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### **ABSTRACT**

The significance of spelling as a language skill should not be underestimated. It is essential for students to comprehend and master spelling in order to succeed in their English language studies. Regrettably, many students often struggle with spelling, resulting in numerous errors that hinder their writing proficiency. This study aimed to identify these spelling errors in undergraduate and postgraduate students' English writing, determine the underlying reasons for these mistakes, assess the impact of these errors on students' overall performance, and propose effective strategies to rectify them. To collect relevant data on the encountered problems, their influence on academic achievement, and potential solutions, a questionnaire was employed. The study involved a total of 100 students and teachers. All the participants are between 20-25 years old. The gathered information was thoroughly analyzed. As a result, the research provided insights into certain pedagogical implications and offered recommendations for teaching spelling effectively. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of spelling as a crucial language skill. It highlights the prevalent challenges students face with spelling and the detrimental effects of these errors on their academic performance. Furthermore, the research suggests practical strategies and pedagogical recommendations to address these spelling difficulties and enhance students' spelling proficiency.

**Keywords:** Spelling Errors, Language proficiency, Error analysis, English composition, Error-free writing

### **INTRODUCTION**

Spelling is a crucial aspect of writing in the English language as it plays a vital role in effective communication. It is essential for English language learners and users to develop the ability to spell accurately in order to convey their thoughts clearly in writing. To avoid errors and misunderstandings, proficient writers must pay careful attention to their spelling. Spelling involves arranging letters correctly to form words. Aspiring writers, especially those writing in English as a second language, should make an effort to understand and overcome spelling mistakes. According to Asudo and Marsh (1998), English has numerous spelling conventions, peculiarities, and exceptions that pose challenges for language learners. Many English words are not pronounced as they are written, which presents a significant difficulty. Additionally, there are several words in English that sound similar, leading to potential errors in writing. For example, homophonic words like seize/cease, scene/sin, right/write, and suit/sooth can be confusing. Learning to spell correctly can be challenging, but it is crucial for anyone studying the language. Proficiency in spelling is a reflection of a learner's ability to express themselves appropriately in English. Kuiper and Allan (2004) emphasize the importance of spelling in their article. They state that while English spelling may seem straightforward in theory, it is more challenging to master in practice. They argue that many people struggle with spelling because written English does not always correspond to the sounds made when pronouncing a word. Consequently, students often make spelling mistakes in English, often due to insufficient proficiency in the language. These errors can sometimes indicate inadequate instruction. There are various factors that contribute to students' spelling mistakes. One such factor is that the English language has borrowed words from other classical and oldest languages, such as Latin, French, and Greek. Consequently, English spelling can be inconsistent. Words like clichés, elite, fiancée, and fiancé have retained their original forms in English from their respective source languages. Another reason for spelling mistakes among students is that English is not purely syllabic, making the spelling of English words inherently challenging. Words are not always spelled exactly as they sound. The presence of multiple spellings for words with the same pronunciation significantly contributes to spelling errors among English language students. Additionally, learners' lack of attention, interference from their mother tongue, and teachers' failure to make deliberate efforts to teach spelling, particularly in primary and high schools, are also contributing factors. Considering the aforementioned challenges associated with English spelling, becoming a proficient speller requires years of practice and continuous effort. However, it appears that

only a few English language learners engage in consistent practice and invest effort into mastering English spelling. Spelling mistakes have been a significant obstacle to producing well-written English, as they hinder communication and make students' writing difficult to comprehend.

### **Problem Statement**

Spelling errors are prevalent in the writings of many graduate and postgraduate students, causing frustration for both teachers and learners. Consequently, students struggle to produce error-free writing. The impact of these errors is substantial, as ten marks dedicated to a specific question are lost due to spelling and other mistakes. It appears that there is a lack of concerted effort from both teachers and students to address this issue. This study aims to identify the root causes of the problem, assess its impact on students' performance, and propose potential solutions.

### **Aim**

The study intends to analyze the various types of spelling errors in the English writings of undergraduate and postgraduate students of Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) whose mother tongue and medium of instruction is Urdu. It seeks to identify the underlying causes of these errors and provide recommendations to help students overcome them.

### **Sample Size**

The study included a sample of 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students, age group of 20 to 25, from Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) in Hyderabad, Telangana, India. All participants had Urdu as their mother tongue and medium of instruction.

### **Research Questions**

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the various types of spelling errors observed in the English writing of graduate and postgraduate students?
2. What factors contribute to spelling mistakes among graduate and postgraduate students whose mother tongue and medium of instruction is Urdu?
3. What is the effect of spelling errors on students' performance in writing in the English language?
4. What measures can be taken to prevent spelling mistakes in English writing?

### **Significance Of The Study**

Teachers of English and students in India who wish to improve their English writing composition can greatly benefit from this endeavor. By highlighting these spelling errors, awareness can be raised among language users, helping them avoid such mistakes. Furthermore, this study provides pedagogical implications and ideas for teachers seeking to effectively teach spelling to their students.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The English language is known for its intricate spelling norms and exceptions, posing a significant challenge for language learners. Asudo and Marsh (1998) highlight the spelling process is further complicated by the fact that a significant number of English words are not pronounced as they are written. Additionally, the presence of similar-sounding terms can contribute to mistakes during writing. Kuiper and Allan (2004) emphasized despite the apparent simplicity of English spelling in theory the learners face difficulty in mastering it. The disparity between written English and spoken sounds adds to the complexity of accurate spelling. Botley and Dillah (2007) conducted a study focusing on spelling errors among university students and found that the omission of letters was the most prevalent type of mistake. This study suggests that despite years of instruction, spelling errors persist. Summaira (2011) points out that these mistakes reflect learners' cognitive processes and their level of proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, Khansir (2010) discusses the argument made by behaviorists that errors indicate shortcomings in teaching methods and the failure to address them adequately. Summaira (2011) emphasizes the significance of error analysis, suggesting that it should go beyond identification by categorizing errors and providing explanations to facilitate appropriate corrections. Understanding the complexities of spelling errors and their underlying causes is crucial for educators and learners in developing effective strategies to enhance spelling skills and overall language proficiency. According to Hartshon (2008), learners face multiple challenges when striving to produce substantive and linguistically accurate works. They often encounter difficulties in effectively conveying their intended meaning to examiners. Examiners assess Mechanical Accuracy, which encompasses grammatical errors, punctuation usage, and spelling mistakes. Alhaisoni, Al-Zuoud, and Gaudel (2015) conducted a study involving 122 undergraduate students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the University of Ha'il in Saudi Arabia. The researchers examined the spelling errors in English compositions produced by these students during their preparatory year.

The data collected consisted of writing assignments completed by 53 male students and 69 female students. The findings revealed that omission mistakes were the most prevalent among the students. The majority of spelling errors were related to incorrect vowel usage and pronunciation. The researchers concluded that these spelling mistakes were influenced by irregularities in the students' second language (L2) acquisition as well as interference from their first language (L1). Dada (2015) conducted a survey study that focused on spelling errors in students' essay writing. The study aimed to identify the causes of these errors, examine their influence on students' performance in essay writing, and propose strategies to correct the mistakes. The research design employed for this study was a descriptive research design of the survey type.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher conducted a survey research design to investigate the topic. The population of interest comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students from MANUU. The sample was selected using a simple random technique and consisted of 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students and teachers. To gather data on the causes of errors, the impact of these errors on students' performance, and potential correction strategies, a questionnaire was shared Google forms and email to both teachers and students.

## Data Interpretation

The collected data from both students and teachers were analyzed as per the sequence of shared questionnaire.

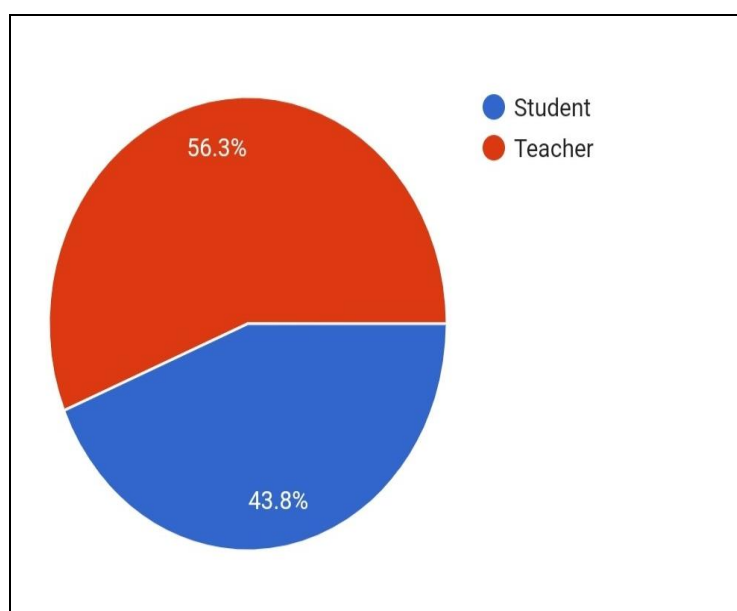


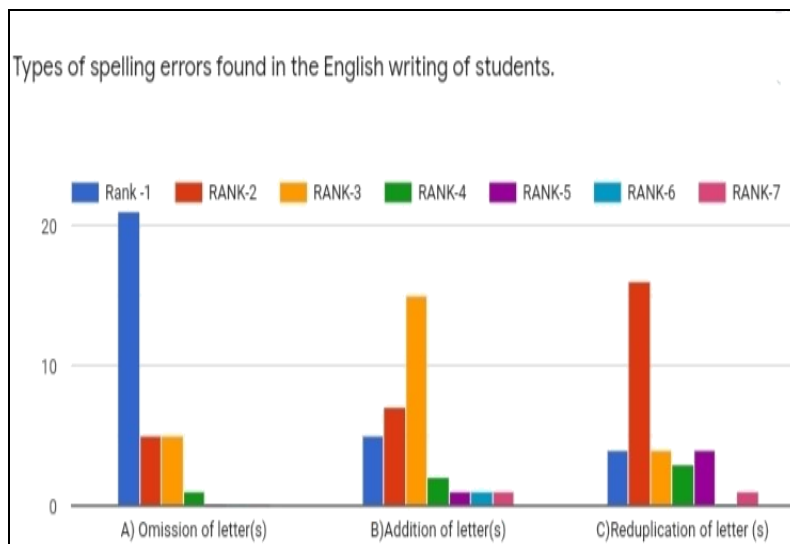
Figure: 1

## Research Question 1

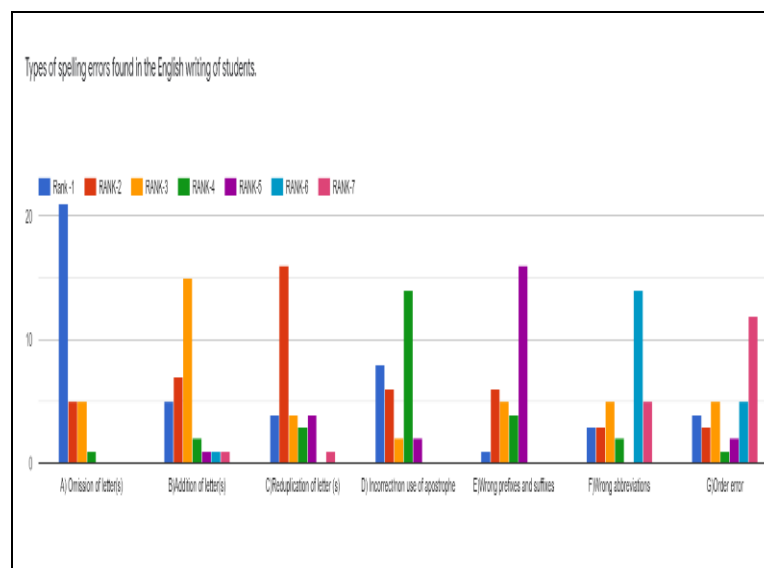
What are the various categories of spelling errors commonly made by graduate and postgraduate students in their English writing? Below given Table-1 presents a compilation of the different types of spelling errors observed in the English writing of graduate and postgraduate students.

Table: 1

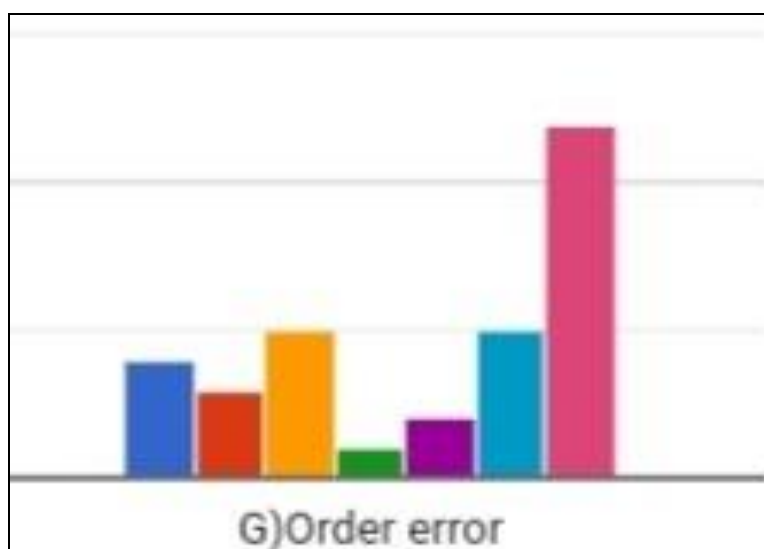
Sl. No	Types of errors	Rank
1	Omission of letter(s)	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	Reduplication of letter(s)	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3	Addition of letter(s)	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	Incorrect/nonuse of apostrophe	4 <sup>th</sup>
5	Wrong prefixes and suffixes	5 <sup>th</sup>
6	Wrong abbreviations	6 <sup>th</sup>
7	Order error	7 <sup>th</sup>



Graph: 1



Graph: 2



Graph: 3

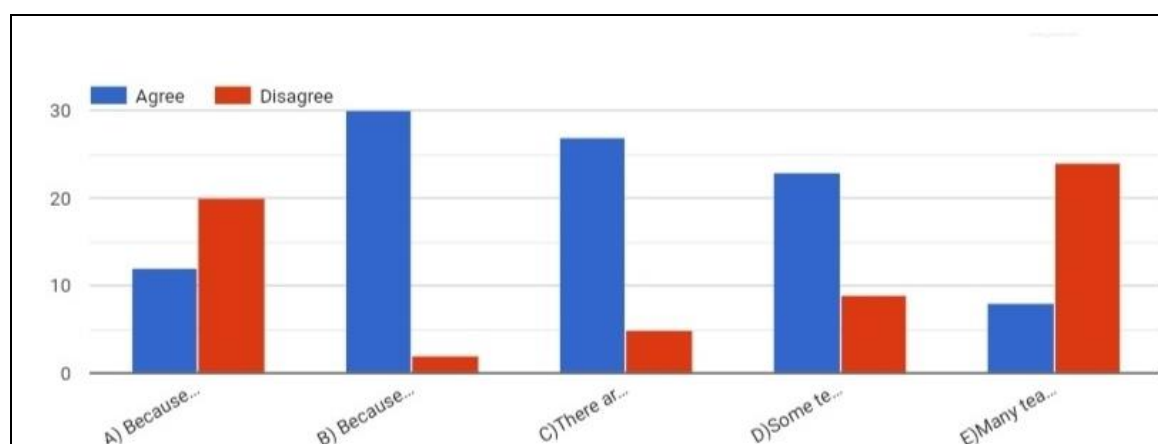
Based on Table 1, the analysis reveals that students in graduate and postgraduate students commonly made seven (7) types of errors in their English writing. The most frequently observed error is the omission of letters, which ranks as the highest. Following that, the errors are ranked in the following order: repetition of letters (2<sup>nd</sup> rank), addition of letters (3<sup>rd</sup> rank), incorrect/non-use of apostrophes (4<sup>th</sup> rank), incorrect use of prefixes and suffixes (5<sup>th</sup> rank), incorrect abbreviations (6<sup>th</sup> rank), and order errors (7<sup>th</sup> rank).

### Research Question 2

What drives graduate and postgraduate students of MANUU to make spelling mistakes? Table 2 given below presents possible causes of spelling mistakes among graduate and postgraduate students whose mother tongue and medium of instruction is Urdu.

**Table: 2**

Sl. No.	Possible causes of Spelling Errors among students	Maximum No. of Agree/Disagree
1	Spelling is not typically included as a specific component of English language instruction.	Disagree
2	Many students fail to thoroughly review their work after writing.	Agree
3	The libraries have a limited number of books that focus on spelling rules.	Agree
4	Some teachers lack enthusiasm when it comes to instructing spelling.	Agree
5	Most of the teachers appear to make spelling errors when writing on the blackboard or whiteboard.	Disagree



**Graph: 4**

The results from Table 2 reveal the causes of spelling mistakes among students. The findings show that the majority of respondents disagreed with the notion that spelling is not taught as part of the English language curriculum in schools. Conversely, a significant number of respondents agreed with the second cause, which suggests that many students fail to review their work after writing. Similarly, the third reason highlighted the lack of books in libraries that emphasize spelling rules, which received agreement from maximum respondents. The fourth cause stated that some teachers lack interest in teaching spelling, and maximum respondents agreed with this statement. However, when it came to the fifth cause, which suggests that teachers sometimes make spelling errors while writing on the black/whiteboard, maximum respondents disagreed. These responses highlight that there are multiple factors contributing to spelling errors among undergraduate and postgraduate students.

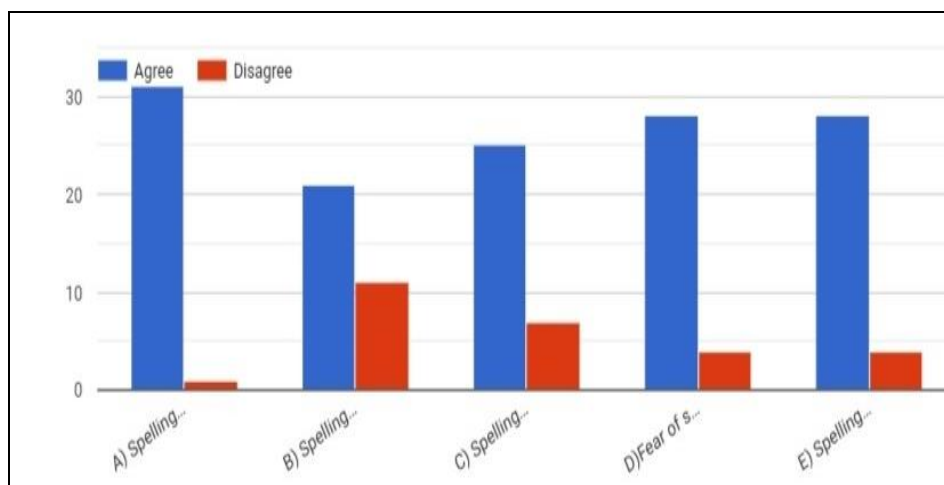
### Research Question 3

How can spelling errors affect a student's performance in English language writing? Table 3 mentioned below presents the influence of spelling errors on student's performance in English writing whose first language and medium of instruction is Urdu.



**Table: 3**

Sl. No.	Influence of spelling errors on students performance in Englishwriting.	Maximum no. of agree/disagree
1	Spelling errors make students to score lessmarks.	Agree
2	Spelling errors make students spend morethan necessary time while writing.	Agree
3	Spelling errors make students writing untidy.	Agree
4	Fear of spelling errors affects students' interest in writing.	Agree
5	Spelling errors contribute to the poorperformance of students.	Agree



**Graph: 5**

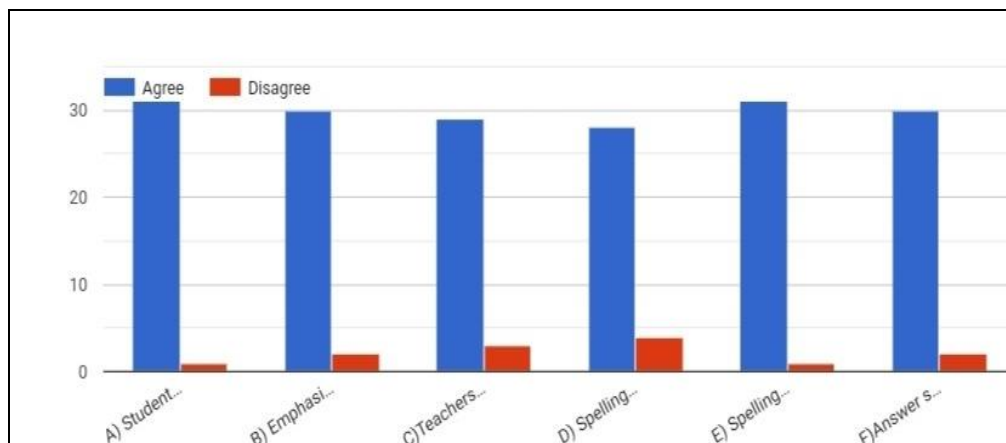
According to Table 3 the responses from the participants indicate the significant impact of spelling errors on students' performance in English writing. The majority of respondents agreed with the following statements: spelling errors lead to lower marks for students, spelling errors cause students to spend more time than necessary while writing, spelling errors make students' writing appear untidy, the fear of spelling errors affects students' interest in writing, and spelling errors contribute to poor academic performance. These findings highlight the influential role of spelling errors in students' English writing performance, as acknowledged by the majority of respondents.

#### Research Question 4

What can be done to avoid spelling mistakes in English writing? Table 4 presents strategies to overcome spelling errors among students.

**Table: 4**

Sl. No.	Strategies to overcome spelling errors among students	Maximum no. of agree/disagree
1	Students should develop the desire to learn correct spellings and allot necessary time to learn it.	Agree
2	Emphasis should be laid on spelling rules in all recommended English language texts for Schools and Colleges.	Agree
3	Teachers should develop interest and invest more time to teach spellings.	Agree
4	Spelling should be included as a major aspect of English language to be taught in schools.	Agree
5	Spelling competitions should be organized among students.	Agree
6	Answer scripts should be shown after each evaluation marking spelling mistakes of the students so that they can develop interest in correcting it.	Agree



Graph: 6

The strategies mentioned in Table 4 aims to address spelling errors among students. These strategies include:

1. Students should develop a desire to learn correct spellings and allocate necessary time for learning them. (Supported by a majority of respondents)
2. Emphasis should be placed on spelling rules in English language textbooks recommended for Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools. (Supported by a majority of respondents)
3. Teachers should show interest and dedicate more time to teaching spellings. (Supported by a majority of respondents)
4. Spelling should be given importance as a significant aspect of English language education in schools. (Supported by a majority of respondents)
5. Organizing spelling competitions among students. (Supported by a majority of respondents)
6. Answer scripts should be returned to students after evaluation, highlighting any spelling mistakes they made. This approach aims to encourage students to take an interest in correcting their errors. (Supported by a majority of respondents)

By implementing these strategies, the problem of spelling errors among students can be significantly reduced.

## FINDINGS

According to the study's findings, the most frequent spelling errors observed in students' writing are as follows:

1. Omission of letters
2. Reduplication of letters
3. Addition of letters
4. Incorrect or non-use of the apostrophe
5. Incorrect use of prefixes and suffixes
6. Incorrect abbreviations
7. Errors in word order

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Bathley and Dilhah (2007) on spelling mistakes among Malaysian students at the degree and diploma levels. In their study, they identified various categories of mistakes, including omission, replacement, addition, misuse of punctuation, influence of the first language (L1), miss-ordering, doubling, term coinage, adoption of US spellings, direct borrowing, and mispronunciations. It is worth mentioning that other researchers have utilized different categories and reached diverse conclusions. The survey also highlights various reasons for students making spelling mistakes. These include a lack of books in the library that focus on spelling principles, inadequate spelling instruction provided by teachers, particularly at the primary and high school level, and a lack of enthusiasm among some teachers to teach spelling effectively. Khansir (2010) argues that errors can be attributed to poor instruction or failure, and mother tongue influence is also identified as a significant contributing factor. The study further reveals that spelling errors have a substantial impact on students' overall performance in English language skills. Hartshon (2008) suggests that learners face significant obstacles in producing compositions that are both substantial and linguistically accurate. In addition, students often struggle to effectively convey their intended meaning to examiners, which affects their performance.

## Pedagogical Implications

Here are some pedagogical implications for the teachers of English to teach effectively spellings:

1. Break long words into smaller parts or syllables to facilitate learning and memorization. For example, "vegetables" can be segmented as "ve-ge-ta-bles."
2. Explain spelling rules to students, along with their exceptions, to help them understand the patterns and



principles behind spellings.

3. Encourage students to maintain a list of new or challenging words and refer to it regularly to reinforce their memory.
4. Foster a reading culture among learners. The more they read, the more exposure they have to different words and their spellings in context.
5. Encourage students to say and spell words aloud, as this can enhance their auditory and kinesthetic learning.
6. Teach students commonly misspelled words (e.g., there, their, they're, to, too, two) and focus on the differences in their usage.
7. Devote the first ten minutes of each class period to dictating and practicing new words learned in previous lessons.
8. Incorporate word games into the teaching process, such as "Guess the word," "Building words," or filling in puzzles. These activities can make spelling practice more engaging and enjoyable for students.
9. Be vigilant about correcting spelling errors, especially in the early stages, to prevent them from becoming deeply ingrained and more challenging to overcome later on.
10. Encourage students to read newspapers regularly as they contain a wide range of vocabulary and provide exposure to correctly spelled words in real-world contexts.

By implementing these suggestions, teachers can create a supportive and engaging environment for students to enhance their spelling skills.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that students make various errors in their compositions, and spelling errors have been identified as a significant contributor to their low English language proficiency. To address this issue, collaboration between teachers and students is crucial. Developing proficiency in spelling requires patience and perseverance. To tackle the problem of spelling errors, particularly at the degree and postgraduate levels, appropriate measures need to be implemented by educators and teachers. It is recommended that spelling be incorporated as a vital component of the English language curriculum, with regular weekly lessons dedicated to it. Course book authors should prioritize spelling instruction in their materials. Teachers should identify areas where students struggle with spelling and tailor their instruction accordingly. Analyzing the different types of spelling errors can help teachers determine the most effective strategies for spelling instruction. Students should also engage in regular practice to improve their spelling skills. Access to appropriate textbooks in libraries is essential for both students and teachers. Students should be encouraged to use English language resources while exercising restraint. Reading novels, short story books, English news papers can be beneficial in developing spelling abilities. Additionally, students should make use of dictionaries to look up the correct spellings of words. By executing these suggestions, the problem of spelling errors among undergraduate and postgraduate students can be effectively addressed and improved.

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