This is so because most of the time, the learners and the users of the English language lack knowledge of the language's writing system. As a result, there have been general complaints about the spellings of words in English language and this has obviously real in the writings of senior high school students for the past few years in a roll (see the WAEC's Chief Examiners' Reports 2016, 2017, 2018). The seriousness of this error type has to be emphasized and brought to the attention of the policy makers and implementers because if it is left undetected and uncorrected, could spoil the good image and the success that Ghana's educational system has chopped over the decades, hence the need for its study.

Research objectives

Every research assignment is carried out in order to obtain specific objectives. Such objectives serve as a caveat that guides the researcher throughout the study and its eventual results or findings. In this sense, the present study aims, among other things to:

1. Find out the most common spelling errors that the students make in their writings.
2. Examine the frequencies of some of these spelling errors in the students' writings.
3. Find out the reasons for some of these spelling errors in the students' writings.

Research questions

1. What are the most common spelling errors that are found in the writing of these students?
2. What are the frequencies of some of these spelling errors that the students' commit in their writings?
3. What are the reasons and the causes for the occurrences of these errors in the students' writings?

The second language users' spelling errors

Second language learners are always expected to be familiar with the letters of alphabet that are found in their target source of language. As a result, they are obviously expected to "be able to write and spell the characters flawlessly" (Al-Oudat 2017:43). When



individual learners do not have enough general knowledge of the writing and the spelling system in the target language, they intend to spell words that only appeal to their auditory senses and not in terms of its orthographic realization as may be the case in English, thereby resulting in some spelling infractions through the fabrics of an intense spontaneity and mutiny.

Quite obviously, one can accept the fact that an effective mastering of all the words in a target language form seems an unlikely panacea for effective learning strategies. Since this phenomenon is linguistically impossible in any language learning situation, the learner then falls into the likelihood of providing strides that matches his or her own knowledge and not that of the native speaker(s). As a result, various forms and particles of errors are bound to be recorded in such circumstance since those anomalies may have “resulted in confusions of set of letters in a word” (Wales 1993:149). These forms of errors that are variously committed by the learner are seen as the sole evidence of the inhibitory values of the learner’s creative impulse.

Kukich (1992) identifies errors that are stemming out of spelling system of the beginners and second language learners and groups them into a ‘typographic’ error type and a ‘cognitive’ error type respectively. He recounts further that a cognitive error form is “presumed to be a misconception or lack of knowledge on the part of” the learner to clearly establish the appropriate form of a particular language system (pp.387). As a result, the learner consciously or unconsciously “substitutes a phonetically correct but orthographically incorrect sequence of letters” to express specific relationship (ibid). The typographic error type, however, emanates because of inaccurate application of orthographic letters in words for specific graphemic representation. Typographic error has remained a confusable item in the minds of the language learners and it therefore allows respective learners to misapply certain words for the sake of convenient and expediency. These types of spelling errors are still obvious and are so predictable in every natural language learning situation as they seem to be causing several

hiccups in writings.

Theoretical framework

The study is hinged on Corder’s (1967) Error Analysis model. This model is applied to every language learning phenomenon and the kind of errors and difficulties that the users are confronted with in their bid to acquire a native-like competence. This theory always tries to provide some sort of insight into the study of errors and to further ascertain various forms of peculiarities that the second language learner brings to bear in the process of learning a new language. Error Analysis theory has been considered among scholars “as an essential part of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors committed by students” (Al-Oudat 2017:43) as it “therefore plays a very indispensable role in understanding second language acquisition” (Theodore 2013:517), hence the need for its use in the present course action.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The research design used for the study was a descriptive type which forms parts of qualitative research approach. This design is often used to deal with scientific findings that are characterized with objectivity. This design, as usual, provides further inquiries into specific phenomenon which is much more peculiar with everyday life situation.

Research Population and sample size

The actual population for the present study was students from four different senior high schools in Ghana and they are all owned by the state. These schools were selected based on the categorization of Ghana’s school system. The categorization system groups schools in Ghana into four different sections namely; category ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’ and ‘D’. The category ‘A’ schools are excellent institutions and they are therefore named as such because of their past and present scores of academic achievements and performances. They are the first class schools with the best facilities. As a result, every single Ghanaian child wants to attend one of those schools. Students that are admitted in these schools are believed to be academically brainy and that they only need a little guidance; and then



the students can work things out by themselves. Category 'Bs' are the very good schools and that they remain the next best performing ones. They have students that are very good academically. They are seen as the second best choice schools in Ghana for every child as well.

Both the 'A' and the 'B' category of schools are located regional capitals as well as the cosmopolitan areas. The 'Cs' are good schools. The academic achievements of such students are not all that bad except that the percentage of quality pass which serves as a bench for university admission are far below the mark. The 'D' categories are also seen to be the averaged schools. Their academic performances are never the very best as many people would expect. Category 'C' and 'D' schools are often found in the district capitals, semi-urban and a few other remote places. Most of these schools (Category 'A' and 'B') may have good facilities, yet the quality of students vis-à-vis their academic progress remains very questionable and unsatisfactory. A school was selected from each of these categories for the study. In all, two hundred (200) students were used for the study, with fifty (50) students coming from each of these schools identified in the groupings above. These students were selected randomly through the use of 'Yes or No balloting method' in order to defy a protracted ambience of favouritism in the collection of data.

Research instruments

Two different sets of instruments were used to aid in the collection of data for the study. These instruments were a questionnaire and a written composition. The questionnaire used was adapted and modified from Subhi and Yasin (2015) which was meant to investigate English spelling errors among Iraqi students in Malaysia. The modification was done in order to suit Ghanaian context. In all, the questionnaire had

Table 1: students' perception on spelling errors

Question №	A Always	B Sometimes	C Usually	D Never	No Response
1	26 (13%)	133 (66.5%)	17(8.5%)	7(3.5%)	17 (8.5%)
2	41(20.5%)	124 (62.0%)	35(17.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

eight (8) test items as compare to the original one which had sixteen (16) items. Each test item was provided with four 'Likert-type' scale labelled with 'A' (always), 'B' (sometimes), 'C' (usually) and 'D' (never) for the respondents to choose from. The result was tabulated and analyzed to reflect the outcome of the respondents' choices. Under the written composition, however, the respondents were given a set of essays to choose and write on without any compulsion. The respondents were also allowed to spend one hour, thirty minutes for the entire exercise under the supervision of the researcher. They were also told that any topic that they selected to write on should contain four hundred and fifty words (450) as its actual length of words.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Out of a total of two hundred (200) questionnaires distributed, it was identified that 140 (70%) of the respondents were males while 55 (27.5%) were females. 5 (2.5%) of the respondents did not indicate their status in terms of gender. The reason for such a large portion of male respondents is that the schools selected, especially for those under category 'A' and 'B', were predominately males. Very many of the respondents were between the ages of 16 to 19 (185 with 92.5%), 7 (3.5%) of the respondents were between the ages of 20 to 30, 1 (0.5%) respondent declared that he or she was under the ages between 12 to 15, while 7 (3.5%) of the respondents could not identify any of the age brackets that they were provided with.

Section B

The table below shows the results of the respondents' perception on how they see errors in their writings. The responses received from the respondents involved are presented to reflect their respective opinions that they shared relative to the questions that they were asked.



3	92 (46%)	59 (29.5%)	36 (18%)	7 (3.5%)	6 (3.0%)
4	119(59.5%)	48 (24.0%)	22(11.0%)	6 (3.0%)	5 (2.5%)
5	87 (43.5%)	76 (38.0%)	19 (9.5%)	14(7.0%)	4 (2.0%)

Question 1 sought to ask the respondents how often they read over their essays before submitting them to their teachers. At the end of the day, 26 (13.0%) of the respondents indicated that they do it ‘always’, 133 (66.5%) of them also made it clear that ‘sometimes’ they do read over before submitting, 17 (8.5%) remarked that they ‘usually’ do so, 7 (3.5%) maintained in their responses that they ‘never’ read over their essays, while 17 (8.5%) of the respondents failed to provide answers to the question.

Under question 2 which intended to find out how often do the respondents make errors when writing, 41 (20.5%) of them ticked that they do make errors ‘always’, 124 (62.0%) also selected that ‘sometimes’ they see themselves committing those errors, 35 (17.5%) further indicated that ‘usually’ they do commit those spelling infractions in their writings, nobody picked ‘never’ and also no one left the question unanswered.

Question 3 tried to suggest how often the students consider the words that they choose before spelling them in their essay writings. The study identified that 92 (46.0%) of the respondents indicated that they ‘always’ take a critical consideration to the words that they choose in their essays, 52 (29.5%) suggested in their answers by ticking that they ‘sometimes’ do so, 36 (18.0%) maintained in their responses that they ‘usually’ do that before they commence writing, 7 (3.5%) also indicated that they ‘never’ do it. However, 6 (3.0%) of the respondents could not give their views on the question that was brought before them.

Question 4 indicated on how often the respondents feel that it is necessary for them to minimize their spelling errors when writing. The

Table 2: Problems and causes associated with spelling errors

Question No	A	B	C	D	No Response
6	35 (17.5%)	7 (3.5%)	104(52.0%)	51(25.5%)	3 (1.5%)
7	90 (45.0%)	35 (17.5%)	46 (23.0%)	27 (13.5%)	2 (1.0%)

results received highlighted the fact that 119 (59.5%) of the respondents considered that it is very necessary ‘always’, 48 (24.0%) suggested that they ‘sometimes’ see it necessary, 22 (11.0%) confirmed that they ‘usually’ realise it as a necessary tool in their writings, 6 (3.0%) responded that they ‘never’ see it as an important item, while 5 (2.5%) of the them could not respond to any of the options provided in an that manner.

Question 5 was meant to solicit from the respondents if they find it as an important factor to learn the spellings of words that seem not to be too familiar to them in their first instance. As a result, 85 (43.5%) of them indicated that they ‘always’ see the learning of the spellings of those unfamiliar words as a crucial factor in their academic lives, 76 (38.0%) maintained that they ‘sometimes’ do experience the learning of how to spell those unfamiliar words very important, 19 (9.5%) ticked that they ‘usually’ have such a conviction in mind that the learning of unfamiliar words is important, 14 (7.0%) responded that they never sense anything of that sort when an unfamiliar word is found, and 4 (2.0%) were not able to give any response thereby leaving those spaces provided blank.

Section C

This section seeks to provide some of the problems and the causes that are associated with the respondents’ spelling errors in writings. The respondents were provided with four different options to select from based on the demands of the individual questions. Each option supplied was labelled from ‘A’ to ‘D’, with each item dealing with separate corresponding questions. At the end of the day, the views of the respondents were sourced and presented in the table below:



8	46 (23.0%)	63 (31.5%)	81 (40.5%)	6 (3.0%)	4 (2.0%)
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Question 6 as identified in the table above tried to find out where the respondents' problem of spelling errors lies. In this regard, 35 (17.5%) of the respondents selected option 'A' which indicates that their problem is realised due to inadequate learning materials in schools, 7 (3.5%) picked 'B' which seeks to establish the fact that lack of good teachers to handle English language as a subject becomes their main problem, 104 (52.0%) also chose 'C' which tries to indicate that there has not been allocated period on the timetable to take care of their spelling needs in schools, 51 (25.5%) ticked 'D' that also tries to explain that the respondents lack interests in the learning of English language as a course in schools, while 3 (1.5%) could not provide any response to the options provided for them.

Question 7 wanted to find out the cause of the respondents' spelling errors in any written composition. With respect to this question, 90 (45.0%) respondents ticked 'A' that seeks to explain that their cause of spelling errors arises because they are not familiar with some words in English vocabulary, 35 (17.5%) picked 'B' which is meant to imply that it is because of the differences that exist between the written and the spoken forms of words in English language, 46 (23.0%) of the respondents took option 'C' to suggest that it is because they want to spell words just as the sounds appeal to their ears, 27 (13.5%) confirmed their choice for 'D' that gives an indication that it is because they often do not

spend time to read over their compositions any time they finish writing. However, 2 (1.0%) could not provide response to any of the options that was available for them.

Question 8 was meant to indicate the kind of things that the respondents do anytime they have difficulties in spelling particular words. It became so revealing to note that 46 (23.0%) of the respondents marked option 'A' to suggest that they spell word(s) just as they feel it is okay for them to do so, 63 (31.5%) too confirmed what they do whenever they encounter difficult word(s) by ticking 'B' to indicate that they do ask friends whom they happen to find around when such needs arise, 81 (40.5%) chose option 'C' to depict that they do look for their right spellings in a dictionary whenever they have difficulty in spelling any word, 6 (3.0%) picked 'D' which indicates that they do ask their teachers any time they come across spelling difficulties in writing, 4 (2.0%) did not provide any response at all to this very question, even though there were enough options that they could have chosen from.

Types of Spelling Errors committed in writing and its frequencies

The table below presents the results of the data gathered from the essays that the respective students were asked to write. The results contained various forms of errors that were identified and recorded to typify the students' error types and the number of types that they occurred in the essays they wrote.

Table 3: spelling errors found in the essays and their frequencies

Type of spelling errors	Various categories of the schools				Total
	Category 'A'	Category 'B'	Category 'C'	Category 'D'	
Omission	40 (4.9%)	37 (4.6%)	36(4.4%)	95 (11.7%)	208 (25.6%)
Substitution	81 (10.0%)	79 (9.7%)	91 (11.2%)	109 (13.4%)	360 (44.3%)
Insertion	22 (2.7%)	38 (4.7%)	29 (3.6%)	63 (7.8%)	152 (18.8%)
Transposition	5 (0.6%)	15 (1.8%)	12 (1.5%)	17 (2.1%)	49 (6.0%)
Splitting	7 (0.9%)	3 (0.4%)	7 (0.9%)	3 (0.4%)	20 (2.6%)
Amalgamation	4 (0.5%)	1 (0.1%)	4 (0.5%)	2 (0.2%)	11 (1.3%)
Other forms	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)	8 (1.0%)	1 (0.1%)	12 (1.4%)



From the table above, one sees that the total number of errors committed from the writings of the respondents was 812 of which omission component of the error type recorded 208 (25.5%). Out of the total mark of 208 (25.6%) recorded under the omission type, respondents in Category 'A' obtained 40 (4.9%), 'B' also had 37 (4.6%), 'C' obtained a frequency mark of 36 (4.4%) and then the 'D' also recorded 95 (11.7%) in terms of its range of occurrence.

Similarly, substitution error type was identified with a frequency mark of 360 (44.3%) of which Category 'A' was marked with 81 (10.0%), Category 'B' recorded 79 (9.7%), Category 'C' also had 91 (11.2%) times of the errors that occurred, while those under Category 'D' obtained a figure of 109 (13.4%) of identified errors.

Insertion had 152 (18.8%) out of a total mark of the errors obtained. As a result, it had a distribution frequency of 22 (2.7%) of the errors committed by respondents in Category 'A', 38 (4.7%) of such errors was obtained from respondents in Category 'B', 29 (3.6%) of the errors was recorded under Category 'C' just as 63 (7.8%) was found to have been committed by the Category 'D' respondents respectively.

Under the transposition error type, only 49 (6.0%) was recorded with which Category 'A' got 5 (0.6%), those found in the 'B' category obtained 15 (1.8%), the Category 'C' had 12 (1.5%) respondents committing same, while 17 (2.1%) of the respondents in the Category 'D' group subjecting themselves to this singular error type in the essays that they wrote in this regard.

The splitting type of error recorded 20 (2.6%) with Category 'A' obtaining 7 (0.9%), Category 'B' also happened to have 3 (0.4%), Category 'C' had to acquire a mark of 7 (0.9%) and Category 'D' found to have recorded 3 (0.4%) in that respect.

The total number of errors recorded under wrongful amalgamation was 11 (1.3%), 4 (0.5%) of those errors being realised by Category 'A' group, Category 'B' obtained 1 (0.1%), Category 'C' also had 4 (0.5%), while 2 (0.2%) of such errors were recorded under the roof of

Category 'D'.

Other forms which were found in the writings of the respondents in the above named categories contained 12 (1.4%). As such, Category 'A' recorded 1 (0.1%) of that error form, Category 'B' was marked with 2 (0.2%), Category 'C' also had a recorded mark of 8 (1.0%) just as Category 'D' obtained 1 (0.1%) in that order as well.

DISCUSSION

Students' perception on spelling errors

Table 1 illustrates the kind of perception that the individual respondents have on spelling errors. It is realised from question 1 that 13% of the respondents 'always' read over their essays before submitting to their respective teachers, 62% claim that they do it 'sometimes', 8.5% admit that they 'usually' take the pains to do it and 3.5% accept that they 'never' read over their essays at all. The fact that only 13% making it a constant practice to read over their essays after they have finished writing their essays leaves much to be worried. This therefore suggests that a large number of the respondents do rush to submit their scripts whenever they are done with a particular composition and that they do not, however, see the need for engaging in the practice of proof-reading their essays to ensure error-free work. This happens because the respondents write with a perceived belief that whatever they write is perfect and that it is simply the best to yield them a required scholarship.

Additionally, question 2 possesses an argument of how often do the respondents make errors in their writings, 20.5% of the respondents agree to the fact that they 'always' do make those spelling errors. This obviously suggests therefore that spelling errors are sporadically made in the writings of the respondents since they do not have the critical space to examine what they write and how to get those words written down correctly at all times. It appears further that this percentage of the respondents has become too insensitive to what they write and that no explicit assistance is given to the notice of their errors that they eventually make. 62.0% believe that spelling errors occur in their writings



'sometimes', 17.5% indicate that 'usually' they do make error in the process of writing. No single respondent decided to choose 'never', while none at all decided to leave some of the questions unsaid in that regard. With this release, one is attempted to assume that individual respondents are bound to make errors in whatever they put into writing and that they eventually unable to express their thoughts without making too many of such spelling errors available (Al-Oudat 2017).

Again, 46% of the total number of the respondents suggested under question 3 that they 'always' do consider the words in mind before spelling them, 29.5% also say that they 'sometimes' do appreciate such a stance before writing the words down, 18% maintain that they 'usually' do that and 3.5% agree that they 'never' do such a thing. The idea that only 46% consider the kind of words that they have to assemble together to present a specific thought is minimally encouraging even though it falls below the acceptable index. It appears to suggest that respondents are taken strides to realise the desiring need of making sure that words are spelt in their appropriate form even as they encounter challenges in their spellings. However, the remaining portion of 51% (constituting 29.5% 'sometimes', 18% 'usually' and 3.5% 'never') have not taken the steps to assess individual words in their minds before spelling them down, but rather confuse the nature of spelling letters and their non-corresponding phonetic sound patterns in the language for most of their writings that they embark.

When asked about how often the respondents feel that it is better to minimize their spelling errors, 59.5% admit that they experience such feelings 'always', 24.0% maintain that they do experience that 'sometimes', 11.0% say 'usually' with 3.0% indicating 'never' in their response to the question. This then seems to bring to fore the fact that a large percentage (59.5%) of the respondents recognises and has a strong feeling that it is important for them to minimize the kind of errors that they make whenever they are writing. This makes it clear to the researcher that those errors that the respondents made cannot be described as an unnoticed deviation from the

reality. It is because the respondents lack the motivation to represent their ideas correctly in words. The remaining indices in terms of percentage (38%) seem not to have such feelings. It means therefore that such respondents do not care what they write. It is because they do not know that words in English are in a particular patterned form and that those words cannot be presented in any haphazard manner to affect the most acceptable standards of practice.

Furthermore, question 5 tries to deal with how often the respondents attach importance to the learning of the spellings of unfamiliar words. In this relation, 43.5% responded to the fact that they see that it is important to learn the spelling of words that they seem not to be familiar with 'always', 38.0% also indicated that they learn to spell unfamiliar words 'sometimes', 9.5% said they 'usually' learn to spell those unfamiliar words, 7.0% admitted that they 'never' do that while 2.0% refuse to respond at all. With this revelation, the results gathered thus far suggest that only a few respondents (43.5%) see the importance of learning how to spell words that are not too familiar to them. Since this small percentage of respondents takes interest to deal with unfamiliar words, it automatically allows them, with all intents and purposes, to minimize their poor spelling habits. With those who learn how to so 'sometimes' (38.0%) and 'usually' (9.5%), they appear not to have the desiring need to check and learn unfamiliar words as frequently as possible. This is so because these respondents (those indicating 'sometimes' and 'usually') have not taken it upon themselves to learn certain words which will go a long way to improve their writing skills and vocabulary arsenal. For the 2.0% who could not provide any respond to questions may appear not to have any interest in dealing with this canker in their academic career as well.

Problems and causes associated with spelling errors

Under table 2, the researcher tried to know the problems and causes associated with the respondents' spelling errors in their respective essays. The study revealed in question 6 that 17.5% of the respondents attributed their problem



in spelling errors to inadequate learning materials in their schools, 3.5% believed it is due to lack of good teachers to handle English language as a subject, 52.0% agreed to the fact that it is because there is no period in the timetable that allows them to have lessons that deal with spelling of words, as 25.5% hanging their problem on the fact that they lack interest to the studying of English language as a subject in schools. This point to the argument that the respondents' ill-spelling habits can be blamed on all the above mentioned attributes. It then indicates further that the stakeholders and various agencies which are responsible for the country's education have not address these pressing needs of the students. These individuals obviously take interest in formulating policies for the schools, but they seem not to concentrate on the things that will make those policies a reality, as a result the phenomenon continues to be the sole albatross on their necks.

Question 7 which sought to look at the cause of their frequent spelling errors also noted that 45.0% of the respondents blamed it on their unfamiliarity with some words in English, 17.5% indicated that it is because of the difference between both the written form and the spoken form of the words in the language, 23.0% believed that it is because they obviously want to spelling words just as it appeals to their sense of hearing, while 13.5% thought that it is due to their inability to read over their essays after having finished writing. All of these bring into account certain behavioural attitude that the respondents, and for that matter the students, have regarding how they perceive some strides in the language (English). They assume that spelling of words in English comes the very moment an individual is introduced into the realm of the said language and tries to arrange the letters to form words that can be used in their own forms and purposes.

Question 8 further tried to find out what the respondents do when they find it difficult to spell a word, 23.0% indicated that they do write it just as they feel it should be, 31.5% did admit that they ask friends who know exactly how such a word has to be spelt, 40.5% believed they do

consult a dictionary for proper spelling information and 3.0% suggested that they find it prudent to ask a teacher who happens to be around at that material moment. What it means is that the respondents have different sources of tackling difficult word(s). Each of these options sounds quite good to the respondents. However, the 40.5% of the respondents who take clue from the dictionary becomes the best idea. This therefore means that only these handful individual (40.5%) probably know how to use the dictionary and as such they consult it whenever necessary. It is because these respondents have therefore accepted that dictionary remains the only source of authority to any human language in the world, hence the need for its use to ascertain the proper form of spelling individual words. The remaining sets of the respondents (31.5%, 23.0% and 3.0%) who used unacceptable procedures always do get most of the words incorrectly spelt, because their sources for which they rely on may not be able to provide a genuine spelling form to the word(s) that the respondents are looking for in terms of its appropriate form.

Spelling errors found in the essays and their frequencies

The findings in the above heading give an indication of the various spelling errors that were found in the respondents' essays. Arguing from this, it is observed from table 3 that substitution error with the highest mark of 360 (44.3%) is the most frequently committed error that was found in the students' writings. This error type occurs when a whole word or a part of a word is used in place of another. The most substituted items identified from the analysis were the letters of the vowels as well as the consonants. The consonant letters like 's', 't', 'd' and 'x' have been used to replace 'x', 'c', 'th', 's', 't' and 'g' in words such as 'dissuss' (discuss), testbook (textbook), studend (student), expecially (especially), treat (threat), and goint (going). Vowel letters such as 'a', 'e', 'i', 'u' and 'o' were seemingly substituted for one another in specific forms. For example, the word 'obedient' with 'e', which is sandwiched between 'b' and 'd', was changed to 'i' as 'obidient', 'because' also with the 'a' is changed to 'o' to form



'because', 'opportunity' has the 'u' being replaced by 'i' to become 'oppportunity'. Similarly, 'humble' becomes 'homble' just for a change of 'u' to 'o' and 'serious' also becoming 'serieus' because of the use of 'e' instead of 'o'. In all of these cases, it is certainly obvious to determine that various substitutions of letters in place of another occurred based on "the tendency that the arrangement of these spelling categories" is really confusing the respective respondents just as it is a failure on the part of these respondents to recognize the corresponding relation that exists between the letters of English as well as its sound systems (Mukhaiyar & Syarif 2013:74). As a result, this error type can be attributed to an "... incorrect spellings of correct sounds" (Sterling 1983:359). It is also due to the fact that the respective teachers and the school authorities do not engage the students in a vigorous study in spelling dictations in schools as well as the students not having spending so much time to read over their written essays before submitting them to the respective instructor(s).

The omission type became the next highest spelling error that the respondents committed most with a total frequency of 208 (25.6%). This type of error occurred when the respondents consciously or unconsciously leave out or exclude a letter or a set of letters from the existing form of a word. In this relation, the respondents were seen to have left out certain letter(s) from words that they used in their writings. Most of the omissions that the respondents committed were 'r', 'e', 'n', 's', 'p', 'i', 'a' and 'l'. For example, words like 'basicaly', 'announced', 'unecessary', 'mentiond', 'compters', 'arived', 'languags', 'belive', 'buit' and 'affectinately' lack their respective requisite letters to make them conclusive enough for their proper forms. The omission of the letters (l, n, e, u, r, o) so sporadically gives an indication that these respondents lacked the "orthographic spelling knowledge" of the words in English language (Kelman & Apel 2004:57) as well as their unfamiliarity with "the arrangement of certain English spelling" words (Syarif 2013:74). It can again be attributed to the fact the most of the students are not so familiar some of the words

in English as well.

Insertion is noted to be the third with 152 (18.8%) as its highest frequency marker. This error form becomes much more obvious when an additional form of letter(s) is allowed to join a particular word pattern of a language. Such additional form often brings about anomaly into the sequential nature of individual letters that are identified in the word(s). The letters which occurred as a result of their inclusions in some of the words were 's', 't', 'e', 'f', 'c', 't', 'p', 'm', 'h' 'er' and were therefore seen in the spellings of anomalous words like 'vissa', 'employe', 'writting', 'peacefull', 'childrens' professional', 'accademic' and 'enough' which were supposed to be 'visa', 'employ', 'writing', 'peaceful', 'children', 'professional', and 'academic'. This error type is frequently defined as a lexical form of error which the respondents have found it too difficult to differentiate from their correct forms. This kind of relation tries to produce an inflow of correct sound system of acute misspelling forms of words by the respondents. Errors of this nature become to revealing because the students always want to spell words just as they hear and feel how those words are supposed to be spelt for the sake of convenience.

Transposition error usually occurs in writings due to a missing order of individual letters. It is also as a result of a change of respective positions of the individual letters of words in a language. This form of error was seen in the writings of the respective respondents' essays. In this regard, the transposition recorded a total frequency mark of 49 (6.0%) and became the fourth most used item in the trot. This particular error became minimally profound in the data collected where the respondents frequently inter-changed the position of letter 'i' and 'e' (recieve ≈ receive, soceity ≈ society), 't' and 'h' (enlighthened ≈ enlightened), 'u' and 'r' (durnk ≈ drunk). Such a relation of this sort can be attributed to a mere careless on the part of the respondents and the fact that they appear not to know that the structures of the words in English are too arbitrary in terms of their organizational patterns, and not how they perceive the arrangements of words in the language to be.



Wrongful splitting of words was one of the errors that were recorded in the writings of the respondents. This act of splitting becomes so obvious in writings when a word that is supposed to be a single conclusive item is broken into unacceptable syntactic unit. Such a word form was minimally used in this relation with its frequency of 20 (2.6%). As identified from the data, individual words like 'textbooks', 'furthermore', 'notebooks', 'adequate' and 'moreover' which are supposed to be conclusive units individually, were wrongfully splitted by the respondents as 'text books', 'further more', 'note books', 'a dequate' and 'more over'. The result therefore is that the respondents appear to have difficulties in writing these words in their correct forms, thereby causing a definite syntactic hiccup in English. The blame can also be hung on their unfamiliarity with the spelling of some of the words in English.

Another form of error that became so apparent in the study was wrongful amalgamation of words which significantly recorded 11 (1.3%) in terms of its total frequency. This error type occurs as a result of a wrongful compounding of words in a sentence. In English, there are words which appear to be one whole item whenever they are realised in speech, but in their written forms, they are found to be separated from each other or one another. These wrongful combinations of words that were found in the writings of the respondents included 'alot', 'infact', 'donot', 'inaddition', and 'extracurriculum'. The most striking argument here is that it appears the respondents are obviously confused "between elements of words" and items of phonetic description which are inexplicable guidelines in any human language (Carney 1994:84). The respondents only seem to write whatever appeals to their sense of hearing without being guided by the actual spelling scheme in English.

'Other forms' of error type recorded the least amount of frequency in the data gathered with just 12 (1.4%). These 'other forms' were various aggregates of infractions that were identified in the writings of the respondents. Some of these forms included wrongful use of

apostrophe (thus marking 'yours' as 'your's', 'works' as 'work's' and 'teachers' for 'teacher's'), the use of nouns as verbs in sentences (for example, 'practice' instead of 'practise', 'advice' in place of 'advise') and other unacceptable spelling forms like 'laziness' for 'lazyness', 'bye' for 'buy' and 'don't as 'dont'. These spelling forms are seen as an awkward illustration of grammatical words which completely derail the solid writing system in English. The fact of the matter is that the respective respondents do not know or lack the knowledge of realising appropriate patterns of these words in their respective combinatorial fashion.

Conclusion

Spelling errors abound in every writings irrespective of the intelligent of the writer. As a result, the user of a language cannot restrain himself or herself from committing errors since the errors are found to be part of a language learning process. In this regard, various forms of errors were identified and their associated problems of reality were generally recounted for respectively. The most frequent category of spelling errors that has been accounted abundantly in the study were substitution (44.3%), omission (25.6%), Insertion (18.8%), Transposition (6.0%), Wrongful splitting of words (2.6%), wrongful amalgamation (1.3%) and Other forms (1.4%), and as a result one can understand the occurrence of such errors as a perennial phenomenon which can occur in the writings of both the native and non-native speakers and the fact that "the learners have such an automatic habit to commit" such an utterly odious act of arranging letters in a conspicuous manner (Mukhaiyar & Syarif 2013:67). The study therefore made a few other interesting strides and further appeared to suggest that the students' frequent attempts "to spell words accurately were thwarted when they seemed to primarily recall the pronunciation of the English words" (Alhaisoni et al 2015:190). Also, these students seemed not to know the fact that there are grapheme-phonetic inconsistencies that engulf the spellings of words at the vocabulary level in English and the fact that most of them do not



seek a proper source for spellings when the needs arise.

According to Warriner et al (1963:270), “spelling is like penmanship – when it’s good, you get no particular credit, but when it’s bad, you run into all kinds of trouble”. This then implies that accurate spelling is seen as part of the scores of writing craftsmanship and that one’s ability to avoid errors in the process of writing cannot be compromised in the shreds of any written discourse. It is always so very important for one to note that “some people seem to be naturally good spellers, but most people have to learn how to spell. Ability to spell can be acquired, provided you approach the task slowly and easily – and provided you have the will to learn” the intricacies in the target language (ibid.).

Recommendations

No matter what a language learner does, spelling errors cannot be eradicated from their writings completely. However, certain steps could be taken to minimize them in the light of the problems identified in the present study. As a result, the study therefore recommends the following steps for consideration:

1. Students should be encouraged to proofread any form of written composition that they engage themselves no matter how short the time allotted for it may be.
2. Students should be encouraged to use dictionaries as often as possible in order to enhance their spelling abilities.
3. Students should develop the ability to read extensively in order to improve their spelling skills.
4. Teachers should find time within their scheduled period to conduct spelling dictations every so often to improve the spelling needs of students in class.
5. Curriculum developers should also see spelling as a very important ingredient in language learning and that it should be part of the syllabus from primary to tertiary level of our education in order to improve the students’ writing skills.

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