

# Spelling Errors among Fourth-Level English Students at Ibb University, Republic of Yemen

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## Abstract

English is the mostly used language worldwide, either as a mother tongue, second language or a lingua Franca. Learners of English, including speakers of Arabic language in Yemeni universities face difficulties with English spelling which are due to several causes such as the mother-tongue interference and the English irregular orthographic system. The learners' proficiency and writing production is affected negatively by these difficulties. The present study aims to identify, classify, and analyze the different spelling errors made by the fourth-level students of English at Ibb University, Republic of Yemen. Data were collected from the written answer-books of Advanced Composition course of 50 students in the academic year 2024-2025. The results show five types of spelling errors including: word reduction, word expansion, interference between speech sounds, capitalization, and morphological errors. The percentage of each error category is made. The commonest error is found to be word reduction. These spelling errors are due to lack of training in English writing, carelessness of the students, overgeneralization of the rules and irregular English spelling system.

**Keywords:** Spelling Errors, English Department, Ibb University, Republic of Yemen.

## الأخطاء الإملائية لدى طلبة السنة الرابعة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة إب - الجمهورية اليمنية

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### الملخص:

تعتبر اللغة الإنجليزية الأكثر استخدامًا في جميع أنحاء العالم، سواء كلغة أم أو لغة ثانية أو لغة مشتركة، ويواجه متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية، بمن فيهم المتحدثون باللغة العربية في الجامعات اليمنية صعوبات في إملاء اللغة الإنجليزية. تُعزى هذه الصعوبات إلى عدد من الأسباب، مثل عدم انتظام النظام الإملائي للغة الإنجليزية وتداخل اللغة الأم. تتسبب صعوبات الإملاء هذه في ارتكاب المتعلمين للعديد من الأخطاء الإملائية التي تشوه كتاباتهم، مما يؤثر سلبًا على كفاءتهم الكتابية بشكل عام. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تحديد وتصنيف وتحليل الأخطاء الإملائية المختلفة التي يرتكبها طلاب السنة الرابعة للغة الإنجليزية بجامعة إب، الجمهورية اليمنية. تم جمع البيانات من أوراق الإجابة لمقرر الكتابة المتقدمة لخمسين طالبًا في العام الدراسي 2024-2025. تظهر النتائج خمسة أنواع من الأخطاء الإملائية، تشمل: تقليل حروف الكلمات، وزيادة حروف الكلمات، والتداخل بين أصوات الكلام، واستخدام الأحرف الكبيرة، والأخطاء الصرفية. تم تحديد النسبة المئوية لكل فئة من الأخطاء. وجد أن الخطأ الأكثر شيوعًا هو تقليل حروف الكلمات. وترجع هذه الأخطاء إلى عدم انتظام الإملاء الإنجليزي وعدم تطبيق القواعد بشكل كامل أو عدم معرفتها، فضلاً عن ميل الطلاب إلى تعميم القاعدة بشكل مبالغ فيه، بالإضافة إلى قلة التدريب، وفي بعض الأحيان عدم الاكتراث بإملاء الكلمات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأخطاء الإملائية، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة إب، الجمهورية اليمنية.

## 1. Introduction

Language is a medium of human communication. It is an audible behaviour which reflects human mind. It distinguishes human being from animals and other creatures. According to Yule (2023, p. 27), "language is uniquely human". It is acquired, not inherited from parents like the colour of the skin. For (Benyo, 2014), language (verbal or written), along with other paralinguistic means are used for communication. For Ferdinand De Saussure (1917), human being is having *La Langage* which is human ability to acquire a language. This ability '*La Langage*' must be implemented in a form of '*La Langue*' which is one of the real languages used by human being such as French, English, Arabic, etc. The language is used for communication through '*La Parole*' which is the actual practice of a language in real situation. English is one of majorly spoken languages all over the world. It is used as a mother tongue in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia and as a second language in Netherland, Sweden, Canada, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc. It is also the first language which is used as lingua Franca all over the world. It is the most spoken language worldwide. This makes the people to call English as the international language. English was having more than five million speakers living in Britain. English was brought to America during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century and adopted as the national language of the United States of America. Now, more than one billion people around the world speak English, either as a first or a second language. It is the mostly used Lingua Franca all over the world. It is used for communication in several fields such as trade, politics, education, etc. by speakers of other languages who do not know the language of each other but they know English. English is also the

language of technology. The coming of internet enhanced the fast spread of English. People all over the world strived to learn English and develop their proficiency in English, which made decision makers and language planners in several countries to design courses to enable learners communicate (verbally or in writing) in English language.

English is taught as a foreign language in Yemen. The main four language skill (speaking, listening, reading and writing) are taught to the learners. Writing skill is one of the most challenging areas for both the instructors and the learners. It needs to be taught by specialists and needs more attention from the learners. Writing is taught as independent subject in English language courses in Yemeni Universities. This study is concerned with a specific area of writing: spelling errors, their causes, aspects and how they can be overcome, which are committed by the university students, with reference to fourth-level students of Ibb University.

### 1.1 Importance of spelling

In communication with English, writing skills plays a vital role in understanding what the person wants to convey. To master the language is to master its words' spelling, as misspelling of one word leads to changing the word or altering the entire sentence meaning. For McCardle *et al.* (2008), it is not enough to know how to read and write, but you should produce the correct spelling of the words in your writing. Spelling is "the encoding of linguistic forms into written forms" (Perfetti, 1997, p. 22). It is a language skill of representing the sounds of a particular language by the letters or graphemes according to the writing system of that language. For Mahmoud (2013), Spelling is the foundation of writing and the language structure. Most of the research, on

English language learning, emphasize the importance of spelling in writing, and stress that correct spelling is a key to good written communication (Al-Hassan; 2006; Cronnell, 1979; Smedley, 1983). According to Fagerberg (2006), poor spelling is considered a deficiency in the writing skill or the education of the person, whereas perfect spelling is a reflection of the good education and writing skill, as spelling can positively or negatively affects reading and writing skills.

Spelling proficiency is crucial for efficient word recognition, which can either significantly improve or impair reading. When it comes to writing, misspellings can make the process difficult and cause frequent disruptions to one's concentration (Moats, 2000). Additionally, the poor spelling hinders the writer's creativity, restricts his word choice and results in brief and occasionally nonsensical writing. Furthermore, Sitton (2005), is of the opinion that, people who have ill spelling skill are not able to write properly. Spelling errors frequently convey the impression that, the writer is careless or not well-qualified (Graham and Harris, 2005, p. 31).

For Moats (2000), having a good spelling competency is very important for reading, writing, recognizing words and understand their meanings. On the other hand, poor spelling affects the learners' reading and writing and produces ill-formed and ambiguous texts. It also hinders the writer's creativity and limits their choice of words. For Sitton (2005), it also influences the writer's motivation. Graham and Harris (2005, p. 31) consider that "Inaccurate spelling often sends a message that the writer is careless or less intelligent than other students".

Due to the importance of spelling, scholars such as Ehri (1986), Rittle-Johnson and Siegler

(1999), Treiman and Bourassa (2000), Kwong and Varnhagen (2005), Conrad (2008), carried research on spelling and its importance for reading and writing. Literacy, for the National Adult Literacy Survey, is "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (Kirsch *et al.*, 1993, p. 2).

## 1.2 Spelling in learning English as a foreign language

The spelling is important for all the learners of English all over the world, whether native or non-native speakers. For Figueredo (2006, p. 874), the population of English language learners increases every year, as it grew around 46% in the US from 1990 to 2000. According to Rao (2025), around 1.5. billion learners of English all over the world in 2025.

As there is no English sound-letter correspondence, and spelling is not phonetic, learners of face several problems as they need to have mastery over the spelling in order to be able to convey their message in a correct way (Waller, 2002). To know the correct pronunciation of a word does not mean that you know its correct spelling (Tavosanis, 2007). William (2008, p. 5) states that, "You can never tell what sound a letter is going to make. Sometimes a letter doesn't make any sound at all, and then you'll find a letter that makes more than one sound". This is one of the reasons why people try to use words to represent regular sounds and spelling in their informal writing by using (a) sound-based spelling (e.g., kwik = quick, foto = photo, unic = unique, redused = reduced), (b) single letters and digits (e.g., cu = see you, ic = I see, 4u = for you, ig =Instagram, jk = just kidding), (c) abbreviations (e.g., UN = United Nations, AC = air-conditioner, WHO = World Health Organization, ID = identity), or (d)

Transliteration of the first language words by using English letters (e.g., 'salam' in Arabic "greeting", 'majed' for "mosque") (Mahmoud, 2013). For Burton (1984), the English spelling rules are not enough to say that English spelling is rule-governed or regular because there is no sound-letter correspondence in English which makes English spelling difficult to learn for beginners studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL), such as Arabic language native speakers.

### 1.2.1. Causes of spelling errors

Spelling is very important as it makes writing much easier. Templeton and Morris (1999) and Griffiths (1998) give several reasons for the poor spelling; the first is that, people consider good spelling as marginal in language learning and it is not acquired but it is a result of intelligence and personal innate ability, so many of the learners do not try to improve their writing and spelling skills by joining training courses and programmes. The second reason is that, many schools do not use a unified programme for spelling as some schools do not have specific courses for spelling, so the children can learn spelling and develop writing skill. Third, the banking of the students on technology as the use of spell and grammar checker all the time, which threatens their learning of spelling and proofreading of their written texts. The fourth reason is the lack of training courses for the novice teachers or in-service training in teaching spelling properly. Moats (2000) asserts that EFL teachers' competency of a language and spelling in particular plays an important role in delivering spelling quality-teaching for the students. The lack of rules for sound-letter relation and the complexity of English spelling system is also a reason for the poor spelling competency of the English learners. For example, the letter 's'

represents /s/ as in 'sun' and /z/ as in husband'. The /k/ sound can be represented by 'k', 'c', 'ck', or 'ch', depending on its position in the word. The letters 'gh' represents different sounds in 'ghost' and 'though', in the first it is /g/ but in the second it is not pronounced but in enough, it is pronounced as /f/ sound. The /f/ sound on the other hand is represented by several letter combinations as 'ph' in 'phone', 'gh' as in 'enough', 'ph' as in 'phone', 'ff' as in 'affairs' and 'f' as in 'father'. Moreover, the orthographic information is influenced by the preceding and following sounds, for example, the past 'ed', can be written as 'd' if the verb to which it is attached ends with 'e' as in 'dance' and 'danced'. The 's' of the plural is written as 's' in 'books' but as 'es' in 'buses', 'glasses', 'dishes' and 'boxes'. an 'e' which occurs at the end of a one-syllable word lengthens the preceding vowel and double letters, and does not occur at the word initial position. Treiman and Cassar (1997) consider that, good spelling is a result of interaction between phonology, morphology and orthography.

### 1.2.2. The effect of L1 on L2 form's acquisition

Doughty (2003) and Ellis (2006) are of the opinion that the frequent use of the mother tongue makes the mind attuned to its phonological and orthographical features, which makes the learning of the mother tongue spelling and words combination much easier than the second language. For example, in case of English, the speaker is able to differentiate between /f/ and /v/ as they are two phonemes and letters in English, but he finds it difficult to differentiate between /h/ and /ħ/ in Arabic, as they are not in his mother tongue. On the other hand, the Arabic native speaker is able to differentiate between /h/ and /ħ/, but he fails to differentiate between /g/ and /ǧ/ in 'girl' /gɜ:l/, 'judge' /dʒʌdʒ/ and 'language'

/læŋɡwɪdʒ/, as the two languages are having different features and belong to different language families. This difficulty is less when two languages are from the same language family as in the case of English, German and French. Cutler et al. (1986) and Cutler and Norris (1988) studied the French and English speakers and concluded that they apply their mother tongue strategies on learning the pronunciation or written form of a second language. This means that learners need to develop a special way of processing their mother tongue forms (spoken or written) and apply them to L2. De Groot (2006) considered that the L2 vocabularies which match the phonological and orthographical patterns of L1 are easier to learn and are remembered more than the L2 vocabularies which are not similar to the first language vocabularies. Moreover, there is strong evidence that the formation of second language spelling knowledge is influenced by the ways in which L1 word formation, orthography is developed and produced; mother tongue interference. In order to investigate the influence of ESL learners' mother tongue on the development of English spelling skills, twenty-seven studies were reviewed by Figueredo (2006) and he found that the L2 learners rely on the phonological, morphological and orthographic knowledge of their mother tongue, which positively or negatively affects the learning of the second language depending on the similarities and differences between the two languages' systems. The more the two languages are similar the easier to learn the second language. For Fender (2003). Arabic-speakers learning ESL, use their mother tongue knowledge of spelling in learning English spelling which negatively affects their progress in linguistic and cognitive processes of learning

spelling of English language due to differences between the writing systems of the two languages.

### 1.3. Spelling errors of Arabic students

It is noted that Arabic students, as many English language learners, face some difficulties in learning English spelling, due to the differences in the writing systems of the two languages (Alzuoud and Kabilan, 2013, P. 167; Alhaisoni *et al.* 2015, Coronado, 2024). Arabic is the mother tongue of more than two hundred million person all over the world (mostly in Arab peninsula, the Middle East and North Africa). It is the second language of more than two hundred million people. In order to understand why Arabic native-speakers face difficulties in learning English spelling, you have to understand the phonological, morphological and orthographic systems of the two languages to find out the similarities and differences between the language systems. The Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) variety, which is used for all official written texts differs so much from English, as it is written from right to left and uses a 28-letters alphabetic orthography, representing consonants whereas three letters; 'ا' [a], 'و' [w] and 'ي' [y], correspond long-vowel sounds and short-vowel sounds are represented by diacritics. In learning Arabic, initially students learn to read and write a fully-vowelized Arabic orthography in a form of diacritized letters to represent consonant and vowel sounds but most of the texts in media and schools are not diacritized which makes it difficult and ambiguous for the readers. Hence, Arab EFL learners are found to get better and faster improvements with Arabic oral-aural proficiency in comparison with English language because of the difficulties of word recognition and spelling (Ryan and Meara, 1991; Fender, 2003; Milton and Hopkins, 2006). This study is meant to explore the Yemeni EFL

learners' spelling difficulties. It focuses on the fourth-level students' spelling proficiency, to identify the common spelling errors in their writing in order to avoid them. This study takes the sample from the fourth-level student of English Department, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University, Republic of Yemen, in the academic year 2024/2025.

### 1.6 Significance of the study

The study is important as it deals with English language and the difficulties that face EFL learners in Yemen, in which English is taught as a foreign language in schools and universities. It is one of the criteria for joining Yemeni universities and higher educational institutions. It is the medium of instruction and research in Faculties of Medicine and other scientific colleges of all Yemeni Universities. The importance of English increases as it is the language of modern technologies and used as an international lingua franca by other languages' speakers all over the world. Therefore, the study significance comes from the importance of the correct spelling of the language which is used by students in their writing and people for various purposes.

### 1.7 Aim of the study

The main aim of this study is to identify, classify, and analyze the different spelling errors produced by fourth-level students of English Department, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University, Republic of Yemen, and examine the main causes of misspellings found in their writings.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 The sample of the study

The sample of the study consists of the 50 students of level four, English Department, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University, in the academic year 2024-2025.

### 2.2 Materials

The end-of-semester examination of Advanced Composition Course which is taught at the first semester 2024/2025. The examination scripts are examined for the spelling errors which regularly occur in the students' writings. The exam is carried out without the use of dictionaries or smartphones.

### 2.3 Procedure and analysis

Every spelling error found in each student's answer book was recorded for the analysis. Infrequent errors and illegible words are discarded. Every error was then classified according to the system described by El-Hibir and Taha (1993). This includes the following categories:

- I. Word reduction, whereby a redundant, silent letter or unstressed is omitted
- II. Word expansion (joining the indefinite article 'a' to the following word or by vowel addition)
- III. Speech sounds' interference between the languages
- IV. Capitalization-related errors
- V. Morphological errors (nouns plural formation or third person singular verb form).

## 3. Results

This study revealed five types of spelling errors produced by the 50 students of the fourth-level, English Department, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University. From the results presented in Table 1, it was noticed that reduction was the commonest type of spelling error, which is estimated at 49%, followed by expansion which is estimated at 31%. With respect to interference, fourth-level students showed (10%) errors in this category. Students had (5%) errors which are classified in capitalization category, and the same percent classified in morphological errors (plural formation of nouns).

Table 1: Spelling errors produced by the fourth-level students of English at Ibb University.

Category	Wrong spelling	Correct spelling	Percentage (%)
Reduction	Buld Mak Ben Suport Ether Easly Society Conacted Education Gramar Evry Finely/Finly	Build Make Been Support Either Easily Society Connected Education Grammar Every Finally	49%
Expansion	Applogise Whater Losst Complixe Academic Visite Allways Writing Impportant Theird	Apologize Water Lost Complex Academic Visit Always Writing Important Third	31%
Interference	Proplem Pepar Bat Poth Jop	Problem Paper But Both Job	10%
Capitalization	english ibb yemen	English Ibb Yemen	5%
Morphological errors (plural formation of nouns)	Sheeps Educated person have	Sheep Educated person has	5%

#### 4. Discussion

It is challenging to acquire a second language as it requires a lot of efforts. Learners of English language, including Arabic native speakers, face many problems in pronunciation, writing, spelling and grammar which make them commit phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic errors. One of the most common language challenges that Arab students face in their written work is spelling errors, which hinder

their education and after universities, during their jobs. For Al Jayousi (1994), the poor spelling is an obstacle for the student in different stages of his educational and professional life.

The spelling problems that face the Arabic-speaking learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are discussed by Kharma and Hajjaj (1997), who attribute this problem to the irregularity of English spelling and Tavosanis

(2007), who attributes them to the differences between Arabic and English languages systems, as the mother tongue interference of Arabic-native speakers affects their learning of English spelling. Due to the differences between the English and Arabic language systems, The Arabic-native speakers learning English face several inter-lingual problems. This study is concerned with the spelling performance of the students. It indicates that, they commit spelling errors of word reduction, word expansion, interference between speech sounds, capitalization, and morphological errors. These errors were attributed to the incomplete application or ignorance of rules and irregularity of English spelling. The students' carelessness and lack of training lead them to overgeneralize the rules. For Benyo (2014), the differences between the learners' sound and spelling system and English are the main spelling errors causes.

Saigh and Schmitt (2012) indicated that a lot of research was carried on the native speaker's mother tongue interference on learning a second language, which indicate that the L2 learners often apply their mother tongue processing habits over processing the L2 forms. While studying the words of similar forms, Laufer (1988) regarded some similarities to be confusing for students, particularly those vocabularies which are formed by attaching derivational affixes such as 'sleep/asleep', 'wash/washing/washable', vowel change such as 'thesis/theses', 'foot/feet' and the homonymous words such as 'liver' (organ) and 'liver' (the doer of the verb 'live'). Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) also confirmed that, a careful analysis of the similar-word forms is needed in order to avoid the ambiguity and misinterpretation of the produced text having such words. Van Heuven *et al.* (1998) mention that many L2 words

have many similar forms and this makes confusions for the learners. For instance, 'take' is a simple word, but the presence of similar forms such as (tame, lake, tape, sake, tall, tale, tack) in English can lead to confusion.

The Arabic native speakers' mother tongue influence on the ESL word recognition and spelling is indicated by the conducted research. Randall and Meara (1988) conducted three studies on L1 influence on L2 learning. They found that the reaction of the Arabic native speakers to the Roman letters different from the English native speakers.

Several studies are carried out to investigate the difficulties that Arab students face in studying English as a second or foreign language spelling. Al-Jarf (1999), studied the Saudi students' spelling and listening comprehension correlation. The data analysis showed that the correct responses of EFL students in the listening comprehension test were only 49% and only 52% correct answers in the decoding test, on the other hand 41.5% of the words are misspelled. examining the spelling errors of thirty-six 1<sup>st</sup> year students majoring in language and translation in a university in Saudi Arabia, Al-Jarf (2005) found that the Arabic spelling system had an important influence on English spelling errors of the students such as mispronunciation, unfamiliarity with American pronunciation and interference with other English words. The study also recommended that other research should be carried out focusing on the mother tongue interference on Arabic-native speakers' comprehension of the difficulties they face in learning English spelling. Using Cook's (1999) classification, Al-zuoud and Kabilan (2013) studied the spelling errors of forty-three Jordanian students and found that the spelling errors were

two hundred twenty-eight and omission and substitution were the most common spelling errors. The ten-words spelling errors of one hundred and fourteen 5<sup>th</sup> grade Omani students were studied by Al-Jabri (2006). The results showed that omission and substitution were most common spelling errors of the students due to the linguistic differences between English and their mother tongue. Chen and Cheng (2008) and Coombe et al. (2007) focused on linguistic features, such as pronunciation, spelling, and grammar, as they are the main factors for recognizing the proficiency of writing. (Sipe (2008) concluded that, the poor spelling affects writing motivation of the Arab and non-Arab students whereas for Fender (2008) Arab students face difficulties in learning English spelling. Investigating the spelling errors of two Chinese learners of English for fourteen months, Fender and Wang (2009) found that the difficulties they faced is due to the spelling system differences between the two languages which affect their understanding of the English spelling system. In the United Arab Emirates, Al-Taani (2006) studied two hundred secondary school students' spelling errors and found that the most common spelling errors occurred in the middle of the words. Figueredo and Varnhagen (2004) studied the spelling errors of ninety-nine Canadian students through comparing two written essays, given to the participants to read and identify the spelling errors. Participants were given these essays to read and identify the phonological, morphological and orthographic spelling errors. The result showed that the phonological errors were more common than the morphological and orthographic errors. errors. Dixon *et al.* (2010), in Singapore, examined the spelling performance of two hundred eighty-five bilingual child and found

that there is a significant mother tongue interference on the correct spelling of the children second language.

Based on the above-mentioned studies, studies investigating the spelling errors of Arabic native speakers learning English (particularly in Yemeni context). Therefore, this study is meant for studying the frequent spelling errors of Yemeni EFL learners in order to improve their spelling competence and come over the students' spelling errors, linguists presented some suggestions; For Nasr (1993), spelling is as important as pronunciation and teachers must emphasize on the correct spelling in writing as emphasizing on the correct pronunciation is in speaking and the students should be involved in natural or semi-natural environment, words also should be selected from the immediate environment of the students and priority is given to the words that students are familiar with in their daily life communication. EL-Hibir and Taha (1993) provided useful suggestions for the non-native learners of English to meet their needs in different situations; to highlight certain generalizations and regularities of English pronunciation and spelling. For example, the letter 'c' is pronounced as 's' before 'e', 'i', 'y' as in 'centre', 'city', cycle' and 'k' before 'a', 'o', and 'u', as in 'car', 'college', 'cut'. Mahmoud (2015) recommended that the dictation exercises which are formed to identify the students' common spelling errors should also identify the spelling differences between English and the students' mother tongue to be able to avoid the interference. Researchers also recommended that, students should learn excepts along with the regular spelling rules. For instance, if the student is not aware of the exceptions to the general rule of past tense formation in English which is realized by

adding the suffix 'ed' to the present simple form of the verb. He will use \*'goed' but not 'went', \*'builded', not 'built', \*'cuted' in place of 'cut', \*'cryed' for 'cried', etc. He will also commit the same spelling error in forming the plural by generalizing the addition of the 's' suffix to the singular form of the noun. He will use \*'mans' but not 'men', \*'sheeps' for 'sheep', \*'foots' not 'feet', \*'childs' instead of 'children', etc.

## 5. Recommendations

In the light of the study findings, the following recommendations are for the teachers and students:

**Firstly, for the teachers.** The recommendations for the teachers are that they must:

- Give your students dictation exercises, focusing on the common errors, in order to distinguish the spelling systems differences between their mother tongue and English to avoid the interference.
- Encourage the students to use dictionary to check the words correct spelling.
- Enhance the students to read properly.
- Develop the students' awareness of the relationship between the derivationally related words, such as clean/ cleans/ cleaned/ cleaning.
- Identify the differences between the L1 and English spelling systems in order to avoid mother tongue interference.

**Secondly, for students.** The recommendations for the students are that they must:

- Look at words correctly.
- Pronounce spelling words correctly.
- Practice writing the word without looking at its correct spelling model.
- Engage in various writing activities.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study clearly shows that, despite the earlier introduction of English in University and

three years courses in English language and literature, fourth-level students, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University suffer from difficulties with English spelling. The main contributory factors for the spelling errors of the students are: the lack of awareness of spelling rules and regular spelling patterns. In order to produce correct spelling of words, the students should be more aware of phonological, morphological and orthographical system of English language. The results of the study are in harmony with other research on the phonological, morphological and orthographical differences between native and target languages.

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