Investigating Spelling Errors and their Pedagogical Implications among the Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate Level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland.

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Abstract - In language learning, spelling accuracy is vital for effective learning and communication. Nonetheless, many research indicate that learners often face challenges while learning spelling. Spelling errors has become a major concern among the second language learners as it also indicates inadequate learning. Using mixed research method, the study is conducted for data collection and necessary information related to the study. This study intends to identify the prevalent spelling errors written committed by the Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland. The sample/population involved in the study were from the academic years 2019-2022, inclusive of both male and female. Research tools included: a total of 500 examination answer sheets comprising of both objective types specifically for grammar and composition and descriptive section for long answer type, a total of 30 vocabulary list for dictation and questionnaires which is composed of both open and closed ended type questions. The study examines and reveals various types of spelling errors such as errors in substitution (28.26%), omission (28.26%), insertion (39.13%) and transposition errors (4.34%) committed by the learners. One of the remarkable discoveries in the present study, is the influence of SMS lingo in spelling with (24.59%). The study discovers that some of the leading factors that lead to spelling errors are related to pronunciation. This study suggests some pedagogical implications concerning the issue of spelling errors.

Keywords - Insertion, Misspelling, Omission, Spelling error, Substitution, Transposition.

Introduction

In language learning, writing plays an important role in non-verbal communication. One may learn to speak faster than writing; as lapses may occur with bad hand writing, spelling errors, unethical way of writing, and many more. Having good writing skill enhances our creativity, critical thinking and presentation in written form. Language proficiency requires both speaking and writing skill. Basically, any language contains certain grammatical rules, alphabets or symbols which is a combination of consonants and vowels, vocabularies, punctuation marks, etc. To give life to the ideas, one needs to have a good knowledge on vocabulary or spelling. Generally, spelling is a combination of letters or alphabets to form words which is recognized by the society to represent a particular language. One may think that spelling system will have a particular system of pattern; which is not, in almost all the languages of the world. Spelling standardizing does possess certain exceptions such as the sound of a particular word may not correspond with the spelling. Two of the most important features in any language are sounds and symbols. Here, sound stands for idea/notion and symbols represents sounds. Symbols which are commonly known as alphabets in a language may or may not have any correspondence with the sounds in a language. Such is the case with English; as it has an inadequate system of sound and spelling, where a sound may or may not be adequately represented by the alphabets. Efforts have been made in the reformation of English spelling over the years by many language experts, writers, phoneticians and linguists. However, the language still continues to exhibit some discrepancies in the pattern of spelling and pronunciation. Some of the notable reasons are because;

- More than one sounds are represented by an alphabet.
- Different alphabets represent a particular sound.
- Letters with silent sound in some words.

Therefore, learners of English often tend to commit spelling errors in English. Spelling performs an important role in exhibiting one's knowledge on a language. As the initial stage of learning a language begins with spelling; it is essential for a learner to have good knowledge on the vocabulary of the second language since it adds quality to writing.

In second language learning, it so happens that most of the time, learners tend to instinctively prioritize using correct pattern of language structure or being able to convey the intended message over achieving correct spelling, especially in writing skill. Also, with the advent of digital world, learners have shifted it manual reading and writing to auto correct system, which in turn has provided both pros and cons in its own way. Since then, it has been observed that several researchers have shown a great deal of concern in the study of spelling.

Review of related literature

The notion of spelling has been redefined by various scholars in various ways. According to Puspandari as (cited in Altamimi, D and Rashid, R. A, 2019) spelling is a method of representing spoken language in written form consisting of a sequence of generally accepted pattern of alphabets to form words. Mpiti, T (2012) defines spelling not simply as a system of writing but the ability of a child's visual memory to formulate analogies with words; along with the combination of phonological, syntactic, semantic and morphological awareness. Perveen and Akram as (cited in Altamimi, D and Rashid, R. A, 2019) defines spelling as a writing technique in appropriate and well accepted structure; in accordance to the orthographical rule of the language, without which, will be assumed to be error in spelling. Spelling errors may cause problems in overall writing text; for instance, the use of '*wier' in place of 'wire', '*protekt' in place of 'protect', etc. this also effects the pronunciation. R.L.Trask defines that English spelling is a notorious combination of complex, eccentric and irregular as compared to any written language.

In the study of spelling errors, Cook (1999) identified the four most common types of error, popularly known as insertion, omission, substitution and transposition. As the names suggest insertion is when an entity is inserted in a word unnecessarily, omission is when an entity is deleted from the word, substitution is when an entity or letter is substituted by another letter, and transposition is when the position of the entities or letters are exchanged within the word. In support to this, Fitria, T.N (2020) also detects the four types of spelling errors; omission, substitution, insertion and transposition from the study conducted in students' writing composition. In this study, Omission error resulted as the dominant type of error. Alhaysony (2012) states that errors are caused due to L1 influence and limited exposure to second language.

Some of the most popular studies of spelling errors is conducted in Arabic context. Where English is taught as a foreign language. The most frequent reason behind Arab learners learning English making spelling errors is due to ineffective learning which is why they keep on repeating the same mistake time and again. Alasmari, et al., (2019) conducted a case study of spelling mistakes made by the two groups of Saudi English learners with different language proficiencies. A total of 90 students participated in the study. Which was then divided into 3 groups such as 30 Graduating Students (GS), 30 Foundation-year students (FS) and 30 Control group (CG). The test conducted for dictation comprised of lexicon supposed to have been acquired by the learners. Surprisingly the GS performed worse than the other two groups despite having more exposure to English. This was because of having the roots of inefficiency during the high school education. Alhaisoni, et al., (2015) according to the study of spelling errors committed by the Saudi beginners in English as Foreign Language (EFL); inconsistency of standardizing spelling causes spelling errors.

Sadly, before the proper installation of remedies for spelling error; a modern trend of spelling system related to technology has developed over the years at an alarming rate. With the launching of the first smartphones in the late 90s and iPhone in 2007; mobile has turn out to be a channel of news access in wide spectrum (http://www.twipemobile.com). The Economic Times (23rd April 2021), SMS traffic per day in India has reached nearing to a billion SMSes per day. Reuters (2022) mentions that news in text message format leads on top despite the growing popularity of video contents in social media. Notifying one of the obvious reasons that the 50% of the people find easier to consume news in text format. While less than 50% of the population find video content more effective in transferring news.

According to the Global System for Mobile (GSM), the characters limit is 160 including spaces in an SMS. Such characters are; Latin letter from A to Z, numbers 0 to 9 and few other special characters like apostrophes. This feature has enabled the users to adapt space, time and money saving strategies while typing. In addition to the effect of charges per SMS by the telecom companies. This has widely affected the modern generations to inculcate this habit of using SMS language or messaging format to use in formal written forms. This has added to the problems of spelling error.

Crystal (2001) the e language or language used in internet is in transition and nobody knows the actual standard e language format. Where many companies are still trying to figure out a possible standard form. There has been a variety of views regarding the use of SMS lingo by the learners. Some writers and researchers have considered that the use of SMS language is no harmful to the learners. Such as; Winzker et al., (2009) mentions that the impact of SMS speak on the written English is not of a great threat in standard spelling system in English. As the learners can adhere to the conventional writing system whenever required. Braimoh, J (2020) reveals that, though many students use texting language; it does not have an adverse effect on written work as they are able to resist using this language in examination. (Aziz et al., 2013) de mystified the popular believe that the students writing is hampered by texting or text message feature. Shafie, Latisha et al., (2010) a study on Malaysian students with age group of 18-22 years old concludes that the students know the occasion to use formal or informal type of language. Only those students with weak proficiency in English is affected by text message language.

While some have expressed damaging threat to the standard language. Geertsema et al., (2011) concerns about the negative influence of SMS language in standard English in the context of South African learners in Grade 8 and 9. The major negative influence is on incorrect shortening of sentence structure and incorrect use of punctuation marks such as inappropriate use of commas, full stops and exclamation marks. A study conducted by Nisargandha, A. A (2019) reveals that text message / SMS is a context-bound, where the users are supposed to be knowing each other and is in turn taking mode of chatting. However, the study also draws a deep concern about the continuous use of incorrect contracted form of English spellings which can lead to decline in the practice of standard English.

Learning a second language is of no easy task. This is even made harder by spelling errors besides other factors. Accumulating all the above discussion, the study aims to investigate on spelling errors.

Research objective

English is taught as a second language and is the official language of Nagaland. But there are very limited population who have attained proficiency in English as a second language. One of the core reasons behind this could be lack of importance given to spelling in second language teaching. Also, the researcher being a native of Nagaland has observed that over decades; teaching of spelling is limited to beginners in schools. Even researchers, teachers and trainers tend to neglect showing concern in educating the importance of spelling in language especially English, which has the history of borrowing words from many dialects and languages. Unless a learner is well versed with the history of English spelling system or memorizes the vocabulary spellings, there is no exception of learners not committing spelling error. Therefore, the study investigates on spelling errors with an aim to identify the categories of spelling errors, its causes and provide some remedial measures.

The study aims to identify, classify, analyze and examine the categories of spelling errors made by Ao (Naga) learners learning English as second language at the Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland. It seeks to identify the underlying causes contributing to these errors. Furthermore, the study plans to offer pedagogical insights for improving the problem of misspelling.

Research Methodology

A study of spelling errors was conducted on the Ao (Naga) learners learning English as second language at Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland. The data for the study have been elicited through the field work, using various methods like questionnaires gathered in both hardcopy and softcopy, dictation and evaluating answer scripts. A population of 482 learners participated in responding questionnaires and a total of 20 students volunteered to participate for personal interactive session in the study. Their age group ranges from

18-25 years, inclusive of both male and female. Mokokchung district has only four (4) secular colleges, all of them providing degree at only Undergraduate level, besides two (2) other colleges which provide professional courses where English as a subject is an optional paper. Considering the limitation, the samples were collected from the above four (4) secular colleges.

Administration for data collection

The present study developed a questionnaire comprising of both open and closed ended type of questions, where the respondents were given more than a week's time to respond the questionnaire. Another tool used for data collection was through evaluating 500 examination answer paper. The time allotted for examination is three (3) hours for seventy (70) marks, where it is obvious that each student will perform their best in order to score good marks while keeping in mind the strict examination's paper evaluation procedure. The study also fashioned a thirty (30) vocabulary list for dictation, which is a collection of very common English words supposed to be familiar with the learners. It was orally administered in a twenty-five (25) minutes session, where each of the respondents were given ample time to cross-check their spellings. During the test, each word was dictated a minimum of 3 times, supplementing with sentences whenever necessary by using the words in context to provide precision. Each of the respondents were required to write the vocabulary list in a blank paper in an uncontrolled environment so as to avoid any outcome of low self-esteem or personal fear of committing mistakes.

Likewise, the data was gathered by recognizing every error committed by the learners. It is noteworthy to have a clear distinction between 'errors' and 'mistakes.' Generally, errors occur when a learner lacks proper knowledge on the target language and has the possibility of not recognizing the error. Whereas, mistakes occur when a second language learner has learned the rules of the target language, still continues to make errors due to lapses, fatigue or other reasons. One can rectify his/her mistakes but not error. In that sense, errors become competence error and mistakes become performance error.

As mentioned earlier, it has been observed that the respondents/students did receive ample of time to rectify the errors they committed. Therefore, the spelling errors committed by the learners in the study are considered as errors and not mistakes.

Significance

This study has the potential to contribute in the field of applied linguistics specifically for the community of Nagas in Nagaland as a whole. Despite the fact that English is the official language of Nagaland, India. There is no or very little extensive study conducted in the area of English Language Teaching (ELT). Moreover, many linguistics studies have been conducted in Ao language but no ELT related research has been done on it. Therefore, the findings from the present study can navigate pedagogical practices by providing insights into the needs, challenges and remedies faced and required in teaching and learning methods. The study can help identify the types of errors faced by the learners and help facilitate an effective spelling instruction strategy. Hence, this can be further accounted as a building block for further expansion in the field of English language teaching (ELT), with special regard to the whole community of Nagaland.

Research tools

Ther research tools used for the present study are; a number of 500 examination answer sheets composing of both objective types exclusively for grammar and composition and descriptive section for long answers, a collection of 482 questionnaires in both softcopy and hardcopy, and a total of 30 vocabulary list (see appendix) which the learners use in their day-to-day conversation were used in the investigation of the study.

Statistical analysis

The data from the spelling errors committed by the learners is quantitatively analyzed by examining the frequency of the various spelling errors using descriptive statistical analysis. It is then, illustrated by using statistical representation like tables and charts.

To analyze the data statistically, a total of all the errors were identified and each of the errors were carefully categorized based on its phenomenon. Then, the formula of descriptive statistical analysis is used to find the averages for each of the types of spelling errors. The formula: $P = F/N \times 100\%$

Here, P: Percentage / average value.

F: Frequency of spelling errors.

N: Total number of spelling errors.

Findings and Discussion

Based on the study, the results are identified, classified, analyzed and statistically represented as shown in Figures and tables below. Generally, spelling errors are categorised into four types. They are:

- ➢ Insertion – Insertion is the addition of an extra letter or letters in a word.
- ➢ Omission- Here, deletion of some letters in a word.
- ➢ Substitution-This is when a letter or some letters is/are replaced with another letter/letters.
- ➢ Transposition - Here, the position of the letters in a word are reversed from its actual position.

Likewise, spelling errors from the study are classified into Insertion, Omission, Substitution and Transposition. The data helps determine the most and least dominant type of spelling errors written by the learners. Among these four types of errors detected, it is found that the most frequent is Insertion errors with 39.13%, followed by Omission and Substitution errors with 28.26% each. The least being Transposition errors with 4.34%. This indicates that most Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate commit spelling error by inserting a linguistic entity or letter or alphabet.

Table 1: Types of spelling errors committed by the Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland.

Type of spelling error	Frequency	Percentage
Substitution	13	28.26%
Omission	13	28.26%
Insertion	18	39.13%
Transposition	2	4.34%

Types of spelling errors committed by Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland.

- Substitution
- Omission
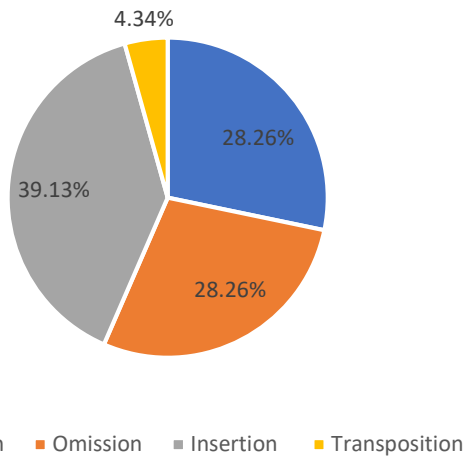- Insertion
- Transposition

Figure 1: Types of spelling errors committed by the Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland.

Table 2: Spelling errors committed by the Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate level in Mokokchung district, Nagaland.

Types of Errors	Correct words	Misspelled words
Insertion	Align	Alline OR aeline
	Worship	Worshipe
	Hawk	Haulk
	Weather	Weathere
	Epiphany	Abeyfany OR Ephyfany
	Athlete	Adelete OR Attlied
	Accent	Acciend
	Wrestle	Rascel
	Fugitive	Fewjitef
	Unanimous	Unanemious
	Taught	Thaught
	Explanation	Explaination
	Listening	Listeningn

	Pronunciation	Pronounciation OR pronounviation OR pronouncetion
	Technique	Tecchnique
	Writing	Writting
	Spellings	Speelings
	Evidence	Envidence
Omission	Wrist	Rist
	Gnash	Nash
	Gnarled	Narled
	Mortgage	Morcage
	Possess	Posses
	Difficult	Deficult
	Therefore	Therfore
	Interpret	Interpet
	Quite	Quit
	Writing	Wrting
	Nervous	Nevous
	Null	Nul
	Pronounce	Pronoun
Substitution	Pushed	Bushed
	Superstitious	Supersticious
	Beneficial	Benefitial
	Foe	Foo OR Fow
	Effort	Efford
	Privilege	Previlage
	Bicycle	Bycycle

	Stutter	Atutter
	Cope	Sope
	Difficulty	Diffivulty
	Accent	Ascent OR axcent
	To	Do
	Basis	Bases
Transposition	Understand	Undersatnd
	Grasp	Graps

Insertion errors

The analysis from the Insertion errors discloses that phonological reasons is one of the major causes. Words like; align, hawk, athlete, fugitive, unanimous, explanation, listening are erroneously written as *alline, *haulk, *adelete, *fewjitef, *unanemious, *explaination, *listeningn. Some of the possible reasons are due to lack of certainty in homophonous words such as; few in fugitive, explain in explanation. Then, words like; *alline, *ephyfany, *acciend, *adelete, *unanemious are misspelled due to insertion of graphemes such as; 'line' in *alline 'align', 'fany' in *ephyfany 'epiphany', 'i' is inserted in *acciend 'accent', 'd' is inserted in *adelete 'athlete', 'e' and 'i' are inserted in *unanemious 'unanimous. Next, error words such as; *worshipe, *weathere, *thaught, *listeningn, *haulk are caused because of false idea/rule hypothesized. Here, learners hypothesize the addition of random vowels and consonants mostly either in middle or final position of a word. The addition of those alphabets may not have any logical reason but this may be considered as the correct spelling by the learners.

Omission errors

In the category of Omission, it is observed that error words like; *rist, *nash, *narled, *morgage, *nevous, *therfore, are due to silent graphemes such as; 'w' in 'wrist', 'g' in 'gnash' and 'gnarled', 't' in 'mortgage', 'r' in 'nervous', 'e' in 'therefore'. Also, words like; *posses 'possess', *nul 'null', *deficult 'difficult' are due to dual phonemes occurring simultaneously in a word which sounds like a phoneme and not like two separate phonemes. Whereas, words like *interpet, *wrting, *pronoun are due to carelessness as we can certainly see that the alphabets 'r', 'i' and 'ce' are omitted from the words 'interpret', 'writing' and 'pronounce'; where it is impossible for these words to pronounce correctly by omitting the above phonemes.

Substitution errors

As shown in Table 2, the reason behind Substitution errors is related to pronunciation. As seen from the example, errors occur due to confusion between voiceless and voiced phonemes such as; [p] is substituted by [b] *bushed in 'pushed', [t] is substituted by [d] in *efford 'effort' and *do 'to.' In addition, words like; * supersticious, * benefitial, *bycycle, *foo or *fow, *bases, *previlage, *axcent, is due to wrong substitution of graphemes such as; 't' is substituted by 'c' in 'superstitious', 'c' is substituted by 't' in 'beneficial', 'i' is substituted by 'y' in 'bicycle', 'e' is substituted by 'o' and 'w' in 'foe', 'i' is replaced by 'e' in 'basis', 'i' and 'e' is substituted by 'e' and 'a' in 'privilege', 'c' is replaced by 'x' in 'accent.'

Transposition errors

With regard to the Transposition errors, it makes the least noticeable errors in the study. Several reasons behind this type of errors are; lack of correspondence between alphabet and phoneme in English. For example; the phoneme [p] is represented by the alphabets- 'f', 'ph' and 'gh'. Likewise, [k] is represented by alphabets- 'c', 'k', 'q', 'ck', 'que.' Next, we have alphabets representing multiple phonemes such as; the alphabet 'a' can represent the phonemes -[æ], [a:], [ɒ], [ə], [ɔ]. The alphabet 'c' can stand for -[k] and [s]. Beside this, another clear factor for such errors like; *understand and *graps is one's own carelessness. Nevertheless, it has been observed that pronunciation has an impact on transposition errors. Because, many learners tend to transposition certain consonants especially in relation with 's' in order to fit their convenient pronunciation. For instance; 'flask' is mispronounced as '*flaks', 'crisps' as '*crips', 'ask' as '*aks', and many more.

SMS lingo

One of the significant findings of this study is the influence of SMS lingo in writing which, in turn has brought confusion in the writing system among the students and teachers as well. With the advent of digital advancement, brings a revolution in all the aspects of life. One of which is the introduction of Short Message/messaging Service (SMS) or text chat. There are various applications and software both in offline and online mode particularly designed for virtual chatting. Basically, SMS lingo is a vocabulary featuring non-conventional system of spelling, special writing characters and emojis. Mostly, the users of SMS prefer using SMS lingo to minimize the space and time while typing. In other words, it's a non-conventional form of short hand writing system.

Some of the SMS lingo that the study discloses are given below in the table. The study also brings a comparison among the different types of spelling errors found from the data.

Table 3: SMS lingo in writing.

Vocabulary	SMS lingo
Because	cos, bcoz, becoz, cause
Even	evn
Of course	ofc
You are	ur
Your	ur
Through	thru
I don't know	Idk
I am	m
And	n

Kind of	kinda
Are	r
You	u

Table 4: Comparative analysis of the different types of errors committed by the learners.

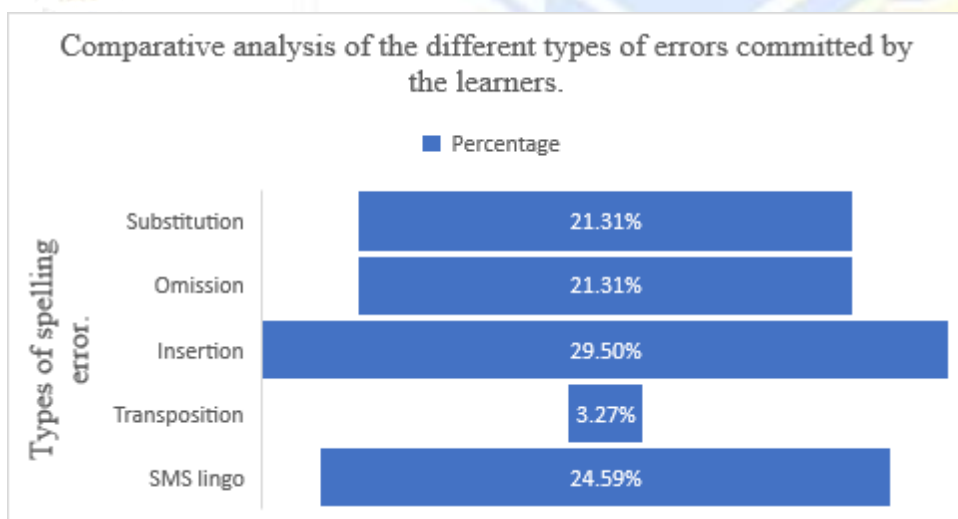| Type of spelling error	Frequency	Percentage
Substitution	13	21.31%
Omission	13	21.31%
Insertion	18	29.5%
Transposition	2	3.27%
SMS lingo	15	24.59%

Figure 2: Comparative analysis of the different types of errors committed by the learners.

Discussion: As it is evident from the above table 3, learners commit errors from the influence of SMS lingo. From table 4, we infer that the use of SMS lingo is a no less concern because in comparison to the other types of error; it stands to be in second rank with 24.59% according to the study.

Implications

In writing skill, spelling plays a vital role in producing precise text. Therefore, it is recommendable to adapt effective pedagogical measures by the researchers, teachers and policy framers so as to improve the teaching and learning pedagogy. It is plausible that the education system has framed certain rules such as the addition of glossaries by the end of each chapter or lesson in the handbooks. This is done, so that the learners can use this to check spellings and meanings of words. Furthermore, using of incorrect short forms for words are not accepted in education system. However, measures such as the practice of dictation should be a part of the curriculum even up to undergraduate level so as to emphasize the importance of spelling because every learner comes from different educational background where some may not have experienced proper schooling. Because dictation as a subject or part of syllabus in every school is implemented in different system. Some schools have till class 5 while some till class 2 or some schools may or may not incorporate dictation as a part of syllabus.

As for the learners, they should be thorough with the spellings in English at least for the common words, while the alien or new words can be rectified by using the help of teachers or from any learning platforms or materials. Complicated words with unique or bizarre sounds should be constantly practiced. A backup from the teachers' end with dictation, practice exercises can help improve the learners. Supplementing this, the learners need to constantly keep an update of the English spelling system and words. The researchers and scholars should investigate more on the issue of spelling errors and highlight the society about any concerns, solutions, suggestions and focus from the results of the study. In this way, framers of the education policy and syllabus can incorporate the suggestions or remedies and update the syllabus accordingly.

Limitations

The present study has been systematically conducted adhering to the research ethics. Certainly, it adds to the existing literature on spelling errors. However, the study has some limitations as the study is concentrated only on the Ao (Naga) speakers at Undergraduate level under Mokokchung district, Nagaland. Hence, the results from the study cannot be generalized. Thereby, more research expanding to a greater number of community/ tribesmen within Nagaland or other places as well needs to be conducted. The results of which can be utilized for upgrading better teaching and learning methodologies in writing skill.

Conclusion

As per the analysis of the study, the learners commit Insertion error as highest with 29.50%, then, SMS lingo error with 24.59%, followed by Omission and Substitution errors with 21.31%. the least being Transposition error with 3.27%. The result from the analysis also shows that there is a slight influence of mother tongue especially in pronunciation that contributes to spelling errors. As we can see from the data; *Abeyfany / *Ephyfany 'epiphany', use of 'do' in place of 'to', *speeling 'spelling' and *adelete / *attlied 'athlete'. Ao language does not have any voiced consonants so Ao speakers often tend to unintentionally use voiced and voiceless sounds in free variation in Ao language. This phenomenon is carried on by the natives and use it in English as well. Hence, causing errors in spelling.

At a closer look, the results also reveal that while evaluating examination answer papers it was very rare to find the short message language. However, messaging language was highly used in responding the questionnaires. This indicates that the students are aware of situation when to use what type of language. Therefore, they made sure that the informal way of writing is not practiced in formal writing. This indicates that the learners have the potential to segregate the two different phenomenon of writing spellings. However, this characteristic also triggers the students to become less active to use formal spelling in casual or unrestricted or informal environment. This also enables the students to not be updated of the correct spelling and check the spelling only when situation demands. In addition, the use of text language has brought a concern in language learning as it involuntarily becomes a reason for students' use of wrong words in wrong situation due to overlooking of semantic meanings of the word. As it is evident from the present data; the use of 'cause' in place of 'because' and the use of 'ur' for 'you are' and 'your'. Additional reason why SMS lingo is a problem is because it doesn't have a proper structure so anybody can use any letters to represent words and slangs.

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APPENDIX

Vocabulary (for Dictation)

Privilege	Conscience	Bicycle	Rendezvous	Butcher	Record
Record	Stainless	Edit	Athlete	Hawk	Mortgage
Epiphany	Fugitive	Align	Gnash	Gnarled	Wriggle
Wrestle	Unanimous	Foe	Wrack	Wrist	Accident
Accept	Effort	Possession	Dengue	Infrastructure	Accent