	Vocabulary	Students' spelling errors					
91	**abroad**	aproud	abrout	abrot	abroat	abrod	aproot
92	**event**	avent	avnt	fent			
93	**war**	wor	worr	woor			
94	**magazine**	magazin	mgazine	magasn	mgaziane	magizen	magazin
95	**newspaper**	newspeper	newspapear	nespepar			
96	**suitcase**	soaitcase	sootkis	sotcuse	soatkase	suietcase	sotkise
		sotkec	soutcees	swoetcise	swetkias	switkis	sweetkis
97	**organize**	orgnaise	orgnaz	organaze	orgnais	ourganaiz	orgniz
98	**airport**	airbort	irport				
99	**insurance**	enshoruns	inshorns	inshrns	enshorans	incurance	ensurant
		inshornts	inshorc	inshorines	inshores		
100	**might**	mait	mite	maite	maght	mahit	maight
		maet	miyet				

Saudi Students' Spelling Errors in a Vocabulary Course

	Vocabulary	Students' spelling errors					
59	**fill**	feil	fell	feel	ful	fil	
60	**upstairs**	upsterci	upsters	upsturs	appstirs	upsteers	apsters
61	**bedroom**	bidroom	mirroer	beedroom	badroom		
62	**mirror**	mall	merr	merrer	miror		
63	**microwave**	mykryev	microwaeve	miecrwef	maicroef	makerwav	microwove
		mycrove					
64	**garden**	gardein	gardan				
65	**saucepan**	sousspan	soowbin	sospan	suspan	sospin	sewspan
		sosban					
66	**ironing**	ironeg	ironning	arrinoc	irooning		
67	**shampoo**	shpo	shnpo	shampoh	shmpo		
68	**ceiling**	selling	cileg	selning	seiling	celing	
69	**radiator**	radietor	rideter	redeeaeter	radeature	readieiter	radtior
70	**rug**	rag	reg	reag			
71	**physics**	fisks	fisxs	physicse	visuks	vusqs	
72	**literature**	lituruchar	ltrichr	letrthr	leteretcure	litrcher	latrutcher
		litrtiasr					
73	**college**	colleag	collage	Colleg			
74	**change**	chinge	chang				
75	**office**	ofice	ofis	ovis			
76	**flight**	fligt	flait	fhlgit	flaght	fleit	fliht
		flayt	flaht	fliet	flyget	vlait	
77	**visa**	viasv	vesa	vise			
78	**holiday**	haloday	holyday	holidey	hooleday	holide	holleday
		holdy	holde				
79	**single room**	singl room	single room				
80	**find**	fained	fiend	faind	fanid	vind	
81	**passport**	pasport	passbort	passpord	pasport	basport	pastport
82	**shower**	swoher	shwoor	shwor	shawer	showr	shour
		shoar	shwoer				
83	**double room**	dubleroom	doble room	debolroom	duableroom	doubl room	dabel room
		dabal room	dubal room	dabl room			
84	**guest**	geaste	gest	gusst	gist	gust	geust
85	**hair**	heir	hire	hir	haer		
86	**facilities**	facilites	feciltye	fecilitise	fletes	fecilitece	fisilites
		fassalts	visilites	fecilits	fasilicites	facilitic	
87	**minibar**	manipar	menypar	manybar	manypar	mine bar	manepar
88	**arrange**	arange	aring	arieng	areng	areing	arang
		areang	araing				
89	**currency**	crancy	carncy	carense	kirense	ckernce	caransi
		carnce	carinsi	curnse	carinse	caronse	
90	**helpful**	helpfull	helful				

	Vocabulary	**Students' spelling errors**					
30	**historic**	historec	hacetrk	hestorek	hostrk	historik	historc
		histric	hestoric	histrc	hostric	hustorek	
31	**crowded**	crodit	croudid	carotd	crawdid	croodid	craowdid
		craudid	crouded	crawdet	caroded		
32	**nightlife**	niehtlife	nait laiv	nagthlife	nightlive	nigtlive	nithlife
		naightlive					
33	**field**	fald	fild	filled	fald	felid	fialed
		feled	feeld				
34	**grass**	gras	geris	gris	graus	gross	
35	**healthy**	hilthy	helthy	halthe	hlthe	hilth	hellty
		hilth	halthy	hulthe	helthe	helthy	
36	**look after**	lock after	luk after	loke after			
37	**supermarket**	supemarket	sopermarket	swbermarket	soprmarkt	suprmarkt	sobrmarket
38	**deli**	dileng	dilley	dilla	dily	dile	bule
40	**convenient**	conveninte	convinit	convenunt	kivenet	caunvenunt	convinent
		conviunut	convenet	convenat	conveneant	conviniant	kinvint
		confinint	cinvenyt	kinfint	canvinet	canfenent	cuveniete
41	**prefer**	perfair	parvevle	profer	prefear	prafer	perfer
		prfear	prefair	brefir			
42	**shops**	choops	shoops				
43	**check out**	shek out	chage out	sheck out	chek out	cheackout	cheakout
		tshakout					
44	**deliver**	dielever	dlever	delevel	dulever	dilevry	dlver
		delver	dele				
45	**alone**	alon	alown	olwn	elwen		
46	**wonderful**	wondfl	underful	oendervol	onderful	wondrfer	oendrvel
		wendruful					
47	**farmer**	farmar	fromer				
48	**hours**	huors	ahors	hourse	hors		
49	**opinion**	opinian	openuen	openon	openen	obinion	opinin
50	**facts**	fackt	fcats	fakt			
51	**mosque**	muosc	mousqe	mosqe	musce	mousqe	mousq
		mouse	museg	mousque			
52	**major**	magor	majer	meger	mijr	mijor	mager
53	**famous**	femos	vaimos	famos	famouse	faumes	famus
		faumos	fimeos	famece			
54	**popular**	pupyolar	puplur	papilar	papylr	pupler	paupler
		popullar	populer	poplaer	papuler		
55	**statue**	stataus	stachyou	stachu	satuse	stautu	stageyou
56	**basket**	baskit	paket	bascet	biscite	pasket	
57	**shopping**	shopk	sopen	shobing	shopic		
58	**view**	viyou	feu	veuo	fiew		

Appendix

	Vocabulary	Students' spelling errors					
1	**address**	adres	adraess	adress	adrese	aiddres	addrees
2	**website**	waupsait	websait	websutte	wabsait	websit	wedset
3	**internet**	intrnet	ntrnt	enternet	intrnet	intarnt	internt
4	**download**	dunlod	donlod	dawnlaud	downlod	dowinlode	dawnlod
5	**reply**	ruplai	reblay	replay			
6	**document**	dokumnt	docyoment	dockment	dokmet	doucemnt	dockement
		dokiment					
7	**folder**	foldr	foldir	folofer			
8	**printer**	prenter	printur	brenter			
9	**speaker**	spkr	speakr	speacker	specar	spaker	cpekr
10	**screen**	skrun	skreen	scren			
11	**hospital**	hosbetal	hospatl	hospetil	hosptil	housbetal	hoasptel
12	**salary**	salra	salry	swlary	slary		
13	**meetings**	metngs	metengs	metings			
14	**spend**	spind	sbend	sbend	spend	spnt	
15	**company**	kapnu	compiny	cumpany	compine	compny	compney
16	**builder**	plder	peldare	belder	balder	belldr	boldir
17	**pilot**	pailot	pailt	piulet	philit	baylot	baylt
18	**cleaner**	clinar	cleanr	cleenr	clener	claner	
19	**nurse**	nairs	nurs	nerse	narse	nurs	nears
20	**retired**	ritaird	ritaird	retird	retide	retird	retiurd
		retaired	retard	returd	riterd		
21	**country**	cantrey	cantary	cantry	contry	cauntery	cuntry
22	**north**	nouth	norf	noarth	nourth	nurth	
23	**enormous**	inerms	inermos	anermes	inarmus	inormmes	enromes
		inurmus	ennoromous	enormis	eniromuse	enerames	enromos
		enoromes	enromoes	enormus	inromns	eneroms	
24	**mountain**	mawnten	mountin	meuntn	maunten	maouten	munten
		mawinten	maontin	meosim	mounten	meonten	mounten
25	**capital**	capitl	capetal	cabitl	capitle	captal	cabetul
		capatl	captall	cuptall	cabetel	qapetal	capetal
		kaptal	capetil	ciptal	captel		
26	**palace**	palce	palis	palac	impuls	balas	palas
		plass	palus	plas	blac		
27	**cathedral**	cathedrel	cthidrl	cathereal	kthedr	cthedral	cathedran
28	**museum**	muesum	musuam	muoseme	musyam	museom	musum
		musuom	musime	musume	mousem	musaum	museim
29	**village**	villag	fileg	vellge	thelage	flitg	villeg
		villige	velg	vallge	falg	valug	vileg

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find out about spelling acquisition: Why do students still misspell some words after having studied them, used them, and practiced writing them?

Conclusion

This study attempts to examine the most common types of misspellings committed by Saudi students, find the causes of these misspellings, and provide solutions. Misspellings prove that students face some difficulties learning a L2. To overcome such spelling challenges, Saudi students need to be given good feedback to strengthen their writing abilities and pronunciation skills. They also need to boost their knowledge of English phonology, orthography, and morphology.

This study indicates that there is an urgent need for reform of the curriculum to include more extensive focus on teaching spelling skills. Most textbooks neglect the importance of spelling (Al-Jarf, 2010). Educators should give priority to acquiring spelling skills ahead of the macro-skills, such as reading, speaking, and listening. Spelling must be taught as early as possible before grammatical structures and writing techniques. Intelligent ideas cannot be conveyed well to the reader if they are written with spelling errors. Students often rely on Arabic language rules to try to overcome spelling errors. This should work as a positive impact, not as a cause of misspellings. When students are aware of the difference between English and Arabic, their native language can facilitate their acquisition of the English spelling system.

written a number of texts. However, misspellings reflect students' incompetence and illustrate incomplete L2 acquisition (Richards, 1974).

Indeed, some misspelt words show their limited acquisition of morphology, phonology, and orthography of English. Errors resulting from L2 learning are called "intralingual errors" (Richards, 1974) and are often manifested as missing double consonants, voiced/voiceless sound replacement, vowel replacement, letter reversals, and inflectional endings. For example, students are not able to distinguish similar sounds, such as [i] and [e], and they think they sound the same. Wasowicz (2007) finds that inability to distinguish vowel sounds, for example in *litter* and *letter*, is a major cause of misspellings.

These errors were produced because students lacked learning, had faulty knowledge, or forgot what they had learned. They also lacked knowledge of the relationship between grapheme and phoneme. Writing from memory or spelling words as they pronounce them lead to different phonological and orthographic problems. Learning to spell is not only about learning orthographic features, it is also about gaining phonological knowledge and morphological awareness (Wasowicz, 2007). If students do not acquire this awareness, they will face many difficulties when it comes to spelling English vocabulary. Poor learning of L2 or lack of linguistic knowledge leads to inaccurate spelling. Competence in spelling requires having an adequate awareness of the phonology and having sufficient knowledge of morphology.

Implications

This study shows that spelling difficulties present a challenge to Saudi students learning English. Its findings support Cook's (1999) claim that spelling errors are the most common type of errors students make in their written work. Therefore, this study provides some insights to help educators increase spelling competence and reduce spelling errors. These insights attempt to provide an answer to the third question set by this paper: How might teachers enable these students to improve their spelling proficiency?

First, students must be aware of the importance of spelling in conveying meaning in communications. They should also be made aware of inconsistencies within the English spelling system, particularly at the early learning levels. English learning programmes should cover fundamental phonological rules, orthographic regularities, and different pronunciations. Although English has an inconsistent system, knowledge of phonics and some basic rules can help students learn to spell many difficult words (Bancha, 2013).

Second, practical activities relating to spelling should be developed and integrated into all language courses, including grammar, reading, and writing courses. Vocabulary courses should not focus solely on learning to spell words or encourage rote memorisation (Decarrico, 2001). These practical activities should emphasise spelling rules and lexical forms to explain how sounds are represented, for example that [ed] can be pronounced [d], [t] and [id]. These activities help students to recognise the relationships between sounds and letters, which can reduce their spelling errors in written tasks.

Third, listening courses should focus on developing students' pronunciation. Most spelling errors arise from wrong pronunciation and students often attempt to spell words the way they pronounce them. Indeed, pronunciation is an essential skill to acquire English spelling as it is intertwined with spelling. Therefore, emphasising correct pronunciation is a helpful technique to boost spelling accuracy and reduce spelling errors.

Fourth, it is recommended that, at the intermediate learning levels, students are given some tasks that involve comparing sounds of Arabic and English. This training would provide students with some knowledge in contrastive linguistics, which would enable them to predict correct spelling and avoid misspellings (Decarrico, 2001). It also prevents students from over-generalising the spelling rules of the two languages, such as silent sounds that exist in English, but not in Arabic.

Suggestions for future research

The findings of this study indicate that further research is needed to find out more about why Saudi students misspell English words and their written habits. Another recommendation is to study current teaching methods to increase students' morphological knowledge and orthographical awareness and find out which methods are more effective than others? Moreover, a study of students' writing based on listening is suggested. Dictation is a useful strategy to use to teach correct spelling. It is interesting to find out why students write as they do: Do they spell words on the basis of memory, on how they pronounce the words, or on what they hear? This is an important aspect to explore further in the future. Students may not be listening carefully to the pronunciation of words. Comparing the nature of misspellings due to the three scenarios outlined above will result is interesting findings. Finally, there is a great deal to

create many differences between the spoken and the written language. Patterns of correspondence between spelling and articulation are missing in this system (Alhaisoni et al., 2015; Wasowicz, 2007). Misspelling words is the result of students' difficulty when it comes to connecting sounds and written symbols of some words. The complexity of the English spelling system can be considered to be the main cause of many errors of substitution, omission, and insertion.

Saudi students are not able to recognise the correct spelling of words. Students use the wrong letter to represent the sound because they cannot recognise the actual system of English (Cook, 1999). Many students make spelling mistakes due to anomalies existing in the English language (Alhaisoni et al., 2015). Among them are the long vowels, such as [ea] in cleaner; diphthongs, such as [ow] in crowded; double consonants, such as [dd] in address; silent letters, such as [gh] in flight; and letters that are pronounced differently, such as [g] in arrange and organise.

In addition, students confuse words that have similar sounds, such as look after with lock after and holiday with holyday. This type of orthographic error is called an "analogy error" (Ibrahim, 1978) because it occurs between words that are similar. Many orthographical problems occur when misspelled words are replaced by other words that sound like the target word (Al-Jarf, 2010).

Cook (1999) asserts that "unlike native speakers, students may not know the actual system of English, and will appear to use the wrong letter." For example: choosing between two or three consonants [c, z and s] as in 'recognice' for 'recognise' and 'tradisional' for 'traditional'. Students also find it difficult to decide whether to use [e] or [i] to write 'devided' for 'divided' or 'dicided' for 'decided'. Students often wrongly omit vowels, particularly [e], when they are absent from the spoken form in the middle of words such as writing 'intresting' for 'interesting' and 'sevnth' for 'seventh'.

Students' techniques. Students use their own systems to spell words and this causes inaccurate spellings. They often manipulate the pronunciation of words that then results in misspelling, such as *mawinten* for *mountain*. Many students write words the way they pronounce them (Albalawi, 2016), without paying attention to the rules of spelling (Bancha, 2013), for example, spelling *speak* with a [b].

Other strange or unpredictable spelling errors indicate that students use their own systems to spell words, such as *irport* for *airport*, *pastport* for *passport*, *areing* for *arrange*, *flyget* for *flight*, and *shopk* for *shopping*. In some cases, it may look like students tried to memorise the spelling, but still got it wrong, such as *mosqe* for *mosque* and *niehtlife* for *nightlife*. In other cases, they overgeneralise spelling rules to the wrong words, such as adding last [e] to words that do not take an [e] as in *famouse* for *famous*. They also often delete letters and sounds, particularly vowels.

Students often simplify some linguistic rules, overuse others and avoid certain difficult rules or structures (Ellis, 1985; Odlin, 1989). Often the errors are down to carelessness as students would be able to pick out their errors if they looked more closely at their writing. Errors of substitutions, inaccuracies, letter reversals, and omissions are easy to identify. Such carelessness could be linked to lack of concentration, tiredness, or lack of awareness when they produce these errors (Bancha, 2013; Subhi & Yasin, 2015).

Arabic influence. Many spelling errors can be caused by negative transfer from students' first language, in this case Arabic (Albalawi, 2016; Alhaisoni et al., 2015). Students are not able to separate linguistic differences that exist between English and Arabic (Richards, 1978). Because Arabic is a phonetic language, students write the words as they pronounce them. In Arabic, they can connect each sound with only one letter due to the strong correlation between the phonemes and the graphemes.

Arabic transfer errors occur when students extend the rules of Arabic spelling to English words when there are phonological differences between the sound systems of both languages. For example, students spell a non-phonetic English word the way it is pronounced. This happens in different misspelling cases because the spelling of many English words differs from their articulation. Students overgeneralise the simple rules of Arabic spelling when they write in English. This confirms the role of cognitive processes played by L1 to extract the principles of L2 (Alhaysony, 2012).

On the other hand, Saudi students struggle to acquire the phonemes that do not exist in Arabic, such as [v] and [p]. They cannot distinguish between them and between [b] and [f], which are similar to the Arabic phonemes [ف] and [ب]. Therefore, students usually replace [p] by [b] and [v] by [f]. Furthermore, English vowels often confuse Arab students because Arabic has a limited number of vowels. Students find difficulty telling the vowels apart due to their similarity. This is why students make many vowels substitutions and omissions. Likewise, English silent sounds increase spelling errors because they are rare in Arabic. Such spelling errors are called interlingual errors that are caused by language transfer from the student's first language (Wahba, 1998).

Lack of knowledge. This is the last cause of the spelling errors. Students' spelling errors indicate their inadequate learning of English and limited knowledge of morphology and phonology (Bancha, 2013). In this study, students were not beginner learners so they could not be excused their misspelling of many simple words. They had been exposed to English for more than six years, during which time they had participated in hundreds of drills and

The third group of spelling errors is addition, where students add a letter or double a letter. This group encompasses five types of error (Table 5): (1) adding vowels like [a] in *gardein* for *garden*; (2) adding a consonant, such as [c] in *speacker*; (3) doubling vowels, such as [o] in *shoops* for *shops*; (4) doubling consonants like [l] in *popullar* for *popular*; and (5) adding last [e] as in the word *hourse* (Table 5). The researcher considers this last type a special case, although it looks like it falls under the first error type, which is adding vowels in general. This is because adding the last /e/ was common in his data. This error was repeated by many students in their spelling of different words.

Table 5.

	Type of error	Example
1	Adding vowels	gardein (garden)
2	Adding consonant	speacker (speaker)
3	Doubling vowel	shoops (shops)
4	Doubling consonant	popullar (popular)
5	Adding the last [e]	hourse (hours)
Third Group: Adding or Doubling Errors		

The fourth group of spelling errors is swapping letters, which only has one type of error. This spelling error is not common in the data. Two examples were found in the data: *fcats* for *facts* and *muesum* for *museum*.

Finally, the fifth group of spelling errors is undetermined spelling errors, which are either unanalysable errors or a wrong orthography, such as *folofer* for *folder*.

These last two groups of errors were not common.

Discussion

Cook's (1999) classification facilitated the analysis of the spelling errors studied in this study. This classification was used to categorise all error types except errors that the researcher grouped under undetermined errors, a category that echoes Bebout's (1985) category of unanalysable spelling errors.

The researcher also determined the frequency of occurrence of spelling errors. The most frequently made errors were errors of substitution, followed by omission and insertion errors that occurred with almost the same frequency. Substitution errors were the least frequently occurring error. These results support the findings of Al-Zuoud and Kabilan (2013) and Alhaisoni et al.'s (2015) finding that the least frequently occurring errors are transposition and letter swapping. However, Alhaisoni et al.'s (2015) and Albalawi's (2016) finding that omission errors constitute the highest proportion of errors made by Saudi students is not supported by this study. Table 6 shows the frequency of occurrence of spelling errors in the data gathered by this study.

Table 6.

Frequency order	Category
Most frequent	substitution
Between	omission & insertion
Least	transposition errors & swapping letter
The frequency of occurrence of spelling errors	

The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies with regard to the identification of the most frequent types of errors made by students, namely vowels replacement, adding last [e], and spelling a word as they pronounce it. Alsaawi (2015) found that the most common spelling errors made concerned silent letters, the last [e] and vowels. Alhaisoni et al. (2015) found that students most frequently eliminated [e] at the end of the words. Also, more errors occur in multi-syllabic words than short ones, as shown in the findings of Subhi and Yasin (2015). In general, most errors concern vowels rather than consonants, which corresponds with the results of Alhaisoni et al. (2015) and Subhi and Yasin (2015).

Misspelling Causes

English spelling system. The first cause of spelling errors can be attributed to the irregularities of the English spelling system. English has an inconsistent spelling structure that makes it more difficult for students to master spelling and requires more effort to memorise. Complex correspondences exist between the sound and letters of English, which

The researcher coded all spelling errors into 22 types. Table 2 shows these types with examples. The last type includes unanalysable spelling errors. The 22 types were classified into five main categories: (1) deleting, (2) adding, (3) replacing, (4) swapping, and (5) undetermined. The first four categories of the classification align well with Cook's (1999) classification of four types of spelling error: omission, insertion, substitution, and transposition. To achieve a high level of reliability for this classification, two applied linguists were requested to check the coding and analysis processes. Following these steps enabled the researcher to describe the spelling errors, classify them, and explain the reasons behind them.

The first group of errors, consisting of substitution errors, comprises errors that originate from replacement and confusion. This group contains 10 types of errors (Table 3), the largest number of errors categorised under a group. The errors are: First, the replacement of vowels, such as replacing [i] by [e] in *printer*. Second, replacing voiced sounds by voiceless sounds, such as *balas* for *palace* or vice versa such as *fiew* for *view*. Third, replacing consonants in different words, such as *qapital* for *capital*. Fourth, replacing the word by a similar one, such as *lock after* for *look after*. Fifth, replacing [j] by [g] as in *magor* for *major*. Sixth, replacing [c] for [k] as in *dokunment* for *document*. Seventh, replacing [ph] by [f] as in *fisks* for *physics*. Eighth, interchanging [s] with [c], as in *palas* for *palace*. Ninth, writing words the way they sound,, such as writing *cantrey* for *country*. Tenth, replacing letters based on Arabic influence, such as writing *shnpo* for *shampoo*.

Table 3.

	Type of error	Example
1	Vowel replacement	prenter (printer)
2	Voiced/Voiceless replacement	balas (palace), fiew (view)
3	Consonant replacement	qapital (capital)
4	Similar to another word	lock after (look after)
5	Replacing [j] by [g]	magor (major)
6	Replacing [c] by [k]	dokument (document)
7	Replacing [ph] by [f]	fisks (physics)
8	Interchanging between [s] and [c]	palas (palace)
9	Self-replacement/Writing as pronouncing	cantrey (country)
10	Arabic influence	shnpo (shampoo)
	First Group: Replacing and Substituting Errors	

The categorisation of some of the types of errors may be confusing. For example, one might wonder why types 5, 6, 7 and 8 were not included under type 3. The researcher decided to create separate categories as they were very common in the data. Each error has a unique cause, which will be discussed later. Another confusing error type is type 9, self-replacement. One may wonder how it differs from other replacement types. Type 9 error refers to students' propensity to spell words based on their own techniques and individual differences.

The second group of spelling errors is deletion of letters. This group encompasses five types of error (Table 4), namely: (1) missing double consonants, such as *adrss* for *address*; (2) missing double vowels, such as *meting* for *meeting*; (3) deleting all vowels in the word, such as *ntrnt* for *internet*; (4) deleting last [e], such as *alon* for *alone*; and (5) deleting silent letter, such as *mit* for *might*.

Table 4.

	Type of error	Example
1	Missing double consonants	adress (address)
2	Missing double vowel	meting (meeting)
3	Deleting all vowels	ntrnt (internet)
4	Deleting the last [e]	alon (alone)
5	Deleting silent letters	mit (might)
	Second Group: Deleting Errors	

Each error included in the list might have been made by several students. However, as the intention of this study was to study the types of errors and reasons behind them, the researcher did not keep count of the number of times an error was made. Some words had one or two incorrect spellings, others were spelled incorrectly in 17 different ways, for instance 'capital' and 'convenient.' No statistics were kept relating to the variety of errors made.

Results

Analysing spelling errors. Analysing and classifying spelling errors was an overly complicated and confusing task. The researcher went through the data many times to ensure that his coding and classification were sound. Some words that were strangely misspelt hindered the classification work several times, for example, words with more than one error, such as *dowinlode* for *download* and *folofer* for *folder*. It was difficult to explain the error accurately in some misspellings. For example, how can one explain the errors in *specar* for *speaker*, *philit* for *flight*, *impuls* for *palace*, *flitg* for *village*, *caroted* for *crowded*, *delevel* for *deliver*, *flyget* for *flight*, and *manybar* for *minibar* when they do not seem to have a logical explanation? More examples of strange spelling errors, which can be called unanalysable-personal spelling errors, can be found in the Appendix.

The list in the Appendix offers up some observations. First, many misspelt words have more than one error. For example, the word *waupsait,* for *website,* has three errors. It is hard to decide which error to focus on to analyse the problem. Second, many errors seem to be specific to a particular student. It appears that many students make a guess at the spelling of a word based on its pronunciation, such as *dockment* for *document* and *cpekr* for *speaker*. Third, multi-syllabic words have more spelling errors than short ones. Fourth, some words featured an unusual replacement of some consonants, such as b for d in *wedsite* for *website*. A possible reason behind this replacement is orthographical confusion, although this should not be the case with students at this level. Finally, some words were spelled differently by different students, such as the word *download*, which was spelled *dunlod*, *donlod*, *dawnlaud*, *downlod*, *dowinlode*, and *dawnlod*.

Table 2.

	Type of error	Example
1	Missing double consonants	adress (address)
2	Vowel replacement	prenter (printer)
3	Adding vowels	gardein (garden)
4	Adding consonant	speacker (speaker)
5	Doubling consonant	popullar (popular)
6	Letter swapping	fcats (facts)
7	Deleting all vowels	ntrnt (internet)
8	Arabic influence	shnpo (shampoo)
9	Voiced/Voiceless replacement	Balas (palace), fiew (view)
10	Consonant replacement	qapital (capital)
11	Similar to another word	lock after (look after)
12	Missing double vowel	meting (meeting)
13	Deleting the last [e]	alon (alone)
14	Deleting silent letters	mit (might)
15	Doubling vowel	shoops (shops)
16	Adding last [e]	hourse (hours)
17	Replacing [j] by [g]	magor (major)
18	Replacing [c] by [k]	dokument (document)
19	Replacing [ph] by [f]	fisks (physics)
20	Self-replacement/Writing as pronounced	cantrey (country)
21	Interchanging between [s] and [c]	palas (palace)
22	Unanalysable error/Wrong	folofer (folder)
Types of Spelling Errors		

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the spelling errors made by Saudi English language students at the beginner level and discusses the causes behind the misspelt words with the view of putting forward suggestions for teachers to address these causes and lessen the number of spelling errors made. The researcher also attempts to provide insights for educators and policymakers to help them understand Saudi students' spelling errors and difficulties explore the causes of these errors, boost learning inputs, and enrich teaching pedagogical techniques. Therefore, this study is as important as the role of spelling in student's competence and accuracy while learning a new language.

Research Questions

The researcher conducted this study to answer the following questions: (1) what spelling errors are often conducted by Saudi students?; (2) why do these spelling errors occur in Saudi students' writing?; and (3) how might teachers enable these students to improve their spelling proficiency?

Methodology

Participants. The researcher collected data from students of the Vocabulary Course, English A2 Level that he teaches at one of the Saudi institutions. This course is an independent course, based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR),that is taught four hours a week over seven weeks.

The data were collected from 43 students, aged from 18 to 21,that made up two classes. The students' English proficiency level, based on the CEFR, was assessed as elementary basic user of English, which is equivalent to advanced beginner's level. The course uses the Oxford Word Skills (Basic Edition) as the main textbook. It focuses on four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and grammar and is taught over 25 contact hours per week at the Preparatory Year Programme (PYP). Students enter the PYP from high school, having been exposed to English for six years. At the PYP, students are expected to study English for one year, going from level A1 (starter) to B1+ (intermediate) (according to CEFR classification). After they successfully complete the PYP, students move on to study for their associate's or a bachelor's degree in the mechanical, electrical, chemical, computing, or instrumentation field.

Collecting spelling errors. When teaching the course, the researcher noticed many types of errors in the students' spelling and wondered about the reasons behind them. He noted, among other things, several misspellings of a particular word, for example, the word 'internet' was wrongly written as *intrnet*, *intrnt*, *enternet*, *intarnt* and *internt*. The researcher, therefore, decided to track his students' spelling errors and compare them to the type of errors noted in the literature. During the academic year of 2018 he kept note of spelling errors made by the students in the homework, classwork, quizzes and dictations given during his Vocabulary Course.

After collecting the data, the researcher reviewed the table that had 743 misspellings of 157 words. The list was collected from two quizzes, four dictation tasks, 18 classwork activities, and 37 assignments. He decided to focus on the misspellings of the vocabulary that was taught in his vocabulary class. He finalised the list by including only the vocabulary of the textbook of the course and excluded any vocabulary that was not introduced in the textbook, making the vocabulary of the textbook the target of the research. The list included 100 words that were explained in his lessons. Table 1 displays the first 5 words of the list with their misspellings while the Appendix includes the entire list.

Table 1.

	Vocabulary	**Students' spelling errors**					
1	address	adres	adraess	adress	adrese	aiddres	addrees
2	website	waupsait	websait	websutte	wabsait	Websit	wedset
3	internet	intrnet	ntrnt	enternet	intrnet	Intarnt	internt
4	download	dunlod	donlod	dawnlaud	downlod	dowinlode	dawnlod
5	reply	ruplai	reblay	replay			
The first 5 words of the list with the misspellings of each							

In creating this list, the researcher was following the advice of Al-Jarf (2010) who collected spelling errors corpora from her students. "Studying the errors made on a list of spelling words is certainly an efficient method of investigating which words cause spellers the most difficulty" (Bebout, 1985, p. 570). These errors highlight students' difficulties with spelling as they involve words that they had learnt in class and used in sentences and during classroom activities.

Learners of English as a second language tend to have more difficulty writing in English than native speakers due to the impact of their L1. The findings show that consonant doubling, silent letters, last [e], and vowels were the most common spelling errors made.

Working within the context of another Arabic-speaking country, Al-Zuoud and Kabilan (2013) examined the spelling mistakes made by 43 Jordanian learners in written compositions. They analysed 228 spelling errors and classified them into four types, according to Cook's (1999) classification: (a) insertion, (b) substitution, (c) omission, and (d) transposition. They also specified the kinds of errors that occurred and how frequent they were. The findings showed that substitution and omission errors were the most frequent spelling errors made. Students found it hard to spell words accurately in their writing.

A review of the literature indicated that many studies, including Al-Zuoud and Kabilan (2013), follow Cook's (1999) classification of the four types of English spelling errors: insertion, that happens when students add one letter to the target word, as in 'phictures' for 'pictures'; omission, that occurs when students delete one letter from the word, as in 'pleas' for 'please'; substitution, where students replace one letter by another, as in 'accidint' for 'accident'; and, transposition, that occurs when two adjacent letters are transposed, as in 'firend' for 'friend.'

Other classifications of spelling mistakes exist in the literature. For example, Richards (1974) suggests that the ESL students' spelling errors do not show their inability to separate L1 and L2, but their intralingual and developmental errors show the incompetence of students at a particular stage and demonstrate some characteristics of second language acquisition. Richards (1974) categorises the types of intralingual and developmental errors as follows: overgeneralisation, incomplete application of rules, ignorance of rule restrictions, and false concepts hypothesised.

Odlin (1989) and Ellis (1985) classify intralingual errors into seven types: (a) simplification errors result from producing simpler linguistic rules than those found in L2; (b) communication-based errors result from strategies of communication; (c) overgeneralisation errors caused by extending L2 rules to inappropriate contexts; (d) induced errors resulting from transfer of training, (e) errors of overproduction which refer to structures used too frequently; (f) errors of avoidance resulting from failure to use certain L2 structures because they are thought to be too difficult; and, (g) developmental errors showing natural stages of development.

Following collection of the spelling errors corpora of Saudi students from their written work, Al-Jarf (2010) classified spelling errors into three types: faulty graphemes, faulty phonemes, and whole word errors. She then described two types of spelling problems: phonological and orthographical. She showed that EFL students make spelling errors due to either inter-lingual or intralingual interference. Inter-lingual errors happen when students make spelling errors caused by their native language transfer (Wahba,1998). Intralingual errors happen when students make spelling errors caused by faulty learning of the L2 (Richards, 1974).

The Current Study

Differences between Arabic and English

It is evident that Arab students have spelling difficulties when writing in English as a result of the linguistic differences between Arabic and English, as well as the complexity of English spelling. English spelling rules are more complex than Arab spelling rules and this is confusing for Arab students mainly in the early learning stages of spelling development (Al-Jarf, 2010). Arabic is a phonetic language; Arabic words have a strong correlation between articulation and spelling which means that words are written as pronounced. Each sound phoneme has only one written letter grapheme. Arabic has three silent letters and no double letters. English, on the contrary, has silent sounds and multi-syllabic words. English spelling does not consist solely of letters that correspond to phonemes but has different corresponding rules for groups of words (Alsaawi, 2015). In addition, English script, which reads from left to right, differs from Arabic script, which reads from right to left. This influences how Arab students learn spelling and writing of English words.

Problem statement

It is evident that learners of English find writing a difficult skill to master and this is an essential skill. Students make many spelling errors in writing assignments. As Arabic speakers, Saudi students encounter even more spelling challenges when writing in English. Although teachers correct spelling errors and spend a great deal of time and effort to avoid students repeating them, students tend to repeat spelling errors when they write in English (Albalawi, 2016; Alhaisoni et al., 2015).

A review of the literature shows a lack of studies on spelling errors of Arab students. This is a research gap that this study addresses by shedding light on Arab students' issues with spelling related to several reasons including linguistic differences between English and Arabic (Smith & Swan, 2001). Students often do not realize the importance of spelling skills and do not pay sufficient attention to these spelling issues.

Introduction:

Using the correct spelling is an ongoing concern while learning English. Spelling is representative of the language (Langer, 2014) and the spelling of words is intertwined with their pronunciation, the vocabulary of the language, listening, reading, and writing (Alhaisoni, Al-Zuoud, & Gaudel, 2015). In other words, spelling is a complex cognitive activity that involves many interrelated skills (Al-Jarf, 2010). Spelling plays an important role in language learning, specifically in written language, academic texts, and literacy. While spelling is a communication tool and is a component of writing, it is not an end in itself (Chandler-Olcott, 2001) and should not be acquired through studying isolated words (Bowen, 2011).

From a teaching point of view, spelling shows the learners' ability to write words correctly from memory (Albalawi, 2016). Spelling reflects their skill in terms of associating English phonemes with the written graphemes (Al-Jarf, 2010). Therefore, good spelling is often taken as a sign of an education (Cook, 1999). Spelling errors enable teachers to understand the learners' difficulties and analyse the reasons behind them. Identifying errors can help the teachers come up with suitable corrective action and facilitate language learners' development. This helps improve students' writing , their linguistic competence (Al-Zuoud & Kabilan, 2013) and their ability to produce meaningful words and sentences.

Learning to spell is a challenge for all English language students, Arab students in particular (Al-Jarf, 2010). Misspelling words is a problem many students face (Alhaisoni et al., 2015). When students misspell words, they can produce disconnected sentences (Hyland, 2003). Misspelling does not only sometimes affect English language sentence structure, it can also cause word mispronunciation (Alhaisoni et al., 2015). It might change the meaning that the author intended to convey in the text (Fagerberg, 2006). Moreover, inaccurate spelling shows that the writer is careless or is less intelligent than others (Graham & Harris, 2005). It can also prevent learners from communicating well (Hyland, 2003), or it might lead to a misunderstanding of the written script (Khuwaileh & Al-Shoumali, 2000).

Literature Review

Although many Arab students make spelling errors, studies in this area tend to focus on Arab students' difficulties in grammar, speaking, listening, and reading. Spelling difficulties are lost among these macro-skills. Although spelling has a crucial role in producing meaningful language, spelling issues of Arab students have received limited attention in research (Albalawi, 2016; Alhaisoni et al., 2015; Al-Zuoud & Kabilan, 2013; Subhi & Yasin, 2015). Only a few studies have been conducted in Arab countries recently on spelling errors, including Albalawi (2016); Alhaisoni et al. (2015); Alsaawi (2015); and Al-Zuoud and Kabilan (2013). According to Fender (2008), Arab students have a low grasp of spelling and face some difficulties when it comes to learning spelling patterns, words, and multi-syllabic words.

Alhaisoni et al. (2015) examined spelling errors in the essay writing of 122 undergraduate students, 53 males and 69 females, at the University of Ha'il in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected through writing tasks set in the preparatory year. They found that omission errors were the most common errors made by Saudi students. Most spelling errors involved the wrong use of vowels and pronunciation. Spelling errors occurred because of interference from their internalised L1 (Arabic) language system as well as the anomalies of the English language, the target language. The study also found that spelling errors were produced when there was a difference between the articulation of the word and its spelling. Finally, some errors could be attributed to the students' inability to recall the correct spelling of words previously encountered in their studies.

Albalawi (2016) conducted a study on 80 female students in one of the Saudi universities. She collected data through writing and spelling tasks. An analysis of the errors made found that omission errors constituted the highest proportion of errors (59 %) and transportation errors the lowest (4.3%). The major causes of the learners' spelling errors were the wrong use of vowels and pronunciation, the irregularity of the orthographic system of English, interference of the mother tongue and the lack of knowledge of grammar or parts of speech, such as noun, verb and adjective. The findings of this study show a need to pay more attention to learners' spelling errors.

Subhi and Yasin (2015) investigated the spelling mistakes and errors made by 30 Iraqi students who were studying the English language in Malaysian universities. The results indicated a high percentage of spelling errors in their writing composition. The main cause of insertion errors was found to be lack of knowledge of the relationship between the spoken and written language and faulty pronunciation. Most errors occurred in multi-syllabic words, in the middle of the word, and in the wrong use of vowels. The study showed a need to revise how to teach English in Iraqi schools and universities. Furthermore, teachers must pay more attention to the errors occurring in vowels, multi-syllabic words and in the middle of the words.

Alsaawi (2015) conducted an experimental study in a Saudi intermediate school, a learning context that has often been overlooked. He pre-tested 26 students at the commencement of the study. His findings were consistent with earlier studies that stated that Arab students' spelling errors are linked to interference from Arabic, their first language.

الأخطاء الإملائية للطلاب السعوديين في مادة المفردات اللغوية

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ملخص الدراسة

تُعتبر الأخطاء الإملائية في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية مشكلةً مستمرةً لدى الطلاب في جميع مستويات الدراسة، وتتكرر هذه المشكلة بالرغم من محاولات المعلمين لتصحيح هذه الأخطاء، واستخدام أساليب مختلفة لعلاجها. ولا شك أن الأخطاء الإملائية تُنقص جودة الكتابة وتقلل من وضوح النص، لذلك جاءت هذه الدراسة للكشف عن الأخطاء الإملائية لدى الطلاب السعوديين، وتحديد الصعوبات التي تواجههم أثناء الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية، ومعرفة الأسباب المؤدية إلى تلك الأخطاء.

وتكون مجتمع الدراسة من طلاب السنة التحضيرية بقطاع الكليات والمعاهد التابع للهيئة الملكية بالجبيل، أثناء دراستهم مادة المفردات اللغوية في المستوى الثاني، وعند مواجهتهم لبعض الصعوبات الإملائية.

وأسفرت نتائج هذه الدراسة عن وجود اثنين وعشرين خطأً إملائيًا، ويمكن تصنيفها إلى خمسة أخطاء: حذف بعض الحروف، وإضافة بعض الحروف، وتغيير بعض الحروف، وتبديل مواقع الحروف مع بعضها، وأخرى غير محددة. كما كشف تحليل تلك الأخطاء عن وجود أربعة أسباب رئيسية تقود لتلك الأخطاء وهي: نظام التهجئة المعقد في اللغة الإنجليزية، أساليب مستخدمة من الطلاب لمواجهة الصعوبات، وتأثير اللغة العربية أثناء الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية، ومحدودية تعليمهم حول الإملاء والتهجئة والصوتيات باللغة الإنجليزية. واختتمت هذه الدراسة ببعض التوصيات والأساليب لمساعدة المعلمين في تقليص مشاكل الإملاء المحتملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطأ الإملائي، مشاكل التهجئة، الطلاب السعوديين، أخطاء الإملاء، صعوبات الكتابة، أسباب الأخطاء الإملائية.

Saudi Students' Spelling Errors in a Vocabulary Course

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Abstract

Recurrent misspelling of English words is a persistent problem in English language teaching. Although teachers correct the errors and spend a great deal of time and effort to help students avoid them, many students continue to make certain errors when they write in English. Spelling errors hinder students from writing clearly and communicating professionally. This study investigates the most common spelling errors made by Saudi students. It identifies the most challenging areas for them and the cause of common misspellings. The spelling error data was gathered from the Vocabulary Course for English A2 level writings of secondary school graduates attending the Preparatory Year Program of a Saudi Arabian institution. The results showed that the students produced 22 types of spelling errors that were classified into five main groups: (1) deleting, (2) adding, (3) replacing, (4) swapping, and (5) undetermined. There were four main causes identified for all spelling errors: (1) the English language spelling system, (2) students' techniques, (3) the Arabic influence, and (4) lack of knowledge. This study provides insights into how and why students make spelling errors to assist teachers with some helpful suggestions and teaching strategies that will mitigate problems of spelling.

Keywords: misspelling, spelling problems, Saudi students, spelling errors, writing difficulties, causes of spelling errors.

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