# CHAPTER ONE
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Overview:

Since English spelling is arbitrary even for native speakers of English, for many foreign students, learning to spell is a very complex process. Spelling is social, its purpose being to enable readers to construct meaning. Correct or standard spelling assists the reader. Language communities determine what the correct spelling is. The value of correct spelling is that, it gives writing credibility and therefore reaches a wider audience. Correct spelling helps writers to communicate across the boundaries of dialect and pronunciation. Recent developments in technology, such as spelling checker software, have not replaced the need for writers to understand how to spell words correctly. Such technology assists in proofreading, but is not a substitute for spelling knowledge. There are about half a million words in the English language. Even though it uses 26 letters for about 44 sounds, many of its words are not spelt the way they sound.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem:

English writing system is complex and, therefore, challenging to learn. The twenty six letters of English alphabet can produce approximately forty four sounds (phonemes). The researcher is going to recognize the factors behind spelling difficulties that face Sudanese university students of English at first year, faculty of Languages, English departments, at some Sudanese Universities. It seems that the academic teacher professional qualifications are low beside the classroom size and the environment creates a number of

difficulties. The researcher is going to investigate the reasons behind spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English.

## 1.3. Questions of the Study:

This study will specifically address the following questions:

1. Why do Sudanese university students violate spelling rules when they formulate plural of Latin and Greek origin words?
2. What is the effect of homophones in spelling errors?
3. Why do some Students of English omit, and replace vowel letters?

4. What is the relation between spelling difficulties and teaching methods?

## 1.4. Hypotheses of the Study:

The researcher hypothesizes that there are many difficulties hindering first year English students concerning spelling:

1. Sudanese university students of English are not aware of the fact that there are exceptions to the spelling rules.

2. Some spelling errors are due to the system of pronunciation.

3. English arbitrary spelling system plays a great role in spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English.

4. Ineffective teaching methods lead to spelling difficulties.

## 1.5 Objectives of the Study:

This study aims at:

1. Drawing teachers' attention to the importance of English spelling.

2. Reflecting the unconventional relation between spelling and phonetic system.

3. Investigating the reasons behind spelling errors encountered by Sudanese university students of English.

## 1.6. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study comes from the findings achieved in this study. The investigation showed the students found difficulty regarding the formulation of Latin and Greek origin words. Most students cannot differentiate between American and British spelling. One of the main findings is that some spelling errors are due to silent letters. This study links between first language interference and spelling errors found among Sudanese students of English. In order to master a language, you have to know the spelling rules to enhance writing, reading and speaking. The present study is seeking to overcome spelling difficulties since it is crucial in learning English. The study aims to shed some light on teachers' attitudes regarding spelling difficulties found among Sudanese university students of English.

## 1.7. Methodology of the Study

The researcher will devote the third chapter to the description of the methodology. He will follow the quantitative analytic method to obtain the results.

He will use one instrument to gather the data; teachers' questionnaire will be used for this purpose. The questionnaire will be based on the spelling difficulties that are faced by Sudanese university Students of English.

## 1.8. Limits of the Study

The present study will not cover all university levels, because of time limit and other factors .This study will be limited to Sudan university students of English, Khartoum University, Ahlia University, and Ahfad University Faculty of Languages, about teachers' attitudes regarding spelling difficulties encountered by first year students in particular.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the issue of spelling and other related topics, with emphasis on the spelling rules. It is divided into two parts; the first one is on the theoretical framework and the other one is on previous studies. The first part will tackle the following issues, what is spelling?, theories of teaching spelling, spelling rules, British spelling versus American spelling system dictionaries as spelling references , and the second part will review two previous studies in the field of spelling.

# PART A

# Theoretical Framework

## 2.2 What is spelling?

English spelling is a system which integrates phonetic and morphemic patterns to produce meaning in writing. Understanding phonetic patterns enables writers to spell those words that have predictable sound-letter relationships, e.g. *mat*. Spelling is stating the letters and diacritics of a word. Words generally have accepted standard spellings which can vary regionally or nationally. Spelling is one of the elements of orthography and a prescriptive element of alphabetic languages. (Boston, 1998:11)

Spelling involves the integration of several skills including knowledge of phonological representations, grammatical and semantic knowledge, as well as the formulation of analogies with words in visual memory and the knowledge of orthographic rules and conventions (Wagner & Torgesen, 1987:13)

## 2.3. The Experiential or the Functional Method:

Beginning in the early 1980s, enthusiasts for progressive methods of education asked, "Why not teach spelling wholly in connection with curriculum units or actual writing assignments?" Some of these educators have even gone so far as to encourage made-up or "invented spellings." These educators reason that ignoring spelling and other conventions encourages "spontaneity, content, and style." They believe they are freeing the student to be creative. Unfortunately, one of the chief failings of this approach is that creativity actually suffers. Another reason the use of "invented spellings" is ineffective is a poor speller tends to be less motivated to write because writing for him is such a chore. The less he writes, both in frequency and volume, the less confident in his writing ability he becomes. Confidence frees him to concentrate more fully on organizing his ideas, thus increasing his capacity for self-expression. (Gordon, 2010: 5)

## 2.4. The Phonics Method:

First, the skills involved in using phonics to spell a word are very different from, and more complex than, those needed to read a word. In reading, the emphasis is upon letter-to-sound relationships. The student has the visual cue of the phonogram to help him decode the word. He also may be aided by other factors, such as story or sentence context, pictures on the page, and the

configuration of the word. Trying to encode or spell is the reverse process and is much more difficult. Often your student is faced with a choice between several reasonable alternative phonograms for writing the sound he hears. For example, the word since can be read in only one way, whereas the sound /sins/* could be spelled cince, sinse, cynce, synce, since, or sence. Which alternative is the correct, spelling must be committed to memory, after many repetitions, unless the student has an almost photographic visual recall.

Additionally, although linguists do not always agree on the exact number of variable sounds which exist for each letter, it is estimated that there are at least 250 spellings for the 44 Basic English sounds. When phonics is taught from reading prospective it is usual to teach the 72 phonograms and the sounds associated with them. A phonogram is the letter or group of letters used to represent a sound. Some phonograms have multiple sounds. (Reed, 2012:10)

## 2.5 Memorizing Word List

Studies of the vocabulary of children and adults have determined that the average person uses a core vocabulary of about 10,000 words. From these words, researchers have determined with considerable accuracy what the most common 4,000 to 5,000 will be. These investigations have determined that a basic core of approximately 4,000 words account for about 98 percent of the spelling requirements for the average person. The most dramatic improvement in spelling ability is seen when your student masters the first one thousand frequently used words he will gain more in terms of communication by learning the next two to four thousand words. This phenomenon is because the first one thousand words consist primarily of prepositions, articles, pronouns, and conjunctions that while integral to the English language provide little true communication. While the percentage of usage of the second thousand, third thousand, etc., words appear to

be small, these words include the many nouns, verbs, and modifiers that carry the "meaning" and ideas your student's wishes to convey. Thus, learning the correct spelling of at least the first 5,000 most frequently used word, rather than only the 1,200 most frequently used words included in most spelling programs is vitally important to your student's writing ease. Beyond the basic core list of the 5,000 most frequency used words taught through the Spelling Power program, your student's spelling study should be supplemented according to your local needs. Such supplementation ideally includes words of local and regional interest, e.g., your last name, the name of your county, city, street and so forth. As your student matures, his spelling needs will expand and become further individualized with words he personally uses frequently related to his hobbies, interests, and vocational choices. In addition to the above, accommodation to his personal spelling needs, still other words can be added from the errors found in his own writing. Such inclusion necessitates providing the student an effective and efficient method of proofreading his own writing. (ibid)

There are approximately 600,000 words in the English language. That means, if the average person uses 10,000 words on a regular basis, there are about 590,000 words which he uses less frequently. Even though these words are used less frequently, they still need to be spelled accurately when used. Therefore, in addition to mastery of the core vocabulary common to all students, your student needs to be given a specific method to help him discover the words he does not know how to spell (proofreading) and a definite and efficient method for discovering the correct spelling of them when he needs them (use of the dictionary.) Knowing how and when to use a dictionary is not automatic; it is a learned skill and should be included in a well-planned spelling curriculum. The goal of the instructional materials for teaching dictionary skills in Adams-Gordon's

Spelling Power is that they become efficient and habitual. The program gives you the materials to teach dictionary skills including first knowledge of alphabetical sequence from A-Z as well as from every vowel, a solid habit of using the guide words, morphgraphic and structural units and etymological information to name a few. (ibid)

## 2.6. Spelling Rules

It is easy to learn spelling rules but it is difficult to apply them. The following rules point the way to good spelling.

### 2.6.1 When to Use ia and ai

This one is simple: Use ai when the vowel combination makes the sound "uh," like the word villain. Use ia when each vowel is pronounced separately, like the word median. (Devine, 2002: 19)

### 2.6.2 When to Use ie and ei

| Write *i* before *e*, except after c <br><br> *Write ie* after *c* for words with a *shen* sound. <br> *Write ei* when the vowels sounds like an *a* as in 'weigh' | Achieve, believe, friend receive, receipt, perceive Ancient , efficient sufficient, conscience, neighbor, vein rein, deign | **Exceptions:** Words like counterfeit, either, neither, height, leisure, forfeit , foreign, science, species, seize, weird |
|---|---|---|

(University of New England)

### 2.6.3 Overwhelming Vowel Combinations

When two vowels combine together in a word, for example, abst*ai*n, ch*ea*p, f*oe,* and r*ui*n. "The first vowel is pronounced, and the second one is silent. In the case of our examples, you hear the long *a* in *abstain*, but not the *i*. In *cheap*, you hear the long *e* but not the *a*. Similarly, in *foe* you hear the long *o* but not the *e,* and

in *ruin*, you hear the long *u* but not the *i*. Here are some more examples of words that follow the two vowels rule:

Plead      float

Woe      repeat

Boat      gear

Treat      suit

Steal      read

Chaise      lead

Moat      heat (ibid)

## 2.6.4 Doubling Final Consonants

*When adding an ending to a word that ends in a consonant, you double the consonant if:*

*The ending begins with a vowel.*

*The last syllable of the word is stressed and that syllable ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant (words with only one syllable are always stressed).*

Some endings that begin with vowels include: -ing, -ed, -age, -er, -ence, -ance, -al; thus *stop* becomes *stopping, stopped, stoppage,* or *stopper.* The final consonant, *p,* is doubled before adding the endings consonant preceded by a single vowel. The word, *occur* becomes *occurring*, *occurred*, or *occurrence*. The final consonant here, *r*, is doubled because the last syllable in *occur* is accented, and it ends in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel. (ibid)

Here are some other examples of words that meet the doubling requirements:

Run      running      runner

Slam      slamming      slammed

Nag          nagged        nagging

Incur         incurred       incurring

Kid           kidding        kidder

Plan          planned        planning,


Some examples of words that do not meet the requirements are:

Cover—the accent is on the first syllable part—the final consonant is preceded by another consonant rather than a single vowel. They are not doubled because they are semi vowels.

Bus          buses chagrin      chagrined

Blanket       blanketed offer      offered

Most words that end in w:

Draw         drawing show       showing  showed

Few          fewer                glow       glowing  glowed (ibid)

## 2.6.5: Sneaky Silent Consonants

*This is a case for memory tricks! There are no rules to define when silent consonants are used. You simply have to learn the words that contain them.* Review this list of common words that contain silent consonants. Each of the silent consonants is marked in italics.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Answer | Indict | psychology |
| Autumn | kneel | reign |
| Blight | knight | rhetorical |
| Calm | know | rhyme |
| Debt | knowledge | subtle |
| Feign | light | through |
| Ghost | mnemonics | Wednesday |

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*Gnat*              *p*salm              *w*res*t*le

*Gnaw*              *p*seudonym          *w*rite (ibid)


## 2.6.6: The Hard and Soft Sides of the Letter *C*

*A soft* c *sounds like an* s; *a hard* c *sounds like a* k. *A hard* c *is followed by all letters except* e, i, *or* y. Soft *C* (sounds like *s)*:

Soft C

Central

Circle

Cymbal

Circus

Cirrus

Cent

Hard *C* sounds like *k*

Case

Cousin

Current

Cloud

Carton

Clamor

Cry

Cringe (ibid)


## 2.6.7 "G" Which Can Be Soft or Hard

*Like* c, g *can be soft or hard. A soft* g *sounds like a* j; *a hard* g *sounds like* gush, *or the* g *in* goof. *A hard* G *is followed by all letters except* e, i, *or* y.

Soft *G:*

Genius

Giant

Gym

Gentlemen

Generous

Hard *G*:

Gamble

Gone

Gumption

Guess

Girl (ibid)

## 2.6.8 Regular Plurals—When to Just Add *-s* and When to Add *–ES*

*Add just an* -s *to most words to make them plural* unless *they end with* x, s, ss, z, o, sh, *or* ch. *Then, add* -es. *If a word ends in* o *preceded by a consonant, add* -es. *Otherwise, just add* -s. The words that take *-es* (those that end in *-x, -s, o, -sh, or -ch*) have similar sounds. They are hissing-type sounds. Grouping the exceptions this way may help you to remember that "hiss" words take *-es* instead of just *-s* to form the plural. For words that end in *o*, remember that if the ending is a vowel followed by an *o*, add *-s* , like *cameo*, or *rodeo*. If the word ends in a consonant followed by an *o,* add *-es.* Examples of this would be *mess*, or *confess*. (ibid)

There are a few exceptions to the rule for making plural forms of words that end in o. The following words (that end with a consonant followed by an o) take only an-s:

Albino          albinos

Alto            altos

Banjo           banjos

Bronco          broncos

Logo            logos

Memo            memos

Piano           pianos

Silo            silos

Soprano         sopranos

Steno           stenos (ibid)

## 2.6.9 Annoying Plurals

*Some plurals are not formed by adding -s or -es. Often, these are words that have come into the English language from other languages, such as Latin or Greek. You can become familiar with these words by looking for patterns in the way their plurals are formed.* Here are some examples: Words that end in *-um, change to -a*

Curriculum          curricula

Datum               data

Medium              media

Stratum             strata

Words that end in *-is*, change to *-es*

| | |
|---|---|
| Analysis | analyses |
| Axis | axes |
| Basis | bases |
| Hypothesis | hypotheses |
| Oasis | oases |
| Parenthesis | parentheses |
| Thesis | theses |

Words that end in *-us*, change to *-i*

| | |
|---|---|
| Alumnus | alumni |
| Fungus | fungi |
| Syllabus | syllabi |
| Thesaurus | thesauri |

Words that end in *-ex* or *-ix*, change to *-ices*

| | |
|---|---|
| Appendix | appendices |
| Index | indices |
| Apex | apices |

Words that add or change to *-en*

| | |
|---|---|
| Child | children |
| Man | men |
| Ox | oxen |
| Woman | women (ibid) |

## 2.6.10. The Annoying *F* — Making Words Plural When They End in *F* or *FE*

*Words that end in* f *sometimes change to* v *before adding* -s *or* -es *to make a plural. Put your memorization skills to work for this group of words.* Words that keep the final *f* and add -*s* include:

Belief          beliefs
Chef           chefs
Chief           chiefs
Cuff            cuffs
Goof           goofs
Gulf            gulfs
Kerchief        kerchiefs
Proof           proofs

Words that change the *f* to a *v* include:

Elf            elves
Hoof           hooves
Knife           knives
Leaf            leaves
Loaf            loaves
Self            selves
Shelf           shelves
Thief           thieves
Wife            wives
Wolf            wolves (ibid)

## 2.6.11 When to Drop a Final *E*

*Drop a final* e *before adding any ending that begins with a vowel. Keep it when adding endings that begin with consonants.* There are a few exceptions to this rule. You keep a final *e* when adding an ending that begins with a vowel if:

1. The *e* follows a soft *c* or *g*. This keeps the soft sound for those letters.

2. You need to protect pronunciation (show that a preceding vowel should be long, for example, as in hoe + -ing = hoeing *not* hoing).

You will drop a final *e* when adding an ending that begins with a consonant if: The *e* follows a *u* or *w,* examples, argue+ing=argument, use+ ing=using be+ ing=being, change+ ing=changing (ibid)

## 2.6.12 When to Keep a Final *Y*— When to Change It to *I*

*Change* y *to* i *when adding any ending except* -ing, *when the final* y *follows a consonant. When the* y *follows a vowel, it does not change. This rule applies to all* endings, even plurals. Change the *y* to an *i*:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Early | earlier | ……. | ………. |
| Fly | flier | flies | ……… |
| Party | partied | partier | parties |
| Weary | wearied | wearies | ………. |
| Sorry | sorrier | ……… | ……… |
| Pretty | prettier | prettiness | |
| Worry | worried | worrier | worries |
| Try | tried | tries | …… |
| Study | studied | ………. | studies |

Remember to keep the *y* when adding *-ing*:

Fly              flying

Party            partying

Weary             wearying

Worry             worrying

Try              trying

When the final *y* is preceded by a vowel, you do not change it to an *i*. For example:

Enjoy        enjoyed      enjoying      enjoys

Employ        employed    employing     employs

Pray         prayed       praying       prays

Delay         delayed      delaying      delays (ibid)

## 2.6.13 Adding Endings to Words that End with *C*

*Add a* k *after a final* c *before any ending that begins with* e, i, *or* y. *All other endings do not require a* k. For example:

Traffic + -er = traffi*ck*er

Traffic + -able = traffi*c*able

Other examples of when to add a *k* are:

Panic     pani*ck*ing       pani*ck*ed     pani*ck*y

Mimic     mimi*ck*ing     mimi*ck*ed     mimi*ck*er

Picnic     picni*ck*ing     picni*ck*ed     picni*ck*er

(ibid)

## 2.6.14 Apostrophes—the Attraction of Contractions

Contractions are shorthand type of words formed by putting two words together, dropping one or more letters, and then putting an apostrophe in place of the omitted letters. This last part is the key point for you to learn: In contractions, the apostrophe *takes the place* of the dropped letters. Here is a list of common contractions, with the most frequently goofed contractions listed below:

I will = I'll

I am = I'm

She will = she'll

He is = he's

We will = we'll

We are = we're

They are = they're (not the homophone *there*)

You are = you're (not the homophone *your*)

Do not = don't

Will not = won't

Should not = shouldn't

Would not = wouldn't

Could not = couldn't

Cannot = can't

Does not = doesn't

Have not = haven't

This is Peter's car

The princess's smile is beautiful.

*The dog's food is good.*

 (ibid)


## 2.7 British versus American spelling

There are several areas in which British and American spelling are different. The differences often come about because British spelling has tended to keep the spelling of words it has borrowed from other languages(e.g. French),while American English has adapted the spelling to reflect the way that the words actually sound when they are spoken. Here are the main differences in which British and American spellings are different, words ending in re, our, ize, or ise, yse, yze and sometimes doubling letters and dropping others.


British          American


Colour           color

favour           favor

neighbour        neighbor

Centre           center

litre            liter

theatre          theater

Travelling       traveling

Marvellous       marvelous

Analyse          analyze

Catalogue        catalog

Cheque           check


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Defence          defense

Kerb              curb

Plough          plow

Pyjamas          pajamas

Tyre (for a wheel) tire (learn English today)

## 2.8 Dictionaries as spelling references

According to Yule, there are three useful things to know about dictionaries. It gives you more chances. Dictionaries are undemocratic. Two independent surveys have shown that 56% of the literate population spell accommodate differently from the dictionary. Should the dictionary change? Actually, change does happen slowly in dictionaries. Change can happen because dictionaries allow several thousand words to be spelled more than one way and gradually some spellings drop off. Gradually, over a hundred years or so, the more unhelpful spellings lose public support, and the more foreign spellings become more English. Around 4% of words have alternative spellings and 0.4% has three or more alternatives. Rare, exotic and dialect words are most likely to have many spellings, because they may be from a different writing system, or may have sprouted unchecked in the spoken language before they were written down. To add a frisson to your own writing, here are some spellings that dictionaries have dropped gradually and you can still find in old novels: prophane gulph, shewn, synonimes ,subtilty, stile, croud ,chymists ,desarts surprise, expence ,gothick, chace, excentrick ,cotemporaries,pionier ,and sope. (Yule, 2005:3)

# Part B

## Previous studies

The researcher is going to give a brief summary for two previous studies.

**Local study:**

Mona Ishag Mohammed conducted a study entitled 'Analysis of Students' Spelling Errors, Omdurman Islamic University, Graduate College, Faculty of Arts, 2006, (an unpublished M.A). The main questions were: why most spelling errors are due to spelling rules? Why most spelling errors are due to the system of pronunciation?

The main objectives is to find the causes leading to the problem of misspelling, to find out which of these reasons is much more serious than the other, and to suggest a remedy for them. The main hypotheses were: most spelling errors are due to the system of pronunciation. Most spelling errors are due to spelling rules. She adopts an experimental method. The population of this study is Sudanese school students in Omdurman province who studied the SPINE they were fifty students. It aims to analyze and evaluate English spelling errors made by first year student at secondary schools. She used one tool a test for first year students. The main findings were: Most spelling errors are due to omission and addition of vowel letters, and not due to introversion or replacement of vowel letters. Most spelling errors are not due to the system of pronunciation. Most spelling errors are due to spelling rules.

Most spelling errors are not due to homophone words. Both studies have something in common, but they are different in some aspects. They both tackle spelling problems but in different study levels or grades i.e. university and secondary schools. They both focus on spelling rules since they are crucial in mastering English spelling. Their main objective is to investigate the reasons behind spelling errors. They are different in the methodology the present study adopts quantitative analytical method (teachers' questionnaire) whereas the previous one adopts experimental method (students' test).

Concerning the major findings both studies find out that most spelling error are due to spelling rules. Most spelling errors are due to omission and addition of vowels letters. But they are different in many findings like university students find difficulty regarding American versus British spelling; Latin and Greek origin words plural, silent letters cause difficulty in writing and pronouncing some words.

**Foreign study:**

Sabeeha Hamza Dehham & Wi'am Majeed Mohmmed in their study Iraqi EFL Learners' Performance in English Spelling, College of Education – University of Babylon. The aims of this Study:

1-Presenting a theoretical background concerning English spelling.
2- Investigating the difficulties faced by Iraqi EFL university learners in English spelling.
3- Identifying, classifying and analyzing the students' errors according to the results obtained from the test and coming up with recommendations.

The hypothesis it is hypothesized that Iraqi EFL University learners face difficulties in English spelling due to various factors. The first factor includes the difficulties which are inherent in the nature of the English system at the levels of

phonology, morphology and syntax. The second factor relates to the processes of interference (or transfer) and overgeneralization.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the light of the preceding survey and discussions related to the findings and hypothesis, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Iraqi EFL university learners at the third stage face difficulty in using English spelling .This is indicated by their low performance in the main test as the rate of their correct responses(40.32%) is lower significantly than that of their incorrect ones (59.68%). This validates the hypothesis of the study which states that Iraqi EFL university learners face difficulties in English spelling.

2- More emphasis should be given to English spelling because this area is very important for the students of English to learn and more necessary for the structure of the words.

3- Students should be activated by daily quizzes and tests.

4- More attention should be paid to English spelling at all levels of education.

## 2.2. Summary of the Chapter:

First, this chapter considers spelling definition, and theories of teaching spelling. Second, it shows English spelling rules that cause difficulty for some university students of English. Third, it gives general overview for the major differences between British and the American spelling system, and then it reviews dictionaries as spelling references. Finally, it gives a brief summary about the previous studies. The current study attempts to investigate teachers' attitudes towards spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English.

# CHAPTER THREE

# METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the description of the methodology used to investigate teachers' attitudes towards spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English .The present study adopts the descriptive analytic method, which depends on the description of phenomena. This is in addition to the analysis of the data gathered so as to find out the reasons that lie behind the occurrence of those difficulties. It focuses mainly on the subjects, the research tool and the procedures of data collection.

## 3.2 Research Methodology:

The population of this study is some teachers of English, who work at some Sudanese universities. They have been selected randomly from these universities, Sudan University of science and technology, Omdurman Ahlia University, Khartoum University, and Ahfad University. They were thirty teachers.

This table is about teachers and their universities, they are thirty teachers from four universities.

## Table: 3-1 Sample of Teachers and Universities

| University | Teacher frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| SUST | 19 | 63.33% |
| AHFAAD | 3 | 10% |
| KHARTOUM | 3 | 10% |
| AHLIA | 5 | 16.67% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 3-1 above shows that most teachers who participated in the study work in SUST this is because it is the university with the largest teaching staff of English. There were more than thirty teachers of English who work in the department of English.

## 3.3. Data Collection Instrument:

In this study only one tool is used for data collection and analysis .The teacher's questionnaire (TQ).

The questionnaire is designed for teachers who teach English at university level. The teachers' questionnaire (TQ) consists of introductory part that deals with teachers' personal information including qualifications, and the years of experience in the field of teaching. The second part deals with spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English. In this part, teachers were asked to determine their attitudes towards twelve statements by ticking the right

box in front of each one. Here likert scale was used. The scale consisted of five options ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

## 3.4 Procedures of Data Collection:

The researcher distributed about twenty questionnaires by hand to some teachers while ten questionnaires were distributed by his colleagues.

## 3.5 Validity of the Tool:

In order to assure the validity of his tool, the researcher took two steps; first the questionnaire was given to a number of experts in Sudan University of Science and Technology to see whether the tool could measure what it was intended to measure .The experts made some modifications, by deleting, adding, and reforming some of the statements. For example the first statement instead of plural forms, it was reformed into Latin and Greek origin forms. Also instead of dropping final (e), the expert added when we add suffixes.  The second step before the tool was tested, it was given to the supervisor for the final evaluation then it was given to a number of subjects who face no problem in answering the questions.

## 3.6 Summary of the Chapter:

This chapter gives full description of the methods and techniques which the researcher used to conduct his study. It exhibits that this study is descriptive and analytical. Then it describes the population and the sample of the study. Also it considers the tool of the study. It explains the procedures which the researcher followed to test the validity and reliability of his tool and how he collected the data of the study and how he analyzed them.

# CHAPTER FOUR
# DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an analysis of the data collected is made. The results are displayed in tables, and texts. These results are critically discussed.

## 4.2 Data Analysis

Below, the results of the study are displayed and discussed:

### 4.2.1 Personal Information:

The following two tables show the degrees and experiences of the teachers who took part in the study.

### 4.2.2. Academic Qualifications:

This table is about the teachers' qualification or degree in English language.

Table 4.2.2 Qualification

| Qualification | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| B.A – B .Ed | 7 | 23.3% |
| Postgraduate diploma | - | - |
| M. A | 21 | 70% |
| PHD | 2 | 6.7% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

The above table explains the qualifications of the teachers who took part in the questionnaire .It is clear that the majority of the teachers about 70% of them obtained the Master degree, about 23.3% obtained B.A degree about 6.7% obtained PhD degree ,and there are no teachers with Postgraduate diploma.

## 4.2.3. Years of Experience

This table is about teacher experience in teaching English language.

Table 4.2.3 Experience

| Experiences | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1-5 years | 18 | 60% |
| 6-10 years | 4 | 13.3% |
| 11-15 years | 3 | 10% |
| More than 15 years | 5 | 16.7% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

In terms of the working experience, the above table exhibits that about 60% of the teachers have been working as University teachers for 1-5 years and about 16% of them have been teaching more than 15 years in the field of English, which means that the majority of the teachers have a good experience background.

## 4.3 Teachers' Evaluation of Spelling Difficulties

Statements in this part of the teachers' questionnaire deal with the teachers' evaluation of spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English. There will be a table for each item or statement in the teachers' questionnaire. The tables will show the frequencies and their percentage. Texts will be used to discuss the statistics.

### 4.3.1 Latin and Greek Origin Words:

Latin and Greek origin words are irregular plural forms, this why they confuse foreign students of English.

**Statement (1)** Some Sudanese university students of English violate spelling rules when they formulate plural of Latin and Greek origin words.

Table 4.3.1 Latin and Greek Origin Words

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 9 | 30% |
| Agree | 18 | 60% |
| Neutral | 3 | 10% |
| Disagree | - | - |
| Strongly disagree | - | - |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.1 above is about formation of the plural of Latin and Greek words origin. Considering the positive variable it, is seen that 90% of the teachers state that there are some difficulties regarding the plural of Latin and Greek origin words. Few of the participants, about 10% are neutral in their attitudes. 90% is high percent which mean that the students are not aware about the exception of irregular plural form.

### 4.3.2 Vowel Replacement:

Vowels are not easy to deal with when students write English words.
**Statement (2)** Most spelling errors among Sudanese university students of English are due to replacement of vowel letters.

Table 4.3.2 vowel Replacement

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 8 | 26.8% |
| Agree | 16 | 53.3% |
| Neutral | 4 | 13.3% |
| Disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.2 above portrays teachers' attitudes towards the replacement of vowel letters; it shows that 80.1% of the teachers' state there is a problem regarding the replacement of vowel letters among Sudanese university students of English. Only 6.6% of teachers are disagreeing to the assumption, while 13.3% of the teachers are neutral in their attitudes. This percentage is high according to the assumption of first language interference, some students replace vowel letters for example instead of (e) they write (i).

### 4.3.3 Homophones words:

Homophone words are two words that have the same sounds but different spellings.

**Statement (3)** some spelling errors committed by Sudanese university students are due to the existence of homophones.

Table 4.3.3 Homophone Words

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 7 | 23.3% |
| Agree | 16 | 53.4% |
| Neutral | 6 | 20% |
| Disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Strongly disagree | - | - |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.3 above considers the existence of homophone words in spelling errors. Due to the positive variables strongly agree and agree it is noticed that most of the teachers, about 76.7%, support the researcher's opinion that some spelling errors are due to the existence of homophone words. 20% of the teachers are neutral in their attitudes; while 3.3% of the teachers are disagree to the assumption. The percentage is high because English is full of homophone words that confuse foreign learners.

### 4.3.4 American vs. British spelling:

American spelling is different from British spelling in some aspects.

**Statement (4)** - Most Sudanese university students of English cannot differentiate between American and British spelling systems.

Table 4.3.4 American vs. British spelling

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 11 | 36.7% |
| Agree | 12 | 40% |
| Neutral | 4 | 13.3% |
| Disagree | 2 | 6.7% |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.4 above states the confusion between American spelling and British spelling systems. From the positive variable given, it is apparent that 76.7% of the teachers agree to the assumption that students of English cannot differentiate between American and British spelling. 13.3% of the teachers are neutral while only 6.7% disagree to this assumption. This percentage is high 76.7% because computers and the web use American spelling and Sudanese students are not familiar with them because they use British spelling since the primary stage.

**4.3.5 First Language Interference:**

Mother tongue influences second language learning.

**Statement (5)** Some spelling errors such as omission among Sudanese university students are due to first language interference.

Table 4.3.5 L1 Interference

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 9 | 30% |
| Agree | 15 | 50% |
| Neutral | 5 | 16.6% |
| Disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Strongly disagree | - | - |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.5 above expresses that some of the spelling errors among Sudanese university students of English are due to L1 interference. Large numbers of teachers, 80% attribute those spelling errors to L1 interference; while only 3.3 are disagree with the researcher. 16.6% were neutral in their attitudes. 80% is high percentage because Sudanese students use to transfer Arabic spelling rules into English ones, regardless the differences between the two languages.

**4.3.6 Spelling is exceptional cases:**

There are exceptions to the spelling rules.

**Statement (6)** Some Sudanese university students of English are not aware of the fact that there are exceptions as there are spelling rules.

Table 4.3.6 Exceptional Cases

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 10 | 33.3% |
| Agree | 13 | 43.4% |
| Neutral | 6 | 20% |
| Disagree | - | - |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.6 above shows teachers' attitudes towards this statement. It shows that 76.7% of the teachers state there is a problem regarding some rules that have exceptions which cause difficulty to Sudanese university students of English only 3.3% of teachers are disagree to the proposition, while 20.% of the teachers are neutral in their attitudes. The reason behind this high percentage is that some teachers don't show the exceptions to their students when illustrating some spelling rules this in one hand, in other hand English spelling is arbitrary.

**4.3.7 Silent Letters Problem.**

Silent letters are one of the major spelling difficulties encountered by foreign learners.

**Statement (7)** Silent letters cause difficulty to Sudanese university students of English.

Table 4.3.7 Silent letters

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Strongly agree | 11 | 36.7% |
| Agree | 17 | 56.7% |
| Neutral | 1 | 3.3% |
| Disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Strongly disagree | - | - |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.7 above expresses that some of the spelling errors among Sudanese university students of English are due to silent letters. Large number of teachers, 93.2% attributes those spelling errors to silent letters; while only 3.3% are disagree to the statement. 3.3% are neutral in their attitudes. 93.2% is very high percent because silent letters don't have rules also Arabic language doesn't have silent letters.

### 4.3.6  IE and EI Distinction

For some students it is difficult to differentiate between ie and ei spellings.

**Statement (8)** -    Sudanese university students of English cannot differentiate between (ie) and (ei) spellings.

Table 4.3.8( ie) and ( ei) distinction

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 8 | 26.7% |
| Agree | 13 | 43.3% |
| Neutral | 7 | 23.3% |
| Disagree | 2 | 6.7% |
| Strongly disagree | - | - |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.8 above shows that some of the spelling errors among Sudanese university students of English are due to the difficulty of differentiation between (ei) and (ie) spellings. 70% of the teachers are agree; while only 3.3% are disagree with the researcher. 3.3% are neutral in their attitudes. The distinction between (ie) and (ei) is perplexing because it's not only spelling it has something to do with phonetic long and short vowel, this why 70% of the teachers agree to the assumption.

**4.3.9. Droping Final (E)**

Some students they don't know when to drop final (e) when adding suffixes.

**Statement (9)** Some Sudanese university students of English are not aware of dropping final (e) when adding suffixes.

Table 4.3.9 Dropping Final (e)

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 3 | 10% |
| Agree | 18 | 60% |
| Neutral | 7 | 23.3% |
| Disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.9 above tackles the problem of dropping final (e) when adding suffix. From the positive variable given, it is apparent that nearly 70% of the teachers agree with the researcher proposition. 23.3% of the teachers' are neutral. Only 3.3 strongly disagree to the mentioned proposition. Most students drop final (e) when adding suffixes regardless that the suffix starts with a vowel or a consonant this rule has an exception. You need to protect the pronunciation (show that the preceding vowel should be long, for example, as in hoeing not hoing). This is why the percentage is high 70%.

### 4.3.10. Doubling Final Letters

There are many cases when we double final letters in order to add suffixes.

**Statement (10)** Some Sudanese university students of English are not aware of the rule of doubling final letters when adding suffix.

Table 4.3.10 Doubling Final Letters

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 6 | 20% |
| Agree | 16 | 53.3% |
| Neutral | 4 | 13.4% |
| Disagree | 3 | 10% |
| Strongly disagree | 1 | 3.3% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Concerning doubling final letters when adding suffixes the above table 4.3.10 shows that 73.3% of the teachers agree to the assumption, while 13.4 are neutral in their opinions. Only 10% of the teachers disagree to this statement.

### 4.3.11 Using Dictionary

Using dictionary may cause difficulty for some students especially those who have problem with transcription.

**Statement (11)** Some Sudanese university students of English do not know how to use a dictionary in order to check for spelling.

Table 4.3.11 Using Dictionary

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 6 | 20% |
| Agree | 6 | 20% |
| Neutral | 6 | 20% |
| Disagree | 7 | 23.3% |
| Strongly disagree | 5 | 16.7% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Regarding using dictionary in order to check spelling, the above table 4.3.11 shows that only 40% of the teachers agree to the assumption, while 20% are neutral in their opinions. Only 40% of the teachers disagree to this item.    The percentage 40 is low because most of the teachers assume according to their experiences in teaching that first year students don't have problems regarding dictionary but some students they don't know how to deal with transcription to solve the problem of silent letters.

### 4.3.12. Handwriting
Recently some students use unclear handwriting to cover their spelling mistakes.

Table 4.3.12 Handwriting

| Option | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly agree | 5 | 16.8% |
| Agree | 10 | 33.3% |
| Neutral | 7 | 23.3% |
| Disagree | 4 | 13.3% |
| Strongly disagree | 4 | 13.3% |
| Total | 30 | 100% |

Table 4.3.12 above shows that 50.1% of the teachers agree that some students adopt unclear handwriting in order to solve their spelling problems, it is apparent that nearly 23.3% of the teachers are neutral regarding this statement. Only 26.6% strongly disagree with the mentioned proposition. 50% is not high percent this may refer that the students use this technique recently this why some teachers are not familiar with it.

## 4.4 Summary of the Chapter:

This chapter analyzes the data, portrays the results and discusses them. Concerning the teachers' questionnaire, it reveals that most of the teachers are M.A holders with sufficient working experiences in teaching English. Which means their response to the questionnaire is positive.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

## 5.1 Introduction

This is the last chapter of this study. It provides a summary of the study, conclusions, recommendations based on the findings of the study and suggestions for further studies.

## 5.2 Conclusions:

This study investigates teachers' attitudes towards spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English. There were four hypotheses concerning this study. First, ineffective teaching methods lead to spelling difficulties. Second, English arbitrary spelling system plays a great role in spelling difficulties encountered by the students. Third, the students are not aware of the fact that there are exceptions to the spelling rules. Fourth, most spelling errors are not due to the system of pronunciation. In order to verify the above hypotheses; the researcher used one tool, a questionnaire for the teachers of English from four universities. The sample consisted of thirty teachers of English. Here are the findings of this study that fulfill the assumptions and the objectives raised in the study:

1- The investigation showed that the students found difficulty regarding the formulation of Latin and Greek plural forms.

2- Vowels letters replacement is consistent error committed by the students.

3- It was found that most of the students cannot differentiate between American way of spelling and the British one.

4- First L1 interference is one of the reasons behind some spelling errors committed by the students.

5- One of the main findings is that some spelling errors among the students are due to silent letters.

6- A large number of the students are not aware of the fact that there are exceptions to the spelling rules.

7- Some spelling errors are due to the existence of homophones.

8- Ineffective teaching methods cause spelling difficulties.

## 5.3 Recommendations:

In the light of the findings discussed above, some recommendations are incorporated in the conclusion of this study.

1- Teachers must show the main differences between American spelling and the British one.

2- In order to solve the silent letters problem, students must consult their dictionaries and they must have basic knowledge of phonetics.

3- Using computer games may help a lot in solving spelling mistakes.

4- Remedial lessons should take place concurrently when teaching writing skills to solve spelling errors.

## 5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies:

On basis of the findings the researcher suggests some further studies in the future in order to cover other areas in the realm of orthography:

1- Further studies are needed on how the new technology such as computers and the web can be utilized in facilitating the spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English.

2- Further studies are also needed in order to know the psychological factors and other factors behind the occurrence of spelling errors.

3- English spelling system and phonetic system are different in order to investigate the similarities and the differences between alphabet and phonetic symbols some studies are needed.

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# Appendix

# Sudan University of Science and Technology
# College of Graduate Studies
# A questionnaire for Teachers of English

Dear teachers of English.

This questionnaire is a part of the study entitled "spelling difficulties encountered by Sudanese university students of English"This study is presented in the partial requirement for an M.A. degree. It aims at investigating difficulties that face Sudanese university students regarding English spelling. Your answers to the following questions will be used confidentially for research purposes only. Would you please answer the questions truthfully?

Thank you for your cooperation

Babu Maki Babu,

M.A candidate,

College of languages,

Sudan University of Science and Technology

# Part A

1- Name of the university where you work…………………………

2- Academic qualification in English: teachers are requested to draw a circle round the suitable degree?

   a) B.A/B.Ed.      b) Postgraduate diploma      c) M.A
   e) PhD

3- Experience in teaching English:

   a)1-5years     b)6-10years     c)11-15years     d)More than 15years

# Part B

Teachers are requested to tick (√) the suitable answer that represents your own point of view?

| Statements | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1- Some Sudanese university students of English violate spelling rules when they formulate plural of Latin and Greek origin words. | | | | | |
| 2- Most spelling errors among Sudanese university students of English are due to replacement of vowel letters. | | | | | |
| 3- Some spelling errors committed by Sudanese university students are due to the existence of homophones. | | | | | |
| 4- Most Sudanese university students of English cannot differentiate between American and British spelling systems. | | | | | |
| 5- Some spelling errors such as omission among Sudanese university students are due to first language interference. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6-    Some Sudanese university students of English are not aware of the fact that there are exceptions to the spelling rules. | | | | | |
| 7-    Silent letters cause difficulty for Sudanese university students of English. | | | | | |
| 8-    Sudanese university students of English cannot differentiate between (ie) and (ei) spellings. | | | | | |
| 9- Some Sudanese university students of English are not aware of dropping final (e) when adding suffixes. | | | | | |
| 10- Some Sudanese university students of English are not aware of the rule of doubling final letters when adding suffix. | | | | | |
| 11- Some Sudanese university students of English do not know how to use a dictionary in order to check for spelling. | | | | | |
| 12- In order to solve their spelling mistakes some Sudanese university students of English adopt unclear handwriting. | | | | | |

End of Questionnaire