Meeting the Challenges to Teaching the Spelling System of English: Voices from the Field in Kuwait

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مواجهة تحديات تدريس النظام الهجائي للغة الإنجليزية: آراء الممارسين في الميدان في دولة الكويت

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الملخص

تعاني اللغة الإنجليزية من وجود حالة من عدم التماثل بين الحروف المكتوبة ومنطوقاتها الصوتية لأسباب تاريخية، ويتضح ذلك من معجمها اللغوي الذي تطورت فيه كتابة المفردات على أطوار متلاحقة. وحالات عدم التماثل هذه بين النظام الهجائي للغة الإنجليزية والنظام الصوتي لمفرداتها يفرض العديد من الصعوبات أمام متعلمي اللغة كلغة أجنبية. وأهم هذه الصعوبات يتمثل في صعوبة تعلم الكتابة والقراءة باللغة الإنجليزية، حيث يبدأ تعلم الكتابة بتعلم الرموز الهجائية ثم قواعد الكتابة واكتساب قواعد الكتابة الهجائية بعد. ولذا، فإن هجاء الإنجليزية ليس هجاء صوتياً، وتظهر المشكلة مع الأصوات المتحركة. والمشكلة نفسها موجودة بدرجة أقل تفاوتاً في الحروف الساكنة تظهر مع الأصوات السواكن، وبخاصة حين توجد بالكلمات المكتوبة أحرف ساكنة أو إدغام أو إظهار أو غير ذلك من الظواهر الفونولوجية. والبحث الحالي دراسة تحليلية وصفية للنظام الهجائي في اللغة الإنجليزية، يتعرض لتاريخ هذا النظام، وأهم الصعوبات الكامنة فيه، وطرائق التغلب عليها، ونماذج تعليم الهجاء، وما إلى ذلك من موضوعات نظرية تفتقر إليها أدبيات تدريس هجاء اللغة الإنجليزية.ومن ثم يهدف البحث إلى استطلاع مدركات المتعلمين، والدارسين، وأساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعة للتعرف على أهم صعاب اكتساب النظام الهجائي للغة الإنجليزية. وقد استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي باستخدام استبانة أعدتها مؤسسه عسر القراءة AVKO، تم تحكيمها، وتعديلها والتحقق من صدقها.وقد عرضت الدراسة للنتائج المهمة التي كشف عنها المفحوصون والتي منها ضرورة الاهتمام بتدريس النظام الهجائي أثناء تدريس اللغة مع مراعاة التكامل بين عناصر منهج اللغة في شموليته، وظهور أهمية الهجاء في تعلم النطق، وإمكانية تحسين القدرة الهجائية بالتدريس النظامي، وغير ذلك.

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Abstract

This is a study of the spelling system of English in terms of the defects about orthography and the system's pedagogical limitations. The paper reports on the inherent problems in English orthography and reform attempts. In line with the discussion, impediments to the teaching of TO and challenges to the teaching of spelling have been reviewed from the literature. Based on a typology of the developmental stages of spelling, the researcher outlines some of the effective pedagogical strategies in teaching spelling. In this paper, too, a survey on teaching spelling was done and the findings have been outlined indicating that the English spelling system is a complex and sophisticated one that has far more to it than the correspondence of letters and sounds and that teachers and students may be helped if they understand some of the systematic elements in English spelling and the developmental phases of spelling learning for nonnatives. Also revealed is that teaching spelling can contribute as much to the students' ability to use English as the teaching of pronunciation at a far less cost in time.

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Introduction and Background

The alphabet of a given language is the way to provide a simple visual code for representing oral language. The difficulty with English is that it departs significantly from this ideal status (Bett, 2001). Learners of English as a foreign language think the language is represented by an ideal one-to-one correspondence between letters and phonemes, and hence the fallacy. However, for historical and philological reasons, there are hundreds of exceptions which render it quite impossible to predict a smooth cut-and-dry system of rules for using the English alphabet; for instance, maid, said, saint, or heart, hart, or colonel /k3:nl/ have historically idiosyncratic spelling histories. These instances of non-correspondence between letters and phonemes make it quite hard for learners to apply certain rules, and thus teaching spelling is obligatory. According to the study by Dewey (1971), 60% of TO spellings are not alphabetical, thus endorsing Hanna's study (1971) of 17,000 English words which showed that 84% were spelled in an irregular pattern.

According to Stokes (2001), learning to read becomes the primary purpose of schooling, and it is essential for literacy development, but mastering the spelling code is a prerequisite for learning to read. Barkhuizen (1999) found out that learners certainly do believe that spelling is importantly ranked high in comparison with other classroom activities. According to subjects of this study by Barkhuizen, good spelling is revealed as a status symbol, which projects a positive self-image.

Pedagogically, Tirumalesh (1996) cutely articulates the problem indicating that "while a number of words appear to be amenable to rules, an equally number of

them remain recalcitrant, thus frustrating the attempts of both teachers and grammarians to provide learners with a neat package of spelling rules" (p.37).

This idiosyncratic nature of the English spelling requires that this system should be emphasized in the whole language curriculum. Lutz (1986) notes that in the past the English spelling used to be taught separately, with an emphasis on memorization as a vehicle thought to be the key to its mastery, and up till the present time, spelling series are introduced separately in the language arts curriculum of elementary schools. This is cited only to clarify how important spelling should be tackled in the language curriculum.

Again, the pedagogical problem with English spelling is that the letters do not usually correspond in a predictable fashion to speech sounds, and more complex, the over-40 sounds of English can be spelled in hundreds of ways, different from word to word. In this vein, Titlestad (1999) clearly illustrates that English spelling is not phonetic, and this non-phonetic, thus creating difficulties for learners and teachers especially in writing and pronunciation classes. According to him, the problem is cutest with the vowels as the only letters representing vowels (i.e., a, e, i, o, u) cater for the great variety of vowel sounds. However, consonants, to lesser degree, pose similar trouble, especially in terms of silent letters, assimilation, slurring, stress, and many other aspects. The problem is that these irregularities created too many digraphs and letter combinations that rendered the predictability of pronunciation a hard job for learners - native and non-native alike.

Aims of the Study

This study seeks to shed more light on the nature and history of the English orthographic system. Furthermore, it aims at discovering some of the perceptions of teachers of writing about the spelling of English and providing some insights for the teaching of English orthography in the EFL context.

Significance of the Study

The teaching of spelling is so important for developing a basis for teaching literacy and reading; hence, the significance of a pedagogical perspective of orthography. This study reviews some of the perceptions of the EFL teaching community in Kuwait which would help provide insights for the EFL curriculum development process in Kuwait.

Research Method

The descriptive method is deemed appropriate for the purpose of this study. A questionnaire developed by the AVKO Dyslexia Research Foundation has been validated and modified for appropriateness of use in the EFL context in Kuwait. The questionnaire was assessed for reliabilty to be used to tap into the teaching community's perceptions of the teaching of English spelling in Kuwait schools.

Sample of the Study

A modified spelling survey form after the fashion of the AVKO questionnaire has been sent to members of three distinct groups of people interested in EFL Teaching: student teachers, practitioner teachers and College of Education pro-fessors.

The Alphabet vs. the Phonemic System of English:

The English spelling system suffers from inherent defects. In this sense, Bett (2001) notes that although the problem began as one of graphemic deficiency, the problem with today's traditional orthography (TO) is one of graphemic over-abundance and diversity. For instance, a sound such as /s/ was spelt six times dif-ferently in the TO: (s, ps, c, sc, sch). Hanna (1971) elaborates on the problemat-ic graphemic overabundance and diversity of the traditional English orthography system by aptly noting that the number of graphemically correct spellings depends on the strength of the word. According to him:

> "A four-letter word can typically be spelled over 10,000 different ways, only one of which is orthographically (or rather lexically) correct. A two-letter word, such as in can be spelled (33X14) or 462 different ways. The short / $\hat{I}$ / sound can be spelled thirty-three dif-ferent ways and the /n/ can be spelled fourteen different ways" (1971:2).

According to Dewey (1971), the eight-letter word " scissors" can be spelled phonetically only one way /sÎzɛz/. However, in the traditional orthography (TO), it can be spelled 596,580 different ways, for the initial /s/ can be spelled (6) different ways, and so on and so forth.

Therefore, the irregularities of the English TO depends on units of analysis: one could argue that since we have 500 symbols (including digraphs) to represent 40 or so sounds, English is (500-40)/500, or 8% phonemic, thus suggesting that English is 92% irregular (Bett, 2001). Shemesh and Waller(2000) agree that

with 26 letters to express around 44 sounds, there's always going to be some compromises, and when a sound like 'ʃ' can have up to 14 different spellings, it's never going to be totally straightforward. However, Yule (1991) also observed that English TO has surplus letters - an observation contrary to Shemesh and Waller's - indicates that these surplus letters serve no phonemic or semantic purpose. On the contrary, Yule notes, these surplus letters mislead learners and increase spelling mistakes in writing. Research and survey studies indicate that over 56% of writers omit one or both surplus letters in doubled consonants that have no function in words such as accommodate. Silent letters can also distort pronunciation as in head, debt, vigour, foreign, people - which pose great trouble for both native speakers and EFL students learning the language. By the same token, the final "e" in many words written using the TO proposes the same potential problem conducive to misspelling.

According to another study (Dewey, 1971), 60% of TO spellings are not alphabetical, thus endorsing Hanna's study (1971) of 17,000 English words which showed that 84% were spelled in an irregular pattern. The irregularity of English compared to other Latin-based languages are presented in this figure (in Warwick, 1992:112):

Source: Warwick (1992): IEA Survey

Highly Regular	5. Finnish
	4. Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Hungarian, Slovenian
Spelling ystem	3. German, Duch, Swedish, Norweigian, Icelandic, Greek
Highly Irregular	2. Danish , French
	1. English

Based on the data cited above, it is apparent that English requires 18 additional characters to represent the English phonology. This falls back to the irregularity of the orthography system which Warwick (1992) vividly describes in the above comparisons between Finnish, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Slovenian, German, Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Greek, Danish, French and English on a scale of 1-5 from extreme irregularity to extreme regularity.

The AVKO has launched a study to identify the main categories of words based on how English words are spelled. The findings are based on teachers' perceptions in the English as a first language environment and as a foreign language. The findings from an exhaustive study revealed that there are five basic types of words in the English language, each with three different levels of difficulty ranging from basic to advanced. This taxonomy of English words based on the way they are spelled has categorized words as simple, fancy, insane, tricky and scrunched up.

	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Simple	cat, big, call dog, run, stay jump, ate, shop, quick, queen	fisherman, shunned, chewing, missed, pinning, outfielder, preacher, defroster, understanding	peddled, strictly, belittled, reenacted, enabled, shackled, misunderstandings
Fancy	onion, notice, station, caution special, crucial, Christ, sessions	suspicious, suspicions, unique, personalities, initially, linguistic, hysteria Christianity, memoirs	flambeau, Chablis, ennui, psychology, psychic, rendezvous, picturesque, mosque
Insane	one, does, was, have, laugh, laughter, cousin daughter should	lingerie, aye, draught, soldering, indictment, salve, corps, Chanukah, renege, cologne	hors d'oeuvres, ciao conch, jai alai, Qin, ribald, loughs, victuals, quays
Tricky	deer/dear, aunt/ant be/bee bear/bare red/read/reed	do/dew/due, aisle/isle/I'll missed/mist, passed/past affect/effect, lox/locks/lochs accept/except	allusion/illusion cache/cash spade/spayed descent/dissent
Scrunched Up	It's, didn't, Mr., Mrs. Ms., Ave., Dr., St. they're, we're	'tis, 'twas, ASAP, CIA, PED XING used to / "usta" going to / "gonna" supposed to / "sposta"	e.g., Ste., i.e., sic et. al., SQ3R, WPA, @ # $ % & * !

The "Simple" words can be defined as those words whose base has but one syllable. For example, the word fisherman can be reduced to the monosyllabic morpheme fish. The phonics for these words are fairly consistent and should be taught in the first two grades of EFL classrooms. As well, the -le ending in peddle, tangle and shackle isn't quite a complete syllable. Although the words ending in -le are highly consistent as in the -angle, -endle, -idle, -oble, -oodle, and -uffle rimes, the words containing these patterns and the patterns themselves rarely occur in first and second grade textbooks. The advanced "simple" words and their patterns are also rarely taught in first and second grade.

The "Fancy" words can be defined as those words whose base (with rare exceptions such as the word "cache" which is both fancy and tricky) is composed of more than one syllable. These words generally follow the phonics of the language that they come from such as Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Arabic, German, etc. The easy ones generally occur frequently enough in texts that most students learn them by sight. The phonic patterns such as "on" being pronounced as "un" at the end of most words such as person, common, and nation generally is not taught. The difficult fancy words occur less frequently and their patterns such as ci=/sh/ and ous=/us/ are not taught in most classrooms.

 The "Insane" words are what teachers often call "outlaws" or exceptions. The common ones are easy only because they are so commonly used. The words such as is ("izz"), are ("ar"), were ("wur"), are drilled one way or another into the young readers' heads. But other words a little less frequently encountered may cause problems, such as laugh ("laff") and laughter ("lafter") and daughter ("dawter"). The advanced "Insane" words are almost never taught. There is no provision in most curricula for the teaching of these words even though the vast majority of students cannot pronounce them. Most teachers have no idea that the word victuals is only correct spelling of "vittles" and that the word lough is pronounced "lock.".

The "Tricky" words are homophones such as be, bee, Bea, and B; dialect dependent homophones such as ant and aunt (Does aunt rhyme with can't or haunt?); heteronyms such as lead (v.) and lead (n.); typography dependent homographs such as to resume writing a job resume; similarity of configuration such as soldier and solder or ambitions and ambitious; similarity of letters in words whose only significant difference is in the transpositions such as in expect and except; words of almost identical meanings but whose pronunciation is accent dependent such as "to reCORD" a new "RECord;" words with variant spellings such as Chanukah and Hanukah; words whose structural endings cause confusion such as hoping and hopping.

An example of the Scrunched Up words is: Wudja beleev dat duh titul uv en ardikul inna reel skolurly jurnle wuz: "Yoo all gonna hafta listen" end dis was by a reel eddycated laidy frum Hahvud Yoonuhversity.

Being able to read words that have been deliberately misspelled by writers is something that good readers take for granted.

Orthography Reform Trends

The literature outlines three orthographic reforms (Bett, 2001). These are: (1) Streamlined traditional, (2) Digraphic, and (3) Unigraphic augmented Roman. Unfortunately, the standardized now used alphabet had been established before it was regularized. Furthermore, the reforming movements of the past did not meet wide-spread political support (Bett, 1996; Beech, 1992, Yule, 1996). As a consequence, over 25% of the English lexicon have irregular spellings and about 10% do not fit any logical pattern whatsoever (Hanna, 1971).

Furthermore, many schemes - Upward (2001) notes - have been developed to reform the English orthography system, but all petered out inconclusively. He notes that:

"Several fully regularized systems have however been tried in the past 150 years in teaching beginners, with dramatic success in helping them acquire basic literacy skills, the best known recently being the i.t.a. (initial teaching alphabet). However, all these schemes have required learners to transfer to the traditional irregular spelling as soon as they can read and write fluently, and much of the advantage is then lost".

Bett (1996) further observes that the situation is actually a little worse than the 25% statistic that Hanna calculated, but amazingly it is as up to 92% irregular. Humorously, George Bernard Shaw put it so crudely, yet quizzically that "English can't be spelt". The principle of orthography that was handed down to us through the ages poses stunning breakage of the spelling system. G. B. Shaw humorously mentioned that strict adherence to the alphabetic principle would not have permitted us to spell fish as "GH-O-TI", counting that GH represents /f/ as in laugh, O, /Î / as in women and TI / 'š' / as in nation.

Apparently, there are two congenital features of failing to enforce an orthography conducive to enhancing the writing scale of English: these are the inconvenience with adopting a new invention which induces wide spread resistance to change; and a political opposition to the introduction of a popular reformed orthography. Reviewing the literature, it appears practically true that resistance to change even for the better is almost insurmountable. According to Coulamas

(1996), the people of the English language count the lexicon written in TO as a cultural heritage that should not be tampered with. According to him, the property of a written sign has more than one value, which Coulamas (ibid, 413) calls polyvalence. However, orthographic reforms typically seek to reduce the degree and/or level of polyvalence. But contradictorily, there have been many reform attempts in the English writing code system (TO), most of which increased polyvalence.

Therefore, one appreciates the quizzical quip by Hockett (1952) that people are more likely to change their religion than to change their writing system. On the political level, the reactionary zealousness of politicians together with the standardization attempts of early lexicographers as Johnson (Johnson's Dictionary, 1755) upheld by the endorsement of men of religion (as in the publication of the King James Bible, 1611) all contributed to the standardization of the currently used alphabet.

Reform Potential and Reform Impediments

Research shows that up to 15% of writing in English TO is expense of time, energy, paper, money and worry (Australian Center for Social Innovation, 2000). Furthermore, it is claimed that if English spelling were cleaned up a 20% percentage, it would help prevent up to 50% of illiteracy. Most scholars agree that having a spelling system compatible with the phonemic constitution of the English lexicon, would help increase and speed up the attainment of a 5th grade reading level by more than 25%, (Beech, 1983; Pitman, 1969; Downing, 1964). Moreover, Beech (1992) in an empirical study attested to the fact that subjects of the study were able to regain normal reading speeds after they read about 6,000 words of regularized texts. Further research indicated that adults regain normal reading speed after they have read regularized texts by 30% accurate spelling improvement. In this sense, Upward (2001) notes:

> "Ideal though total regularization may ultimately be, the effect such schemes have on written English is so drastic as to be a major deterrent to their adoption. The following sentenc, in the Simplified Spelling Society's New Spelling (1948), perhaps the best thought-out and most influential of these fully regularized orthographies, demonstrates the effect".

However, as EFL teachers of the language, we have to approach reform movements and trends very cautiously. Aside from the other rationales for an enhanced modern orthography, one can say that the convergence among the pro-

posals advanced along the last fifty years resulted in a repugnance and consequent renunciation of the proposed orthography system as well as a noticeable discontinuity in these trends. In addition, EFL educators cannot take the initiative; at least it is not their native language.

Other research studies propose an International English Spelling that caters for the varying needs of EFL Learners of nonnative origins whose L1 orthography is different from the current English system. This new code is called fastr spelng. Others propose a 20% cleaned up TO so that the current system can become far easier to learn and to spell (Zachrisson, 1970; Upward, 1996; Pitman and John, 1969). Other researchers propose a phoneme-grapheme correspondence as cues to spelling improvement (Hanna et al, 1971).

Teaching English: the Dilemma of the Current Spelling System

In cases where first and second language orthographies differ, there is a big problem inherent in the teaching of the target language. Lee (1997) observes that.

> "As a fluent, adult reader of (one's) native language, feature and letter cluster analyses are automatic processes: one exerts no mental effort in distinguishing a from ab. (But) these processes may be quite effortful when the second language uses a different alphabetic, logographic, or syllabic writing system". (Lee,1997:194-195).

The fundamental dilemma of teaching the spelling system of English is that this system - as mentioned before- departs from what is regular, and ideal: i.e., that the alphabet assigns one letter to each phoneme in the language so that a spoken language could be written down and read by others who know the code (Stokes, 2001) The fact that the spelling system of English not all that systematic poses some great pedagogical problems.

Pedagogically, Tirumalesh (1996) cutely articulates the problem indicating that "while a number of words appear to be amenable to rules, an equally number of them remain recalcitrant, thus frustrating the attempts of both teachers and grammarians to provide learners with neat package of spelling rules" (1996:37).

The idiosyncratic nature of the English spelling requires that this system should be taught as an individual subject separated in the language curriculum. Lutz (1986) notes that in the past the English spelling used to be taught separately, with an emphasis on memorization as a vehicle thought to be the key to its mastery, and up till the present time, spelling series are introduced sportily in the lan-

guage arts curriculum of elementary schools.

Challenges to the Teaching of Spelling

Statistics (Yule, 2001) demonstrate that less than 5% of the British, American and Australian people can spell in English without mistakes, or without dictionaries or computer spell-checkers. As earlier mentioned, thousands of spelling reform proposals have been introduced, but aside from the two cons against promulgating reform mentioned above, Samuel Johnson tacitly reasoned that "People fear they would have to go through the whole awful process of learning to read and write again".

Stokes (2001) in his research that continued for 25 years in child language and literacy development in children concluded that "most commonly used methods of teaching spelling are ineffective, the most common complaint by teachers and parents being that students study their spelling words on Thursday nights, take the test of Friday, and by Monday the words they memorized are forgotten". Consequently, Yule (2001) strikes a cord by noting that "English has to be learnt as two languages - the spoken and the written - while most foreign languages can be learnt with books to help learn the spoken language, and speech to help with the written language.

Furthermore, the teaching of spelling rules is not the same as the learning of spelling rules such the final plural /s/ or the inflectional present simple /s/. Research indicates that using phonic rules, for most words, is not a worth-while instructional procedure (Fitzmimmons & Loomer, 1978). By the same token, learning to spell words out by repetition does not insure spelling retention (Abbot, 1909; E. Horn, 1967; Green,1968; Petty,1968).

Read (1975) concludes that learning to spell is not a matter of memorizing words, but a developmental process that culminates in a much greater understanding of English spelling that simple relationships between speech sound and their graphic representation. Lutz(1986) concurs with Read asserting that the acquisition of spelling rules is viewed as a complex developmental process, the identification of these stages would help provide insights into language /literacy development.

Children of the native language be it English or other are faced in their formal / informal schooling with a printed orthography, the intricacies of which have to be discovered on their own or via teacher and/or parent assistance.

Stages of Spelling Development: Implications for Teaching

Gentry (1982) describes five stages of spelling development in nonnative speakers of EFL who learn the language in ways rather artificial than L1 acquisition phases described by second language acquisition researchers:

* Pre-communicative Spelling

In the pre-communicative stage, the EFL learner uses symbols from the alphabet but shows no knowledge of letter-sound correspondences. At this stage, the child lacks knowledge of the entire alphabet, an ability to distinguish lower from upper case characters and perhaps the left-to-right direction of the English orthography.

* Semi-phonetic Spelling

At this stage, the child often employs rudimentary logic using single letters to represent words, sounds and syllables, e.g. u for you .

* Transitional Spelling

At this stage, the learner begins to assimilate the conventional alternative for representing sounds, moving from reliance upon the sounds for representing words to a reliance on visual representation and an understanding of the morphology and structure of words.

* Correct Spelling

A cognitive-developmental stage of maturity in which the EF learner knows the English orthography system and the underlying rules. Basically, the EFL learner knows about affixes, silent consonants, and alternative spellings. Usually, the learner's intuitions and generalizations about spelling and exceptions are correct.

However, the progression of these stages is not absolutely systematic. According to Gentry (1982), change from one stage into another grows gradually. Curiously, examples from one or more stages may co-exist in a particular sample of writing. Still, the development is always progressive, for children do not fluctuate radically between stages, passing for instance from phonetic back into semi-phonetic or from transitional back to phonetic.

No matter how gradual this development may be, the identification of stages is of potential assistance for language teachers. Kutz (1986) notes that an aware-

ness of spelling developmental stages can help instruction. For pre-communicative and semi-phonetic spellers, teachers may teach alphabet knowledge, letter-sound correspondences, the concept of "wordiness", and the left to right directionality. Furthermore, at the phonetic stage, students may get familiarized with word families, spelling patterns, morphology rules and lexical structures.

Research on Orthography: Findings from a Survey

The writer deemed it appropriate to check some of the thoughts and conceptualizations of the English spelling system as cherished by a selected segment of language educators in Kuwait. She used a survey form prepared by AVKO Dyslexia Research Foundations, but modified to meet the research needs of EFL communities in Kuwait as referred to by the validation jury.

Validity of the questionnaire was determined by sending it via e-mail to five English language teachers and two university lecturers. Then, on piloting the tool on a sample (27 student teachers, 3 lecturers in EFL methodology and 17 EFL teachers) reliability was assessed using the Kuder-Richardson's formula (21), which was determined at .79 - a high reliability level.

The Spelling Research Survey Form modified was sent to members of three distinct groups of people interested in EFL Teaching: student teachers, practitioner teachers and College of Education professors, but due to the limited number in the 1st category, the survey was distributed to staff and junior members. The spelling survey forms were sent to 30 student teachers, and 25 respondents returned the forms fully filled in, 30 teachers out of 50 returned the survey forms, and 15 university related EFL professionals returned the filled in forms. Thus, the net sample of the questionnaire study mounted to 70 respondents. Respondents were referred to the fact that the community of EFL learners targeted in the questionnaire fall into the categories of elementary through middle into general secondary schools. In this paper, the teaching community refers to student teachers, practitioner teachers and teacher educators, whereas the learning community refers to pupils studying English from elementary through general secondary school students.

The findings below are selectively reported here in this paper:

o   21.4 % of the respondents are interested in orthography teaching from the perspective of research / college teaching, 78.5% from the perspective of school teaching

o   73.2 % agree that between 50-200 monosyllabic words using just one short vowel, one ending consonant sound can be included in grade 2 English curriculum. And so is the case with monosyllabic lexes ending with two or three consonants.

o   63.1 % agree that between 50-200 monosyllabic words using just one long vowel as in player could be taught to beginning readers. While 70.3 estimate a 50-200 amount of monosyllabic lexes with a long vowel followed by a consonant and a silent e to be included in beginning reading classes.

o   82.4 % estimate and amount less than 50 lexes with - ous, - tious, -cious, -al, -tial, etc. endings to be taught to 1st or 2nd graders.

o   66.7 % estimate an amount less than 50 of words originating in Greek to be taught in EFL courseware

o   89.2 % estimate an amount less than 50 words using -y, -ly, -ily, -ary, -acy, -ify, ending s to be taught to 1st & 2nd graders.

o   87.4 % estimate a 100% average for adding the -s ending, 99% for -ed and -ing, -ly, -er, -ment, -ness, -tion endings. 100% for 's , 98% for -sion, -al, -le, -live, and -ist.

o   Because English relies on a store of individual words, students need to learn some words as one-off items. Indeed L2 users of English may perform better at irregular high-frequency words than at regular low-frequency words.

o   One common mistake noted by the teaching community is the doubling of consonants, amounting to 14.4% of all mistakes and 43.3% of mistakes with consonant addition or omission.

o   Mistakes consist equally of adding an unnecessary double consonant (48.3%) and omitting a necessary second consonant (51.7%). Some may be due to pronunciation problems when students do not know whether a vowel is short or long.

o   <l> Problems include: omission or addition of one <l> as in *excelent* and *allarm*; <ly> endings where <l> either gets left out generaly or an extra <l> gets added *largelly*; unnecessary doubling in endings in <ful> *beautifull*, also found in other words ending in single <l> with short stressed vowels such as *tel* and *wil*.

o   <r> Unnecessary doubling of <r> occurs mostly between vowels as in *verry, tirred*; lack of doubling is found on stressed verb-stem endings in <er>/<ur> *occured, transfering* and the *ubiquitous refered*.

o   < m> The most common mistake is the loss of <m> in accomodation; some words in *<comm>* lose an <m> *comercial* and some in <com> gain an <m> *comming*.

o   <t> Medial <t> is often wrongly doubled *universitty* or left single *atention, hoter*.

o   <s> Final <ss> often becomes <s> *adres*, medial <s> becomes <s> *dissapoint*.

o   Transposition of letters comes as prominent of all mistakes. In consonants the worst offenders are digraphs such as <th> *strenght* and <tc> *Ducth*, in vowels <ie> *freinds* and <ei> thier. Some consonant vowel pairs also alternate, particularly <ce> *patienec*, <le> *handels* and <or> from (form).

o   Unlike native speakers, students may not know the actual sound system of English, and so will appear to use the wrong letters. Two main areas are:

   1. confusing English sounds, in particular /e/ and /i/ as in beg big, *endiveduoly, fredges* .

   2. adding vowels *after* final consonants and *in between* consonant clusters.

o   As for consonants, the following have been noted:

o   Choosing between the three consonants <s>, <c> and <t> *socialise, tradisional, spetial*, particularly in words with Latinate endings.

o   Interchanging <m> and <n> *confortable*.

o   Omitting consonants, particularly <c> before <t> or <k> *charater*, chiken, <h> in <wh> what and <ch> *psycology*, the 'silent' <r> of British English before consonants coner, <s> *oberved*.

o   Inserting extra consonants, particularly <t> with <gh> heightt, <r> Tuersday .

o **As for vowels, the following have been uncovered:**

1. Choosing between <a>, <e> and <i> in word endings with <an>/<en> fre-quantly, relevent, appearence, important; with <el>/<al>/<il> hostal, leval, fossal; and with <ate> definately, definetely.

2. Deciding whether to use <e> or <i> to correspond to /' / devided, dicided.

3. Knowing which written vowel corresponds to schwa /' / activeties, grammer. Since many unstressed vowels are pronounced as /' /, the spellings have to be remembered as one-off items, equally difficult for native speakers as seen in destinct and divice (Author, 1997).

4. Wrongly omitting vowels, particularly <e> when 'absent' from the spoken form in the middle of words *intresting* or 'silent' <e>s *joks*, and in the com-bination <ie> *belive*.

5. The use of <y> as a final letter corresponding to /' / causes confusion, lead-ing both to its omission *studing* and to the failure to change <y> to <ie> before <s> *implys*.

Effective Spelling Pedagogy : Voices from Practitioners

If learning to write or read is just a matter of knowing the language code, then formal instruction and student grudge in learning the writing system would become futile. Some educators, theorists, and researchers are ferreting for the most efficient means of teaching (Stokes, 2001). They systematically propose different methods of introducing the writing system - the character set and the orthography.

However, the following techniques and methods have been proven by research as effective in the instruction into spelling:

* Of all the spelling techniques tried, student self-correction is generally the most effective (Horn, 146; Louis, 1950; Thomas, 1954, Schephoeerster, 1962, Beseler, 1953).

* Teaching high frequency vocabulary in child and adult writing instruction and this should commence as early as the elementary stage (Haskell et al, 1992; Fitzgerald, 1953).

* Phonemic awareness training and phonological / orthographic training is important for developing reading and spelling skills (Griffith and Olson, 1992; Helfgott, 1976; Yopp, 1992). Pronunciation practice is going to be more rewarding with these problems than practice in spelling, not only the contrast

between phonemes but also the structure of the English syllable.

* Frequent application of spelling knowledge by students while writing encourages spelling competency (Lutz, 198).

* Teachers should avoid - in teaching - overemphasis on absolute correctness, mechanics and memorization. For early emphasis on mechanical aspects of spelling inhibited developmental growth (DiStefano, et al, 1985).

Language games especially word puzzles are potentially effective in enhancing the young child growing awareness of words and their spelling (Hodges, 1981). Also, limericks are efficient. For instance to teach the ' i e' sequence, the limerick to follow can be used:

> Write I before E
>
> Except after C
>
> Or when sounded like A
>
> As in neighbor and weigh.

* First grade reading books are far behind the child's speaking ability primarily because these courses eliminate irregularly spelt lexicon to the advantage of regularly spelt words, thus postponing crazy words to later stages. In this fashion, around 40% of the English lexicon which are irregularly spelt are postponed (Bett, 2001).

* Alphabetic systems are easier to learn than logographic (or word sign) systems. However, once learnt, logographs are often quicker and easier to recognize and read. For instance, in Chinese, an 80 % logographic orthography can be read quicker than English which is only 25% logographic (Bett, 2001).

* A key point in the teaching of English TO is that - instead of thinking of reform, which is completely a native speaker's task and not an EFL learner or teacher's we help our students to develop a whole language approach to the learning of English. This approach "emphasizes the intricate relationships of various language items in terms of linguistic processes" (Tirumalesh, 1996:37). Therefore, to better teach spelling, teachers of English need to extend the student's horizons of language and its respective culture awareness.

Conclusion

Spelling has been almost completely ignored in teaching methodology, in course-books and in research into second language learning. Perhaps the majority of student's mistakes in written English are to do with spelling. Spelling mistakes are often felt to be a sign of lack of education; while accent and grammar can be excused, spelling mistakes can be unforgivable. Leaving the teaching of spelling to haphazard correction cannot be in the students' best interests. Therefore, we - as educators - can set rules depending on grammar and morphology whereby to guide young spellers, setting aside irregularities and oddities.

Irregular spellings will be learnt in due time at intervals, and it is the historic memory of the learner that can assist him/her in using the correct form. However, this historic memory needs to be developed through education and training that emphasizes the teaching of the English spelling system integrated in the whole language curriculum.

Finally, English spelling is a complex and sophisticated system that has far more to it than the correspondence of letters and sounds. Teachers and students may be helped if they understand some of the systematic elements in English spelling and the developmental phases of spelling learning for nonnatives. Teaching spelling can contribute as much to the students' ability to use English as the teaching of pronunciation at a far less cost in time.

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Appendix
AVKO Spelling & Dyslexia Research Foundation's
Reading/Spelling Research Survey Form Modified

1. My interest in reading/spelling research is primarily from the perspective of:

__ ِa teacher __a parent __a school administrator __a college instructor

__ a researcher __a school board member __other_____

2. Most polysyllabic words contain very regular phonic patterns such as -tion ("shun") as in ignition, -tial ("shul") as in initial, -tious ("shus") as in ambitious, -ique ("eek" as in technique, -sque ("sk") as in mosque, -cial ("shul") as in crucial, -cious ("shus") as in suspicious, and -cion ("shun") as in "coercion." Should phonics instruction include the teaching of these highly regular patterns? __yes __no.

3. Is it possible for all the phonic patterns of the polysyllabic words which are different from those of the monosyllabic words to be taught in the first two grades? __yes __no.

4. There are many single syllable words using just one short vowel, one ending consonant sound and just the structural endings of -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est such as: cats, batted, telling, batter, and tallest, etc.

5. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	6. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	7. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

8. There are many single syllable words using just one short vowel, two ending consonants and just the -s, -ed, -ing, er, and -est structural endings such as: bath, bands, picked, singing, singer, and grandest.

9. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	10. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	11. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

12. There are many single syllable words using just one long vowel and just the structural endings of -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est, such as: go, plays, rowed, going, player, and slowest.

13. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	14. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	15. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

16. There are many single syllable words using a long vowel followed by a consonant and a silent e (CVCe) that have structural endings of -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est such as: love, races, chased, baking, baker, and latest.

17. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	18. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	19. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

20. There are many single syllable words using a long vowel digraph in the medial position that have structural endings of -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est such as: boat, coats, seated, meeting, trainer, and greenest.

21. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	22. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	23. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

24. There are many single syllable words whose vowel is affected by the -r control, w- control or both w- & -r control that have structural endings of -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est such as: R-Controlled—car, cards, parted, starting, starter, sharpest; W-Controlled—wand, watches, swapped, swatting, wander; Controlled by both W- & -R— war, wards, awarded, rewarding, word, words, wormed, worming, etc.

25. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	26. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	27. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

28. There are many simple words using the -er, -le, -el, -il, -ul suffixes plus the -s, -ed, -ing structural endings such as: batter, battered, battering, battle, battles, battled, battling, label, pencil, symbols, etc.

29. How many *could* be taught to beginning readers?	30. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	31. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	less than 50
50-200	50-200	50-200
201-500	201-500	201-500
501-1000	501-1000	501-1000
1001-2000	1001-2000	1001-2000
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	Over 2,000

32. There are many simple words using the -y, -ly, -ily, -ary, -acy, -ify, -ity plus the -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est structural endings such as silly, sillier, silliest, easy, easily, library, literacy, qualified, varsity etc.

33. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	34. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?	35. If not in 1st or 2nd grade, when should they occur in spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	3rd & 4th
50-200	50-200	4th & 5th
201-500	201-500	5th & 6th
501-1000	501-1000	7th & 8th
1001-2000	1001-2000	9th & 10th
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	11th & 12th

36. There are many powerful words that have the -ous, -tious, cious, -al, -tial, -cial, -on, -cion, -ssion, -sion,-tion, -ive, -atic, -ac, -ic, and -etic, structural endings such as: personal, partial, crucial, carbon, suspicion, passion, vision, station, relative, fanatic, maniac, panic, and magnetic.

37. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	38. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?	39. If not in 1st or 2nd grade, when should they occur in spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	3rd & 4th
50-200	50-200	4th & 5th
201-500	201-500	5th & 6th
501-1000	501-1000	7th & 8th
1001-2000	1001-2000	9th & 10th
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	11th & 12th

40. There are many powerful words which came into our language from the Greek and from the French such as: chef, cuisine, petite, elite, machine, mechanic, chaos, quiche, cache, etc.

41. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	42. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?	43. If not in 1st or 2nd grade, when should they occur in spelling books?
__less than 50	__less than 50	3rd & 4th
50-200	50-200	4th & 5th
201-500	201-500	5th & 6th
501-1000	501-1000	7th & 8th
1001-2000	1001-2000	9th & 10th
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	11th & 12th

44. There are many powerful words using Greek and Latin roots such as: biology, cognitive, eccentric, multiple, equality, etc.

41. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	42. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?	43. If not in 1st or 2nd grade, when should they occur in spelling books?
__less than 50	__less than 50	3rd & 4th
50-200	50-200	4th & 5th
201-500	201-500	5th & 6th
501-1000	501-1000	7th & 8th
1001-2000	1001-2000	9th & 10th
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	11th & 12th

48. There are some words that defy phonic analysis even by experts from the very common little words such as does and was to the fairly frequently encountered words in print such as soldering, lingerie, hors d'oeuvres, and potpourri to the vexing victuals ("vittles"), gaol (jail), quays ("keys"), and place names such as La Jolla ("La Hoya"), Thames ("Temz"), Nice, France ("Niece"), and Sault Ste. Marie ("Soo Saint Marie").

49. How many *should* be taught to 1st & 2nd graders?	50. How many *actually* occur in typical 1st and 2nd grade spelling books?	51. If not in 1st or 2nd grade, when should they occur in spelling books?
less than 50	less than 50	3rd & 4th
50-200	50-200	4th & 5th
201-500	201-500	5th & 6th
501-1000	501-1000	7th & 8th
1001-2000	1001-2000	9th & 10th
Over 2,000	Over 2,000	11th & 12th

52. By the 6th grade, what percentage of students should be able to make compound words of words that they already can correctly spell such as putting cow and boy together to make cowboy?

53. The one school I am most closely associated with is__ public, __private, __charter, __home school

54. To the best of my knowledge, my school:

___teaches all the patterns and nearly all the 80,000 words a good reader and good speller knows, and nearly all the students learn them.

___provides the opportunity for students to learn all the 80,000 words a good reader and good speller knows, but (__many, __some, __a few) still do not learn them.

___does the best it can under the circumstances

___teachers have not been trained in systematic intensive phonic patterning and/or

___textbooks (spelling and reading) do not systematically teach all the patterns of English spelling. However, my school

___is interested in training its teachers through inservices.

___is interested in learning about a systematic approach to teaching all the spelling patterns of the English language.

___is satisfied with its approach to teaching reading and spelling.