



Investigating Omani University Students' Spelling Errors: A Case Study of Nizwa University, Oman

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this study was to investigate and identify spelling errors in writing essays written by Omani foundation students at Nizwa University. Error analysis technique was used in this research to find their errors, identify them, and explain their sources. The study investigated errors of 100 essays which were gathered from Omani university students enrolled in the “foundation program” during the second semester of February, 2014. The results of randomly selected 100 essays written by Nizwa University freshmen students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Engineering & Architecture, College of Economics, Management & Information Systems and the College of Pharmacy and Nursing. A total of 3208 spelling errors occurred in 100 written essays and subsequently classified them into four types: (a) Insertion (b) Substitution (c) Omission (d) Transposition. The results of this study have confirmed the hypotheses on which it was based. The conclusion is that there are different problems that these students face, which impede their proficiency in the target language.

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INTRODUCTION

English language has now become the world's lingua franca; it is the main language for international communication in different fields including commerce, industry, politics and education. This is the main reason why millions of language learners all

over the world are striving to improve their English language proficiency. An essential component of this proficiency is improving one's ability to communicate via writing since it is crucial to effective communication and essential to employment in today's world. One important factor to consider

As relates to writing competence is spelling one one single misspelled word can change a word and alter the whole meaning of the sentence. In general, good spelling is regarded as a sign of good education whereas poor spelling is considered as sign of abandons (Fageberg, 2006).

Spelling is the formation of words by using letters, orthographically; a combination of letters representing a word. Al-Saedi (1989:17) defines spelling as "putting the elements (letters) of each word in the right sequence. It is also the ability to write words correctly depending on memory.

Spelling is an important activity in the process of learning a foreign language. Al-Khaffaji and Al-Shayib (1987: 7) state that "to spell correctly makes written communication easier while misspelling might lead to interruption of communication and misunderstanding".

English is taught in Oman as a foreign language there (EFL) whereby students are expected to master the four basic language skills i.e., reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Traditionally spelling has been given less importance both by schools and colleges in Oman. It was neglected and was not regarded as even though it is an essential skill in academics. Omani learners were taught spelling in primitive ways, mostly through dictation tests. Vaddapalli (2012: 272) declared that reasons for spelling problems made by Omani learners may be because of "lack of proper spelling instruction at schools and colleges, lack of motivation and seriousness among students, poor reading skills, poor listening skills ...". In fact, students start learning spelling in their fourth year of studying English; however, it is not taught in depth. *English for Me* (Ministry of Education,

2000) includes very few exercises related to spelling which are basically not enough for practise; Moreover, it gives very limited emphasis on spelling rules. This leads us to the fact that most learners have no clear idea about some spelling rules that help in facilitating spelling.

Moreover, Al-Harrasi, (2012, Fender (2008), Al-Jarf, R (2007), Kharma and Hajjaj (1989), state that English is not a phonetic language, i.e., it is not written as it is spoken or it does not have closer phoneme – grapheme correspondence. Therefore, spelling difficulties are expected to be made by foreign learners learning English as a foreign language. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) and Smith (in Swan and Smith, 1987) noted that because English is not a phonetic language, Arab learners struggle to master English spelling. This study is set out to answer the following questions:

- What are the spelling errors that students make in their writing?
- What are the causes and sources of these errors?

For the purpose of investigating these study questions, the following hypotheses are formulated:

- Omani university students make different types of spelling errors in their written essays.

During a few years ago, more information has become available on spelling errors studies in Omani context such as the studies made by Vaddapalli (2012), Al-Jabri (2006) and Al-Hassan (2006). These studies were some attempts to explore the types of spelling errors done by Oman learners and suggest some spelling instructions. This paper is complementing the previous researches conducted in Oman; however, it determines students' spelling errors and classify the errors made by

Foundation year program students at Nizwa university into four main categories. Generally speaking, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the spelling errors made by Omani learners of English, and
2. Explore the reasons behind these types of errors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a considerable amount of research conducted on spelling errors. Several researchers have analyzed the patterns of spelling errors during the last decade. These studies try to classify the errors made by language learners into different types to help them recognize the spelling problems more clearly.

The researchers adopted Cook's (1999) classification of errors, which categorized spelling errors into four categories: substitution, omission, insertion, and transposition.

- Omissions (deletions of some letters);
- Substitutions (replacing one letter with another);
- Insertions or additions (adding extra letters) and
- transpositions (reversing the position of letters).

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on classifying errors made by Arab learners; most of them are similar to the one presented by Cook (e.g. Emery, 1997; Al-Jarf, 2008; Vaddapalli, 2012; Al-Jabri, 2006; Al-Hassan, 2006; Al – Harassi, 2012).

Some studies shed light on the spelling errors targeting Arab students. For example, AlJarf (2010) asserted that English language courses neglected the importance of spelling. This paves the way to study the actual students' spelling errors and the reasons behind these errors.

Moreover, Fender (2008) showed that Arab students have a lower level in spelling and they have difficulties in spelling patterns, words, and multi-syllabic words. Ajarf also (2007) investigated that some factors that cause poor spelling such as communication, breakdown, and inadequate knowledge of the English spelling rules, which influence the Arabic spelling system, students' mispronunciation, and interference between English words, and unfamiliarity with the American pronunciation. This may help in recognizing the relationship between errors and their sources. Al-Jabir (2006) classified spelling errors with Omani students, and concluded that spelling gives an idea about types of errors.

Many studies investigated the spelling errors made by speakers of other languages, such as Spanish and Chinese. For example, Sun-Alperin, & Wang (2008) investigated Spanish-speaking children's spelling errors. In this study, native Spanish-speaking children committed significantly more vowel spelling errors that were consistent with the Spanish orthography. The findings showed that orthographic properties of native children influenced their learning to spell in a second language. These results help us to compare two languages in terms of spelling such as English and Arabic. In addition, Chan(2004) investigated writing errors committed by 710 Chinese ESL learners at different proficiency levels with the focus on five types ,namely A) lack of control of copula B)incorrect placement of adverbs C) inability to use 'the, there and be' structured D) failure to use the relative clause E) confusion in verb transitivity. The results showed that there is a transfer between Chinese and English languages. This confirms that some

spelling errors are committed due to transfer between English and Arabic.

This paper is an addition to the previous studies on exploring the common spelling errors in Omani university context. Recently, a small amount of literature has been published on spelling errors in Omani context by Vaddapalli (2012), Al-Jabri (2006), Al-Harassi (2012) and Al-Hassan (2006). These studies mainly classify the spelling errors done by secondary school and university students, present study deals with students in the foundation program with different specializations.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects of the Study: The sample of this study consists of 100 foundation program university students from Nizwa University. They form one group according to their class time. The 100 university students were selected as the group for the written essay task.

Procedures: All of the 100 participants were given a writing exam that involved essay writing. The essays analyzed in the study were the ones written in the final exam because at this stage the students were supposed to have acquired skills of essay writing during the course. Three questions were asked:

- Question 1 was “How does stress affect your life?” ,
- Question 2 was “How do you feel when you don’t get enough sleep?” and,
- Question 3 was “What qualities do you think are important in a leader? Why are these qualities important?”

After that, the three steps of error analysis specified by Corder (1974) were followed:

- Collection of sample errors.
- Identification of errors.
- Description of errors.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

In the study under investigation **both** face validity and content validity were applied. The test is said to have face validity if it looks as it will measure what it is supposed to measure.

As for content validity it has to demonstrate that it measures a representative samples of the language skill , structures , etc., with which the test is meant to be concerned . The test would have content validity only if it included a proper sample of the relevant structures which depend on the purpose of the test. Accordingly, the test of this study was validated by a group of experts who are familiar with language teaching and testing. They made some valuable remarks about the test and the researcher made use of there observation.

As for the reliability of the test the researcher used the test-retest method to verify the reliability of the test. It was first administrated to 20 students (excluded later from the sample of the study), and then administrated once again on the same group two weeks later. The scores of the subjects in the first test were calculated with those in the second test using Pearson Correlation.

The results showed that there was positive correlation between the pre-test and post test:

Pre-test: 0.8698

Post-test: 0.8467

Upon considering all the validity and reliability coefficient which was of an adequate and that it would help in obtaining acceptable statistical analysis.

RESULTS

Table discussion show the analysis of errors based on type of error, number of errors and percentage of errors committed by the participants.

Table 1: Relative Frequency of Occurrence of Spelling Errors

Type of Error	Cases of Errors	Percentage
Omission	1215	37.8
Substitution	1023	31.8
Addition	627	19.5
Transposition	343	10.6
Total	3208	Approx 100%

Following the identification, classification of the spelling errors with detailed description of each category with explanation of the causes of the errors was carried out.

Omission Errors: As it appears from Table (1) omission errors reported to be the most spelling errors in this study. Omission errors are deletions of vowel and consonant letters. These deletions

show the poor spelling abilities of the participants. The reason behind this is that spelling in English language does not correspond closely to the pronunciation.

a- Vowels Omission: Vowels omissions were most common in the participants (68.3% out of 831 cases); they were more common than consonant omission. Table (2) shows that clearly.

Table 2: Occurrences of Spelling Errors in Percentage

Categories	Vowel		Consonant	
	Cases	%	Cases	%
Omission	831	68.3	384	31.6
Substitution	671	65.5	352	34.4
Addition	381	60.7	246	39.2
Transposition	294	85.7	49	14.2
Total	2177		1031	100%

The most frequently omitted vowel letter was 'e' when it functions as a 'silent letter' in word final position. e.g.

* Befor	before	* Lik	Like
* Because	Because	* Sam	Same
* Hav	Have	* Mak	Make
* Because	Because	* Becam	Became
* Hav	Have	* Her	Here
* Commucut	Commucate	* Cultur	Culture

This kind of error could be attributed to the mother tongue (MT) interference where Arabic is a language which orthographically possesses an intact consonantal structure, therefore, all short vowels are not realized in writing. Students of this study seem to omit silent letters (e.g., *mak* for *make*, *cultur* for *culture*). This shows similar results

presented by AL-Jaraf (1999) who believes that this type of error is linked with transferring the Arabic system into English. Students of this study seem to omit silent letters as they almost do not exist in Arabic (Bughio & Shabbir, 2009).

The researcher also noticed a lot of vowel 'a' omissions in the participants'

writings, e.g.

* Srary	Salary	* Concentration	Concentration
* Important	important	* Lerning	Learning
Vowel 'i' omission was also spread among the participants' work. e.g.,			
* thnking	thinking	* specal	Special
* responsible	responsible	* finshed	Finished
* beautiful	beautiful	* sutable	suitable

It was observed that vowel 'o' omission and vowel 'u' omission were also made in the participants' writing. e.g.

* enough	enough	* becase	because
* yellw	yellow	* shold	should
* ging	going	* bild	build
* anther	another		

Such errors could be ascribed to the inconsistency of English spelling. Students made errors in the omission of the short vowels (a, e, i, o, u). These short vowels in English have higher frequency of use than long vowels and they are represented in different ways as evident from the above examples. Consequently, the students made errors in the omission of the vowels. Moreover, The deletion of short vowels, as in writing *beautiful* as *beautfulis* is a problem because such vowels are not represented in written Arabic (Bahloul, 2007 & Fender 2008).

Thus, "Irregularity of English." Causes the errors that are mostly caused by the non-phonetic nature of English orthographic system. Unlike English, Arabic has a highly phonetic orthographic system, as words are mostly written as they are pronounced.

- /a / as in sat
- /ei / as in take
- /∂/ / as in about
- /a: / as in start
- /e / as in many
- /e∂ / as in area
- /o: / as in hall
- /o / as in was

Henderson (1981) indicates there is no one-to-one correspondence between the written word and their pronunciations, i.e., the written symbols do not represent the speech sounds. Hook (1976:5) says that in spoken language we make use of more than forty sounds but we have only twenty six letters to represent them. Accordingly, some letters must perform at least a double duty.

Therefore, this difference is expected to cause some spelling problems to Arab learners. One example is that English has a large number of words that have silent letters (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997). Thus, many learners might omit silent letters. Another example is that all vowel graphemes in English have more than one pronunciation (Hildreth, 1962). For example, the vowel grapheme 'a' is pronounced differently in the words:

Therefore, many Arab learners might write words as they pronounce them or use wrong vowel graphemes.

b- Consonants Omission: Consonants omission was also common in the students' work. It constitutes 31.6% of

- * Now know
- * Our hour
- * Rite write
- * wich which
- * wold world
- * Knowlege knowledge

Apparently, learners tend to delete 'silent' letters like the e.g., above(*now* for *know*) and (*our* for *hour*). This shows similar results presented by (Al-Jaraf,1999) and (Al – Harrisi,2012), Their studies indicate that this kind of error is linked with transferring the Arabic System into English. Students of this study seem to omit silent letters as they almost do not exist in Arabic (Bughio&Shabbir, 2009).

Moreover, this kind of error could be attributed to the lack of correspondence between the phonemes and the letter in English language, e.g., 'c', 'q', and 'x' are superfluous. 'c' represents either /k/ as in 'camera' or 's' as in 'cell', 'q' stands for either /k/ as in 'unique' or 'kw' as in 'queen', and 'x' represents the combination of either /ks/ as in 'six' or /gz/ as in 'exaggerate' or /k/ as in 'luxury' or /gz/ as in 'luxuries'. Smith (1973) points out that there are 52 main English spelling units in English, which double the size of the English alphabet and complicates the task for language learners. Hence, it is not only the 26 letters of the alphabet that learners need to know to be able to read and spell

- * worry worry
- * tal tall
- * spicaly specially
- * stoped stopped
- * traveld travelled
- * corectly correctly

the total number of omission errors. Errors are noticed in the omission of silent consonants as in e.g.,

words correctly, learners also need to get familiar with many more letter combinations that are used to represent the 43 phonemes of English.

This fact is confirmed by Stone (1965:28) who states that:

"English does not sound as it is written, is not written as it sounds. Unlike other languages which have a consistent sound-spelling relationship.... English is really two languages, a written one and a spoken one, and any relationship between them seems to an ESL learner purely coincidental".

This shows that in English there is not one-to-one correspondence between sound and letters and some consonants are written but not pronounced while contrary in Arabic consonants there is one-to-one correspondence between sounds and letters and every written consonant must be pronounced. Accordingly, all these irregularities cause learners of English to find English spelling a big burden.

Moreover, the students made consonant omission errors in words where consonants are doubled in writing, though representing one sound, e.g.,

- * maner manner
- * shoping shopping

Moreover, the learners made some errors related to consonant doubling which Cook (1997) considers the most complicated aspect in English spelling system. They tend to omit one letter from doubled consonant letters, e.g. *tal* for *tall* and *mane* for *manner*.

The problem of the errors above arises from the fact that in Arabic, though the consonant doubling is articulated as two similar sounds, it is represented orthographically by a single consonant, whereas in English it is represented by

- * Wold World

The errors above ascribed to English sound system. In English, the consonant 'r' is pronounced in certain environments and not pronounced in others. It is pronounced when it comes at the beginning of a word as in 'read' or when it is followed by a vowel as in 'spring', while it is not pronounced when it comes at the end of the word as in 'actor', and when it precedes a consonant as in 'bird'. In Arabic language, the consonant 'r' pronounced whenever it appears, which rules out interference of MT pronunciation to cause such errors.

It is generally the case that omission is the most committed errors in this study. A review of the literature has indicated that Omani learners of English mostly

- * Stell Still
- * Geve Give
- * rech Rich

And 'i' replaced 'e' in words like:

- * Shi she
- * Rist rest
- * Thim them

Also 'a' replaced 'e' or 'i' in words like:

- * Frash fresh
- * Vogitable vegetable

doubling the consonant. In Arabic the doubling is indicated by the diacritic mark (ْ) 'shadda', which is placed above the consonant sound which is to be doubled as in (السَّيَّارة), and thus no doubling of consonant letters is required. Here, we could attribute such errors as in the above example to the interference of the MT.

The students make errors in the omission of the consonant 'r' both in mid and final word position, e.g.

- * Howeve However

face difficulties in omission (Al-Jabri, 2006) and (Al- Harrisi, 2012).

Substitution Errors: Cook (1997) shows that learners tend to make two types of substitution errors: vowel substitution and consonant substitution. The findings of the present study seem to be consistent with his research.

a) Vowel for vowel substitution: Vowel for vowel substitution was the most frequent one in the participants' writings 65.5%. Vowel for vowel substitution could be ascribed to the fact that, one letter in English can represent different sounds e.g.,

The vowel 'e' and 'i' are most frequent errors substituted, e.g., 'e' replaced 'i' in words like:

- * Hem Him
- * Defferent Different
- * Stell Still

- * Mysalf myself
- * Personalaty personality

The results of the current study declare that the learners mostly fail to discriminate between (e) and (a), e.g. *myself* instead of *myself*; (e) and (i), e.g., *thim* instead of *them*; (a) and (i), e.g. *personality* instead of *personality*. A possible explanation for the first type may be mother tongue interference. This type of error can be attributed to the lack of confusion between various vowels in Arabic as there are only three distinct sounds that assimilate the English vowels but they are diacritics put on the letters. These symbols are not written most of the time, and their absence does not often affect the meaning of words because their major function is to show the syntactic functions of words in sentences. Thus, Arab learners of English are used to pronounce the vowels in reading or speech without having to write them. Moreover, unlike English, the diacritics in Arabic correspond with their spoken sounds while in English there is no one-to-one correspondence between vowels and sounds most of the time; e.g. <a> can

- ‘b’
- * Broblem
- * Groub
- * Bolice
- * Beople

- ‘p’
- * Puplic
- * Mempers
- * Proplem
- * Ruppel

This analysis further supports the findings of Al – Harrisi (2012) and Vaddapalli (2012) which indicates that Omani students mismatch <p> and as they are the same in Arabic.

represents /a: / as in "harm" or /æ/ as in "cat" ;the vowel sound / ə / can be represented in different ways such as, ‘er’ in ‘teacher’, ‘ar’ in ‘regular’, ‘or’ in ‘sailor’, ‘o’ in ‘oppose’, ‘a’ in ‘standard’....etc. This causes a lot of confusion between the two phonemes ‘e’ and ‘i’ which results the substitution of ‘e’ instead of ‘i’ vice versa in both pronunciation and spelling.

This finding is in agreement with Fender (2008), Al-Jarf, R (2007), Kharma and Hajjaj (1989), and other studies. Kharma and Hajjaj (1989) and Smith (in Swan and Smith, 1987) showed that because English is not a phonetic language, Arab learners struggle to master English spelling.

b) Consonant substitution: Consonant substitutions were not common in the participants' writing, i.e., 34.4%. Some examples could clarify that. The learners seem to confuse the uses of some letters and alternate between them, e.g., (p) and (b) such as *proplem* for *problem*; (f) and (v) such as *fife* for *five*, e.g.,

- for ‘p’
- problem
- group
- police
- people

- for ‘b’
- pubblic
- membbers
- problem
- rubbed

The reason for these errors is mother tongue interference, includes the errors which resulted from the differences between the written and sound systems of English and Arabic. English has some sounds that are not found in Arabic, such

as /p/ as in *park*, /v/ as in *very*, and /dʒ/ as in *much*. Many Arab learners of English replace these sounds with their closest written equivalents that are found in Arabic, which are the 'b', 'f', and 'sh' respectively. For example, some learners would write *fife* for *five*, the confusion is that Arabic does not have the phonemes (p) and (v), and thus the learners tend to substitute them with their counterpart sounds (b) and (f) as

‘s’	for	‘c’
* desided		decided
* sucessful		successful
* plases		places
* prinsses		princess
* ashievement		achievement
‘c’	for	‘s’
* cpecial		special
* reacon		reason

The errors above happens when both 's' and 'c' are pronounced /s/, which creates confusion in pronunciation and consequently substitution in spelling. When the letters 'sh', 'c' and 'ch' are pronounced /ʃ/, students make spelling errors in words like * cpecial for 'special' due to the irregularity of English spelling where one sound is

* fife	five
* themselves	themselves

The errors resulting from the substitution of 'f' and 'v', might be a result of confusion caused by the absence of the /v/ phoneme in their MT, where Arabic only distinguishes the /f/ sound. The students use the 'f' instead of 'v' in free

* suppost	supposed
* afrait	afraid

The errors above due to the mispronunciation on behalf the students which often results in misspelling.

We can conclude that most of errors can be attributed to differences in the spelling system of English and that of the learners mother tongue whereas

they do not discriminate between them. Richards (1985:131) called this as 'hypercorrection', i.e., over consciousness of making a mistake. Therefore, the students are at a loss when to use these letters and when not to use them and the result is that they make such errors.

The substitution of the consonant letters 's' for 'c' occur in words like, e.g.,

‘s’	for	‘c’
* desided		decided
* sucessful		successful
* plases		places
* prinsses		princess
* ashievement		achievement
‘c’	for	‘s’
* cpecial		special
* reacon		reason

represented by different symbols in spelling such as the sound /ʃ/ which represented by 'sh' as in 'shop', 'ti' as in 'patient', 'ci' as in 'special' ...etc. This cases the students to make errors by false analogy as evident in the examples above.

Also errors resulting from the substitution of 'f' for 'v', e.g.,

variation. This kind of error could be ascribed to the teaching and practicing to the spelling rules concerning these sound, /f/ and /v/.

Other errors of consonant substitutions include 't' for 'd' or versa visa:

Arabic has high degree of correspondence between sounds and letters. English spelling is characterized irregularity in this respect. Moreover, we can observe that the students tend to over generalize some spelling rules when they did not know the right

spelling. This explanation accords with Waller's observation (2002) which showed that most learners whose language is phonetic feel confused with English spelling. Arabic does not have the phonemes (p) and (v), and thus the learners tend to substitute them with their counterpart sounds (b) and (f) as they do not discriminate between them. This analysis further supports the findings of Vaddapalli (2012) which indicates that students mismatch (p) and (b) as they are the same in Arabic. However, it differs from one published study by Al-Jabir (2006) who found out that Omani learners do not face much difficulty in distinguishing (v) and (f).

* leade	lead
* showe	show
* Focuse	focus
* thinke	think
* lessone	lesson
* withe	with
* finde	find
* blacke	black
* wishe	wish
* frome	from

And also the addition of 'e' in the middle, e.g.,

* uesed	used
* aney	any
* faceing	facing

The addition of 'e' could be attributed to false analogy with words that have like it 'take', 'make', 'sake' ...etc., or to over generalization that a silent 'e' exists at the end of all words. The

* Difficalt	difficult
* cray	cry
* tray	try
* mast	must
* boday	body
* besaide	beside
* beaing	being
* fainally	finally

or following 'e' as in, e.g.,

Addition Errors (Insertion): Addition or redundancy errors can occur at all levels of language production: syntactic, lexical, phonological and orthographic, where it leads to errors of spelling.

The data of this study revealed that errors resulting from vowel, consonant and vowel/consonant letters additions.

a. Vowel Addition: Errors resulting from the resulting addition of the vowel addition which constitute 60.7%.

The addition of the vowel 'e' constitute the highest frequency in this area. Such errors resulting from adding the 'e' to word endings, e.g.,

overgeneralization is a result of student's ignorance of the rules of the silent 'e'. The addition of redundant 'a' is also occur. It is noticed to be inserted in sound environments preceding 'i', 'u' and 'y', e.g.,

- * reast
- * pearson

Addition of vowel 'a' seems to be caused by false analogy with English words like 'soak', 'abroad', 'claim'etc.

In addition to that, spelling errors resulting from the insertion of a vowel

- * firistly
- * firstely
- * firestly
- * country
- * ininstead
- * healeth
- * pereson

The kind of error above could mainly be attributed to mother tongue interference. The students' MT almost all words in Arabic do not have consonant clusters and therefore, it becomes difficult for language learners to produce words of consonant clusters (Aziz, 1974). To break the cluster, Arab learners usually insert vowels like in the previous examples. In his study, Treiman (1991) assumes that difficulty with consonant

- * immportant
- * helpfull
- * failed
- * decstroy

This type of error could be attributed to the false analogy. When the learners realize certain similarities between two or more words they tend to spell one of these words on the pattern of the other to approach the target word. This type of

- * bettween
- * honnor
- * cry
- * hapens

Doubling consonant errors could be ascribed to the students ignorance of the spelling rules regarding the doubling of consonants and to the irregularity of the English spelling system itself. The students here, either representing the

- rest
- person

sound in consonant clusters is also witnessed in the data of this study. Here, a consonant cluster is a series of two or more consonant sounds not separated by a vowel, e.g.,

- firstly
- firstly
- firstly
- country
- instead
- health
- person

cluster leads to misspelling, e.g., they pronounce 'store' as /esto:/ with an /e/ sound after the first consonants or an /i/ at the beginning /isto:/.

b. Consonant Addition (Insertion): Additions of redundant consonants constitute 39.2% of all the addition errors in this data. Addition of consonants like 'c', 'd', 'l' and 'm' in words such as e.g.,

- important
- helpfull
- failled
- destroy

analogy is called phonetic analogy. It happens when the same sound is represented in more than one way in spelling.

or errors with doubling of consonants, e.g.,

- betwween
- honor
- cryy
- happenns

sound with one single consonant as in the omission of consonants where doubling is obligatory, or use double consonants where not needed.

Transposition errors: Transposition means the change of the order of two

letters by putting them in the place of each other. Learners mostly switch the positions of two letters by replacing one letter in the position of the other one. In the present study, transposition errors was a problem of almost 10.6 % of the total numbers of the spelling errors. Transposition errors are few; Spelling

- * another
- * daughtre
- * exampel
- * featuers

The reason of the errors above could be attributed to the phonological reasons. The letter ‘r’ in ‘another’ and ‘daughter’ though represents a consonants it is pronounced as vowel / ə /. So, the students are confused which letter to use

‘ei’	for	‘ie’	
		* countreis	countries
		* expereice	experience
		* pateint	patient
		* beleive	believe
		* acheivement	achievement
		* sceince	science
		‘ie’ for	‘ei’
		* Their	their
		‘ai’ for	‘ia’
		* Specially	specially
		‘ia’ for	‘ai’
		* afriad	afraid
		* dialy	daily
		* striaght	straight
		* trianing	training
		* fiar	fair

Also the students commit errors in the (‘ia’ instead of ‘ie’), e.g.,
* spciel special

Errors resulting from this type of vowel/vowel transposition might be attributed to phonological reasons, since both vowel transpositions ‘ie’, ‘ei’ are pronounced /i:/ sound in English. The students are misled, which letter comes first ‘i’ or ‘e’. Concerning the vowel combinations ‘ai’ and ‘ia’ the reason is

errors here were also sub-categorized into; resulting from vowel / consonant, consonant / vowel, and vowel/vowel transpositions. Which could be ascribed to phonological reasons.

a- Vowel / Consonant, Consonant / Vowel Transpositions: The students made errors in words like:

- another
- daughter
- example
- features

first and as a result they make such errors.

b- Vowel / Vowel Transpositions: Transpositions of vowels (‘ei’ instead of ‘ie’) and vice versa, and the vowels (‘ai’ instead of ‘ia’) and vice versa, e.g.,

the combination ‘ai’ is pronounced as /e/ in said, and again, while it is pronounced as /ei/ as in ‘rain’ and obtain. The ‘ia’ combination is pronounced as /ə/ in ‘special’. So the students are at a loss which letter comes first ‘a’ or ‘i’ and the result is that they tend to over generalize the distribution of these combinations.

It is obvious that some participants do not seem to be knowledgeable of some basic spelling rules which apply to the previous words. Generally speaking, Omani learners may not have been exposed to some English spelling rules or proper spelling instruction during their school years (Alharrasi, 2010 and Vaddapalli, 2012). Therefore, the learners who made this type of error may be unaware, for example, (e) comes before (i) when it is preceded by (c). These findings also support what the literature says that deficiency in spelling rules make learners have difficulty with the spelling of some words (Al-Jaraf, 2007; Jorm, 1981; Amorso, 1985).

CONCLUSION

This study tried to find out the common spelling errors committed by Omani university students. As hypothesized: Omani university students make different types of spelling errors in their written essay. The results of this study showed that the writing of essays within the experimental group improved that those students commit different kinds of spelling errors. The most common types of spelling errors made by Omani learners are omission and substitution. Insertion and transposition type of errors take the smallest proportion of error types.

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