



**TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI
PUJILÍ CAMPUS**

**DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY
ENGLISH MAJOR**

RESEARCH PROJECT

**"SPELLING ERRORS IN FIRST-CYCLE UTC ENGLISH
DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' WRITING"**

Research report before obtaining the bachelor degree in National and Foreign
Language Pedagogy, English Major

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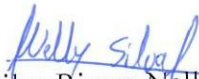
MARCH- 2025

DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

We, Silva Rivera Nelly Ruby, with ID number 0202679577, and Vilaña Pilaquina Mauricio Gabriel, with ID number 1752330462, declare ourselves as the authors of the following RESEARCH PROJECT: "**SPELLING ERRORS IN FIRST-CYCLE UTC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' WRITING**", MsC. Marcia Janeth Chiluisa Chiluisa, serves as the Tutor of this work. I expressly release the Technical University of Cotopaxi and its legal representatives from any potential °claims or legal actions.

Furthermore, I certify that the ideas, concepts, procedures, and results presented in this research work are solely my responsibility.

Pujilí, February 24, 2025


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ENDORSEMENT FROM THE PROJECT TUTOR

As Tutor of the Research Project titled:

“SPELLING ERRORS IN FIRST-CYCLE UTC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' WRITING”, by Vilaña Pilaquinga Mauricio Gabriel and Silva Rivera Nelly Ruby, from the Department of National and Foreign Language Pedagogy English Major, I believe that the aforementioned Research Report deserves approval endorsement for meeting the technical standards, translation, and prescribed formats, as well as for incorporating the observations and recommendations proposed during the pre-defense.

Pujilí, February 24, 2025



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APPROVAL ENDORSEMENT FROM THE GRADUATION COMMITTEE

As a Readers' committee, we hereby approve this present Research Report in accordance with the provisions issued by the Technical University of Cotopaxi, and its Pujilí Campus. The applicants, Vilaña Pilaquina Mauricio Gabriel and Silva Rivera Nelly Ruby with the title of Research Project "**SPELLING ERRORS IN FIRST-CYCLE UTC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' WRITING**", have taken into consideration the recommendations issued in a timely manner and possess the sufficient merits to undergo the thesis defense.

Based on the aforementioned, authorization is granted to record the corresponding files on a CD, in accordance with institutional regulations.

Pujilí, February 24, 2025

For the record, they sign:



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GRATEFULNESS

With deep gratitude, we acknowledge God as our greatest source of strength and wisdom. We are especially thankful to MsC. Chuiluisa Marcia for her guidance, trust, and unwavering support. Our appreciation also goes to the Technical University of Cotopaxi and its professors for shaping our academic and professional paths. Lastly, we thank our families and friends for their constant encouragement and belief in our dreams, making this achievement possible.

Nelly & Mauricio

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God for giving me the strength and resilience to face this journey. To my parents, my greatest example of love and dedication, for their unconditional support and trust. To my sister, my life companion and best friend, for always being by my side. To my grandmother, whose love and wisdom continue to guide me from heaven. This achievement is also hers.

Nelly

DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this work to my family. To my parents, for their unconditional love, guidance and unwavering support, which have been my greatest strength. To my grandparents, for their wisdom, encouragement and for always reminding me of the importance of perseverance and family. And to the friends I have made in this part of my life, for their company, laughter and support, making this journey even more meaningful. This achievement is a reflection of everything you've taught me and the love you've given me. Thank you for always believing in me.

Mauricio

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF COTOPAXI
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY
ENGLISH MAJOR

**THEME: SPELLING ERRORS IN FIRST-CYCLE UTC ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
STUDENTS' WRITING**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the most common spelling errors in the writing of first-cycle English students at the Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC). The main objective is to identify the most common spelling errors in the writings. The methodology approach was quantitative with a descriptive design. To collect the information, a writing essay was applied to forty first-cycle students. The forty papers were analyzed in order to classify errors based on Cook's (1999) categories: omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition. The findings reveal that substitution errors are the most frequent, followed by omission errors. Insertion and transposition errors appear less often. A comparison between two groups, First B and First C, shows that First C consistently makes more errors across all categories. The most significant differences are in substitution and omission errors, where First C demonstrates greater difficulty in recognizing correct letter choices and maintaining accurate spelling. These findings indicate that students may rely heavily on phonetic-based writing, leading to incorrect spelling patterns. Additionally, omission errors suggest challenges in retaining complete word structures, particularly with longer or more complex words. The research also found that ESL students commonly make spelling errors due to native language influence, limited vocabulary, and phonetic-based writing tendencies. Without targeted instruction and corrective feedback, these errors can persist and hinder students' English proficiency. To improve writing, students need structured spelling lessons that emphasize phonetics, letter patterns, and error correction. Furthermore, teachers should implement interactive spelling activities and corrective strategies to help students internalize correct spelling patterns. In conclusion, the findings highlight the importance of analyzing students' writing to identify recurring spelling challenges. Understanding these errors provides valuable insights for educators to enhance teaching strategies, reinforce correct spelling patterns, and improve students' written communication skills in English.

Keywords: Second language, spelling errors, teaching, writing.

UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA DE COTOPAXI
FACULTAD DE PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y
EXTRANJEROS - INGLÉS

**TEMA: ERRORES DE ORTOGRAFÍA EN LOS ESCRITOS DE LOS ESTUDIANTES
DE LA CARRERA DE INGLÉS DEL PRIMER CICLO DE UTC**

Autores:

Silva Rivera Nelly Silva
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RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza los errores ortográficos más comunes en la escritura de los estudiantes de primer ciclo de inglés en la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi (UTC). Su objetivo es identificar los errores más frecuentes en los textos de los estudiantes de primer ciclo de la carrera de inglés. La metodología fue cuantitativa con un diseño descriptivo. Para recolectar la información se aplicó una tarea escrita a cuarenta estudiantes de primer ciclo. Se analizaron los cuarenta escritos para clasificar los errores según las categorías de Cook (1999): omisión, sustitución, inserción y transposición. Los hallazgos revelan que los errores de sustitución son los más frecuentes, seguidos por los de omisión, mientras que los de inserción y transposición son menos comunes. Una comparación entre los grupos Primero B y Primero C muestra que Primero C comete más errores en todas las categorías, especialmente en sustitución y omisión. Esto indica que los estudiantes dependen en gran medida de la escritura fonética, lo que genera patrones ortográficos incorrectos. Además, los errores de omisión reflejan dificultades para retener estructuras completas de palabras, sobre todo en términos largos o complejos. La investigación señala que los estudiantes de inglés como segunda lengua suelen cometer errores ortográficos debido a la influencia de su lengua materna, un vocabulario limitado y la tendencia a escribir según la pronunciación. Sin una instrucción adecuada y retroalimentación correctiva, estos errores pueden persistir y afectar su competencia en inglés. Para mejorar la escritura, es fundamental implementar lecciones estructuradas de ortografía enfocadas en fonética, patrones de letras y corrección de errores. Además, los docentes deben aplicar actividades interactivas y estrategias correctivas para reforzar la ortografía. En conclusión, este estudio subraya la importancia de analizar la escritura estudiantil para identificar desafíos ortográficos recurrentes y mejorar las estrategias pedagógicas que fortalezcan la comunicación escrita en inglés.

Palabras clave: Errores de ortografía, enseñanza, escritura, segunda lengua

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1. General Information

Theme: Spelling Errors in First-Cycle UTC English Department Students' Writing

Starting Date: April 2024

Ending Date: March 2025

Place of Research: Technical University of Cotopaxi

Sponsoring Faculty: Pujilí Campus

Sponsoring career: National and Foreign Language Pedagogy English

Macro project of the career: Academic discourse: A transdisciplinary study of education and linguistics in linguistic-communicative contexts for teaching the English language

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Knowledge area: Education

Research line: Education and Communication for Human and Social Development.

Research line Pujilí Campus: Education, linguistic, literature, interculturality, and society.

2. Problem Statement

English proficiency has become essential for professional and career development worldwide. Individuals with strong English skills have access to better job opportunities, higher-paying positions, and international professional experiences. As a result, many young people and adults pursue English as a new language to improve their future prospects. However, acquiring English proficiency remains a challenge for many students, particularly in countries where English education is limited (Yoga, 2021). In Ecuador, most educational institutions lack dedicated English laboratories, and reductions in English class hours imposed by the Ministry of Education further hinder language acquisition. Consequently, many students enter university with significant difficulties in mastering English, particularly in writing skills

Universities play a crucial role in addressing these linguistic challenges. Within the English major at the Technical University of Cotopaxi (UTC), students face persistent struggles in writing due to frequent spelling errors. Writing is a fundamental skill in language learning, yet spelling difficulties negatively affect both communicative effectiveness and academic performance. As Cook (1999) states, "spelling is a complex skill that poses significant challenges for second language learners, often affecting both their academic success and their ability to communicate effectively" (p. 47). These challenges highlight the need for a closer examination of the most common spelling errors among English learners at the university level.

First-cycle English students at UTC frequently make numerous spelling errors. These errors are evident in their written assignments and academic work, impacting their overall writing proficiency. Spelling errors do not only affect academic results but can also have an emotional impact, leading to frustration and, in some cases, a loss of motivation. The objective of this project is to identify and analyze the most frequent spelling errors in first-cycle students' writing. Based on previous research, this study will categorize errors into four main types: addition, omission, transposition, and substitution. A study by Barbosa & Torres (2024) at UTC confirmed that these error types are among the most prevalent in students' writing, while Wangmo, Sharma, and Tshering (2023) found that substitution errors are particularly common.

This research is relevant for multiple stakeholders, including students, faculty, and university administrators. Students, as the primary individuals affected, need awareness of their spelling difficulties to improve their writing proficiency. Faculty must consistently evaluate students' written work and understand the most frequent errors to support learning objectives effectively. University administrators are also concerned with students' academic performance, as it reflects the institution's commitment to quality education. Through this analysis, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into spelling challenges within the English major, reinforcing the importance of written accuracy in second-language learning.

3. Justification

This study emphasizes the importance of spelling errors and how they hinder the academic and communicative development of students that learn English as a new language. According to Wangmo et al. (2023), "poor spelling can be detrimental to the overall quality of writing, leading to miscommunication. Therefore, communication skills through writing should focus on understanding spelling proficiency because spelling plays a crucial role in students' writing" (p. 3). Without a proper proficiency in spelling, students may have difficulty transmitting their ideas clearly, which can affect not only their writing development, but also their confidence in using the language.

A rigorous analysis of this issue is necessary, as proficiency in written communication is essential for effective communication and academic success in learning English. Many students face persistent spelling problems, which result in frequent errors. This research aims to examine the most frequent spelling errors in students' writing, specifically analyzing four common types: omission, transposition, addition, and substitution, based on Cook's (1999) classification. The study will apply this framework to analyze spelling errors among first-cycle students at UTC, providing a detailed examination of their most common errors..

This research not only benefits students, but also strengthens UTC's National and Foreign Language Pedagogy major by addressing a crucial aspect of language learning: spelling accuracy. By analyzing common spelling errors in students' writing, this study provides valuable data that can help educators understand the specific challenges students face. Furthermore, recognizing spelling difficulties allows the university to refine its educational approach, strengthening the training provided to future educators.

This study is feasible due to the accessibility of UTC first-cycle students, who will participate by completing a writing assignment. The data collection process is straightforward and does not interfere with the regular academic schedule, as it only requires students to complete a single writing activity during class time. Since no additional materials or specialized equipment are needed, the research does not require a large financial investment. The support of the institution and the willingness of students to participate ensure that the study can be conducted efficiently within the time and resources available.

4. Objectives

General objective:

To identify the most common spelling errors in the writings produced for first-cycle students of the UTC English Major.

Specific objectives:

- To establish the theoretical foundations of spelling errors in the writing of students learning English as a foreign language.
- To analyze the spelling errors in the writings of first-cycle UTC English Major students using a selected data collection and analysis technique.
- To describe conclusions based on the analysis of spelling errors and provide recommendations for improving students' English writing.

5. Activities and task system in relation to the objectives proposed.

| Specific objective | Activities | Results of the activities | Evidences |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|
| To establish the theoretical foundations of spelling errors in the writing of students learning English as a foreign language | Bibliographic search. | Specific knowledge of the variables. | Theoretical framework |
| To analyze the spelling errors in the writings of first-cycle UTC English Major students using a selected data collection and analysis technique. | Analyze the students' writing spelling errors. | Analysis and discussion of results | Writing essays and tables. |
| To describe conclusions based on the analysis of spelling errors and provide recommendations for improving students' English writing. | Interpretation of findings and formulation of recommendations. | Conclusions of the most common spelling errors. | Conclusions and recommendations |

6. Scientific and technical foundation

6.1 Background

Many studies have analyzed spelling errors in EFL learners, identifying different types and their frequency in students' writing. Understanding these patterns is essential for improving writing accuracy and communication skills.

Spelling errors are a common challenge for English learners worldwide. Studies (Wangmo et al., 2023; Vajchakul, 2022; Fitria, 2020; Imtiaz, Hassan, & Akmal, 2023) identify omission and substitution as the most frequent errors, followed by insertion and transposition. Various methodologies, including descriptive, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches, have analyzed these errors. Research by Jayousi & Thaher (2011) in UAE and Imtiaz et al. (2023) in

Pakistan highlights substitution errors as a major issue, often caused by English orthographic irregularities, mother tongue interference, and poor reading habits.

Badilla and Núñez (2020) analyzed spelling errors in 56 EFL students at Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica using a quantitative approach, identifying lexical errors mainly at the semantic level. Anicama and Curi (2015) examined spelling errors in Peruvian sixth graders using a quantitative approach, finding contextual errors as the most frequent, with specific letters like “t,” “s,” and “v” showing higher errors rates. Their study also noted better spelling performance in private schools. These findings highlight persistent spelling difficulties in Latin America, emphasizing the need for focused error analysis and instructional strategies.

Andino Vargas (2022) analyzed spelling errors in Ecuadorian high school students, using a pre-experimental study with a quantitative approach to evaluate their writing before and after a standardized test. The results revealed frequent spelling errors affecting linguistic accuracy, with a marked improvement after specific interventions. Similarly, Barbosa and Torres (2024) examined spelling errors in sixth-grade students at "Isidro Ayora" School, using a qualitative approach identifying four main types: addition, omission, transposition, and substitution, with substitution being the most frequent. Their findings highlight the challenge of writing as pronounced, emphasizing the need for targeted spelling instruction in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms. On the other hand, the study conducted by Cando, German & Morán (2024), found that omission is the most common error among students, followed by substitution, which also occurs at a high rate. The author applied a mixed approach in 30 students of UTC.

In conclusion, spelling errors are a natural part of learning English as a foreign language, posing challenges for students worldwide. Therefore, educators and learners should recognize the influence of native language interference and the importance of targeted spelling instruction to improve writing accuracy.

6.2 Theoretical Framework

English as a second language

English is an important language with global significance in the modern world. It serves as the language of international communication, science, technology, business, the internet, education, entertainment, diplomacy, and travel (Abduganieva et al., 2023, p. 64). English is really important; it is the most widespread global language used for international communication. It's a lingua franca, which is used to help people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds meet and communicate in areas such as business, education, technology, and traveling.

Language acquisition is a whole, complicated process that involves more than the acquisition of grammar rules or a lot of new vocabulary. It involves developing the capacity to use a language effectively in a natural environment. Abduganieva et al. (2023) highlight the importance of English in personal and professional development, noting that:

Learning English provides many opportunities for personal and professional growth, and it plays a significant role in shaping culture and literature worldwide. As a result, it is crucial for individuals to have a good grasp of the English language to stay relevant and competitive in the modern world (p. 64).

What is an error in the use of language?

Errors are a natural part of learning, especially when learning a second language. Understanding the concept of an "error" is important because it helps us recognize and embrace errors as opportunities for growth. By grasping this concept, we will better appreciate constructive feedback when someone corrects a word or phrase to create meaningful improvements in a piece of our writing. Moiden & Liaw (2021) states that "error is a deviation from the use of language from the standard structure because the user has not mastered the grammar" (p. 962), and Permatasari & Yuliasri (2020), as cited in Mertosono & Erniwati (2023), reported that errors produced by learners are related to inappropriate lexical choice, ambiguity, wrong forms of verbs, and addition of unnecessary verbs. This indicates that the learners have problems with

vocabulary. Errors in the use of vocabulary and verbs highlight the importance of vocabulary in second language acquisition. These errors are often due to limited knowledge of context, collocations or grammar. Teaching focused on vocabulary, verb usage and contextual application can significantly reduce these errors.

Moiden & Liaw (2021) also highlights an important part about error, which is "error occurs when a proficient speaker comprehends the first language's grammar and uses the second language's grammar rules" (p. 962). Errors are often the result of unclear or inconsistent teaching. Unclear definitions, poor choice of examples or lack of practice can confuse learners and lead to avoidable errors. Errors thus reflect not only the level of the learner, but also the quality of the teaching process, which underlines the need for well-structured teaching.

What is a mistake in the use of language?

Mistakes may sound like they refer to the same thing, but that is not the case. It is also necessary to know how to differentiate between error and mistake. According to Corder (1991), as cited in Muliya, Rekha & Aminatun (2020) "A mistake is perceived as something normal, something that the educator may distinguish, treat, or disregard and it is based on their choice. A mistake is not an issue of information but it is an issue of its application" (p. 46). Mistakes, although they may seem minor, can cause long-term problems if ignored. In contrast to errors, which are a consequence of a lack of knowledge, mistakes are temporary lapses in performance, often due to stress or pressure. They do not indicate a poor understanding of the language and are not usually related to proficiency, so they are easier to overcome.

Mistakes are often due to learners pushing their limits in expressing complex ideas, highlighting their active participation and helping them to identify and address potential gaps in their knowledge. These mistakes indicate an interest in the language, which is crucial for long-term proficiency. Mistake is a deviation in language use because the user does not use the language correctly when speaking or writing according to the circumstances. This error is not due to the user not mastering the second language (Moiden & Liaw, 2021, p. 962).

Difference between error and mistake

An error occurs when the student does not know the rule and makes it repeatedly, while a mistake is an accidental slip that the student can correct if he notices that he has made a mistake in his writing. For example, if a student says "*He go to school every day*" because they do not know they should use *goes*, it is an error. However, if they usually use *goes* but write *go* by accident, it is a mistake.

White (2021) explains the difference between an error and a mistake as follows:

An error is when a student is unaware of what is generally considered accurate in the target language. However, a mistake is made when a student flouts what is considered accurate by native speakers either by accident, forgetfulness, or a lack of caring (p. 143).

Four English Skill

English skills are four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking fluently in English. English skills needed to improve in daily life since English has become a global language (Hanan, 2021, para. 3). These are all important skills interrelated with one another in English communication, which is becoming indispensable in the present world without borders. Reading and listening are receptive skills and give an insight into how far an individual can understand and process the information; while writing and speaking are productive skills that enable clear expression of ideas.

Hanan (2021) argues that fluency in English comes with regular practice in daily life. Building vocabulary is essential using a dictionary while reading or writing helps strengthen understanding. Listening skills improve through exposure to English media and native speakers, while confidence in speaking requires practice to overcome anxiety about grammar or pronunciation. Dedication and consistent effort are key to mastering English skills effectively. Developing fluency in English takes time and practice. Students should invest time in increasing their vocabulary by learning by doing with dictionaries whenever they encounter an unfamiliar word when reading or writing.

Similarly, listening skills are developed through exposure to English media and conversations with native speakers. The most difficult aspect for most students is speaking fluently, which requires regular practice to reduce anxiety about grammar and pronunciation. This points to the importance of sustained effort and practical exposure to achieve proficiency in English.

What is writing?

According to Jamoom (2021) "writing is a productive skill that requires students to produce messages and ideas through written texts" (p. 106). Writing is a skill that requires learners to be able to convey ideas in a clear and understandable way. Achieving this goal can be challenging, as it involves not only putting thoughts into words, but also having the appropriate knowledge to structure ideas logically and coherently. It also requires the development of linguistic skills, such as the appropriate use of vocabulary, which allow for fluency and clarity in the text. Therefore, writing effectively is not only a mechanical act, but a complex cognitive process that involves reflection, organization of thought and the ability to adapt the message according to the communicative purpose and the target audience.

Writing is a key language skill for English language learners to develop, as it serves as an essential means of communication through symbols that represent sounds, words, and ideas. This skill requires an understanding of various linguistic rules, such as capitalization, spelling, and punctuation, which play a crucial role in helping writers organize and express their thoughts clearly (Mertosono & Erniwati, 2023). Mastering these elements not only improves the clarity of written messages, but also enhances the production of coherent and well-structured texts.

Types of writing

As stated by Mertosono & Erniwati (2023), "Writing takes four types; descriptive, narrative, persuasive, and expository. At schools, these types of writing are often popular as types of texts, each type of which poses different styles, structures, and purposes" (p. 65). This highlights how schools or colleges emphasize various writing forms to develop diverse skills in students.

According to González (2014), as cited in Barbosa & Torres (2024), texts can be classified into four types. Narrative texts describe events and scenarios in broad strokes, while descriptive texts focus on detailed aspects of a situation. Expository texts aim to explain facts with evidence, and are commonly used in educational contexts. Finally, argumentative texts present reasons to support an opinion and influence the reader's perspective. All text types are important for the development of writing skills, as each one serves a specific function. However, descriptive text is the most appropriate, as it is an effective way of accurately reflecting the characteristics of something, allowing the reader to visualize it clearly.

Descriptive Text

In the view of Barbosa & Torres (2024), "descriptive texts focus on detailing a field or area through words. They represent the elements of a situation or place in a specific manner. These texts are generally used to inform how an event has occurred or what a person, place, or thing is like" (p. 9). Descriptive texts allow readers to visualize the topic and connect emotionally with it. This type of writing is especially effective in narratives or descriptions, where the goal is to capture the readers' interest and provide them with a clearer understanding of the content.

Writing difficulties

Writing is a skill with many facets that requires not only the composition of texts, as well as the ability to organize and transmit ideas efficiently. It involves relating information in a coherent and attractive way through narrative or descriptive forms, making it accessible and comprehensible to the reader.

In addition, writing often requires the transformation of information into new forms, such as expository texts that explain concepts or argumentative pieces that present and defend a point of view. According Hadley (1991), as cited in Alisha, Safitri, Santoso & Siliwangi (2019), "writing requires composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of

information in the form of narrative or description, or to transform information into new texts as in expository or argumentative writing" (p. 20).

Based on the view of Alisha et al., (2019):

Learners usually have some problems when they try to construct a sentence, a paragraph or a text. Some problems could be found in writing text, the students who rarely write in English always face some difficulties when their teacher asks them to write down their ideas, thoughts or experience (p. 21).

These problems often occur because writing requires knowledge not simply a good level of the language, but requires the capacity to organize and express ideas clearly. For many students, poor exposure to writing in English results in a lack of self-confidence and fluency, making it more difficult to express their thoughts in structured texts.

What is spelling?

Spelling is a fundamental aspect of learning English that plays a crucial role and positively influences other language skills such as listening, reading and writing (Nur Fitria, 2020). According to Liando and Tatipang (2023) spelling is an important aspect of learning English, as it is not only the ability to form words correctly, but also plays a crucial role in the development of other language skills. To improve it effectively, it is essential to use the right method. Similarly, good spelling not only improves accuracy in writing, but also enhances vocabulary acquisition, as well as progress in reading, writing and even speaking by improving comprehension and correct use of the language.

Spelling is often considered a simple task that consists of arranging letters correctly, but its difficulty goes beyond that. As Adoniou (2022) explains, "A simple commonsense definition of spelling is getting the 'right' letters in the 'right' order when you write a word. However, words are not simply strings of letters. Words are the combinations of letter patterns and

meaningful parts" (p. 4). This demonstrates that spelling involves pattern recognition that makes sense, not just memorization of letters.

Spelling Error

A spelling error is a error in writing a word that does not follow the correct spelling rules of a language. These errors can be due to several reasons, such as misplacing letters, omitting or adding extra letters, using incorrect letter sequences, or confusing similar sounds.

If a word does not match the word target words are partially or completely marked as misspelled. There is something wrong with words, wrong grapheme (single vowel, single consonant, vocal digraphs, consonant digraphs, phonogram, suffix or prefix) within a word is counted as an error. Every grapheme that are added, removed, and replaced by the other or upside down is counted as a spelling error (Wahyuningih, 2021, p. 12).

Types of Spelling errors

Elliot and Johnson (2008) stated that there are several types of spelling error as the following:

1. Sound- based (homophones, incorrect consonant, and e for y, vowel sound error, and morpheme error).
2. Rules based error (doubling/ singling, and text-speak)
3. Omission, commission and transposition (single or paired letters added, omitted or transposed).
4. Writing error (spacing, end of word missing).
5. Multiple errors.

The different types of spelling errors presented by this author gives a clearer idea about the difficulties and complexity of the writing process faced by students when writing and applying the different orthographic and phonetic rules.

Cook's Classification on Spelling errors

Cook (1999) identifies four distinct categories for classifying writing and spelling errors, providing a clear framework to understand the different ways errors can occur. This classification is essential for developing effective strategies to improve writing and spelling skills. From now on, omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition errors will be collectively referred to as OSIT.

Omission

As explained Wahyuningsih (2021) "Omission errors occur when students do not provide or delete required items or letters into a word" (p.27). In principle, any morpheme or word can be omitted, but some are more frequent than others. Examples include spelling errors such as "profesion" instead of "profession", or using a phrase such as "Guitar is red" instead of "The guitar is red".

Omission-based errors are made by students when deleting or leave out a letter or more from words as a result of ignorance of the actual word spelling. Students are not able to memorize word spelling as they do not practice writing and/ or they spell as they pronounce words (Al-Saudi, 2020, p. 22).

Substitution

Substitution errors refer to the substitution of letters, i.e. changing one letter for another independently of if it is a vowel or a consonant. That is to say to change a "u" for an "o" when you want to write the word "book" some people write "buuk". This also involves the pronunciation of English words. Some students tend to write as they hear and this is a factor in the substitution. Yuliah, Widiastuti, & Meida (2020), argues that "Substitution error occurs when a letter of a word is submitted by another letter, such as in dicided (decided), and in devided (divided)" (p. 66).

Insertion

Insertion errors refer specifically to adding more or different letters to those required by the structure of one or more words while writing a text. For example when writing the word "forbbidden" instead of "forbidden". Al-Oudat (2017) explains that:

This type of error mainly appeared because of the addition of extra letters in a word. These errors would be a result of the lack of knowledge as English is not a phonetic language. For instance, students tend to write words the way they say it, such as: 'whay' for 'why', 'earley' for 'early' and 'phictures' for 'pictures' so they ended up with words that are misspelled phonetically (p. 46).

Transposition

According to Kusnadi, D. (2018) explains that:

Transposition is reversing the position of the letter. In this error, we reverse the word with unconsciousness and ignorance. For example, bicycle. Sometimes, many people reverse the word „I“ with the word „y" . So, they write down the bicycle is bycicle. It is because they do not know about the right word and lack of vocabulary. (p.21)

Transposition errors refer to the disorder in which a word is written, i.e. the structure of the word does not follow its chronological order and the letters are placed in the wrong order, which leads to a failure of the word's structure.

Causes of spelling errors

Spelling errors are a common problem in learning a second language. These errors not only show the difficulty of mastering a new language system, but also the mental process that learners go through when assimilating and applying the rules of the language. They can appear for a variety of reasons, such as the influence of the mother tongue, overgeneralization of the rules of the language being learned, or even emotional and performance factors.

Muhassin et al. (2020) cite Richards (1980) who points out some factors that may contribute errors known as sources of spelling errors as follows.

1. Interference, an error caused by the transfer of L1 rules to L2 production;
2. Overgeneralization, an error due to the application of target language rules improperly;
3. Performance error, an unsystematic error owing to poor condition, such as nervousness, fatigue, confusion, and strong emotion;
4. Markers of transitional competence, an error resulted from developmental sequences in SLA;
5. Strategy of communication and assimilation, an error due to the production of the target language regardless of grammar;
6. Teacher-induced error, an error caused by ineffective pedagogical processes.

Mother tongue

When identifying spelling errors in students' writing, it is essential to analyze their origins, including factors such as mother tongue influence and lack of language practice. According to Al-Saudi and Jibrel (2020), many students struggle with spelling due to interference from their native language and insufficient practice in English writing skills. Their study emphasizes that regular writing practice can help students improve their spelling abilities.

Educational system

Another cause of spelling errors is the educational system in some countries, where insufficient emphasis is placed on properly teaching the English language. Imtiaz, Hassan, and Akmal (2023) argue that a major factor contributing to these errors is a weak education system that does not provide early English language training with qualified teachers, leading to difficulties in spelling and overall language proficiency.

Translation

Translation is one of the causes of spelling errors in students learning a new language. Many tend to think that if a word is spelled a certain way in their native language (L1), it will follow the same structure or grammar in the language they are learning (L2). In other words, "this error is the most common error caused by learners as they translate word by word from L1 to L2 or vice versa" (Pasaribu, 2021, p. 439). Consequently, this causes a transfer of spelling rules which is not always correct. In addition, some learners get confused by words that are spelled or pronounced similarly in both languages, learners usually tend to translate on their own and think that they also have the same meaning.

Spelling rules

A study by Vajchakul (2022) found that "Students' spelling errors were most frequently caused by pronunciation, followed by spelling rules; letter/sound correspondences; and syllable structure, respectively" (p. 76). The linguistic system that English presents at the time of learning is one of the main factors that lead students to make these spelling errors due to the difficulties they present when trying to understand the relationship and differences between pronunciation, sounds, grammatical and orthographic structures of the writing of this language. Contrary to other languages with more predictable and easier to understand spelling rules, English presents phonetic variations that can generate confusion in students, especially in those whose mother tongue, such as Spanish, has a more direct relationship between the sound of words and their spelling.

Understanding the different causes of spelling errors is key to creating educational strategies that help students overcome these obstacles and improve their ability to write in a second language such as English.

Strategies to teach Spelling

A spelling strategy allows the student to discover a way in which they can spell easily. They can choose a different strategy for each word. For this reason, it is necessary for students to know the different options (Andino Vargas, 2022, p. 7). In the following part we have detailed some strategies that help students improve their spelling.

Visual strategies

Visual strategies help learners focus on common word clusters and habitual spelling patterns, as some words often end the same way.

Andino Vargas (2022) emphasizes that students should focus on word combinations and common letter strings or endings, such as mysterious, famous, generous, courageous, and synonymous. Additionally, students can enhance their learning by using strategies like highlighting key words, adding pictures to associate meanings visually, and applying color codes to identify patterns more effectively.

Phonic strategies

Students can identify and write words by focusing on similar sounds. Andino Vargas (2022) provides important information about this strategy, which helps to better understand its usefulness. According to the author, "students can read words aloud, and say again it but under their breath. Students can say the words, breaking them up into chunks or syllables. Students can invent a rhythm or sing with some new words" (p. 9).

This strategy allows the learner to reinforce the association between the sounds and spelling patterns of words, helping them to memorize the correct spelling. By using more than vision to learn, students improve their ability to retain information and help them correct their most common spelling errors. Therefore, incorporating this type of strategy into teaching can be a way to reinforce spelling accuracy in students.

Kinaesthetic strategies

Andino Vargas (2022) states that "kinaesthetic strategies refer to what students need to feel and learn. For instance, they need to finger tracing words or writing words to spell" (p. 9). According to this author, there are several strategies that can help students improve their spelling, which are as follows:

- Students can practice their spelling while they are walking.
- Students can make cards with a sequence and shuffle them up and after that put them in order again.
- Students can use post-it notes of each spelling and search for patterns.
- Students can play a game where one of them writes the spelling of the word on the partner's back and the other must guess what word it has written.

The use of kinesthetic strategies in spelling teaching allows students to learn more actively and effectively. By combining movement with word practice, students can improve their memory and their recognition of spelling patterns.

Spelling Race

"Spelling game helps students with their spelling ability also to strengthen their memory on the new information but in fun and interactive way. The spelling race facilitates the recall of previous knowledge regarding vocabulary spelling" (Malik, Mahmud, Anshari, & Salija, 2020, p. 183). Nevertheless, it is also important to take into account how effective it can be depending on the context and learning style of the students. Some may benefit more from complementary strategies.

7. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions.

- Which are the most common spelling errors in writing for students of the first-cycle?

8. Methodology

Research Design

This research employs a quantitative approach with a descriptive design. According to Taherdoost (2022), "Quantitative methodology is the method of employing numerical values derived from observations to explain and describe the phenomena that the observations can reflect on them" (p. 54). Quantitative research helps researchers study things using numbers, making the results clear and easy to analyze. This methodology is used because it allows objective analysis and measurement of spelling errors, providing clear data to identify patterns.

Research Participants

The sample consists of 40 first-cycle students from the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major at UTC. Participants include 20 students from class "1B" and 20 from class "1C." The students have minimal prior experience in learning English, starting from high school. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, as described by Thomas (2022), "A purposive sampling technique can be used in a research endeavor to quickly and effectively narrow down the pool of potential participants. No prior knowledge or a predetermined number of informants are required for the non-random technique" (p. 2). This technique was chosen to ensure that participants met the criteria of first-cycle students with minimal prior English learning experience.

Data Collection Instruments

Data will be collected using a writing task assigned to students, in which they will be asked to write a short essay on a given topic. The student essays will be carefully analyzed to identify the most frequent spelling errors. Additionally, this instrument has been applied in prior studies, such as those by Wangmo et al. (2023), demonstrating its reliability in detecting common spelling errors. The collected data will be categorized based on error types. This approach ensures a systematic and objective evaluation of students' writing skills.

Data Collection Procedures

The writing task was administered to 64 first-cycle English students divided into two groups: "1B" (30 students) and "1C" (34 students). Initially, a minimum requirement of 150 words per essay was set; however, due to the limited number of students meeting this requirement, it was reduced to 100 words. Ultimately, 25 essays from "1B" and 22 from "1C" were selected for analysis after discarding essays that significantly deviated from the word limit. The writing topic was "My Last Vacation," with students required to use the simple past tense. They were given 30 minutes to complete the essay without the aid of dictionaries, cellphones, or other tools.

Data Analysis Technique

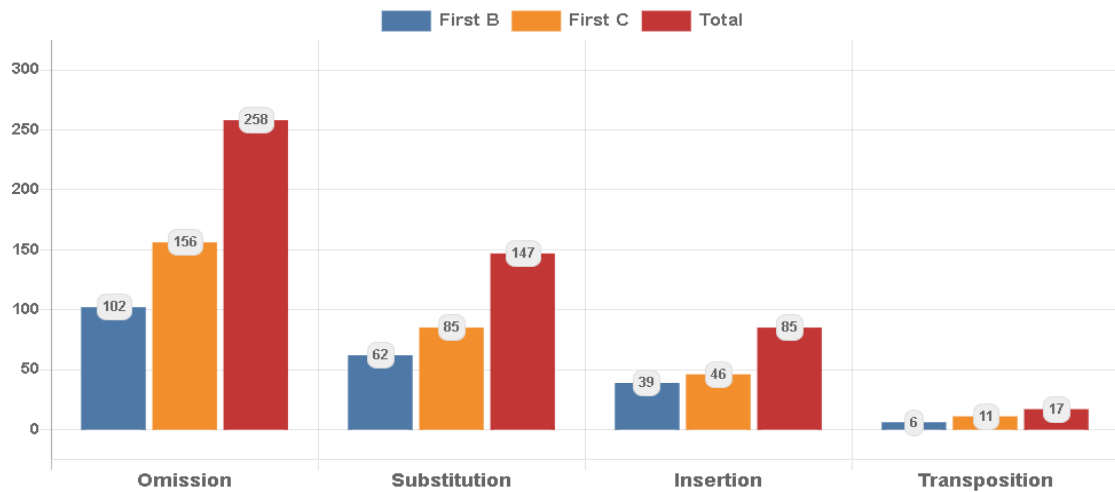
Quantitative data from the student essays will be analyzed to identify spelling errors, classified into four categories: omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition, based on Cook's (1999) classification. The frequency and percentage of each error type will be calculated.

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, will be used to analyze the data. Results will be presented using bar charts created with QuickChart to display the total number of OSIT (omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition) errors. Additionally, pie charts generated in QuickChart will illustrate the percentage distribution of these errors. Tables created in Microsoft Word will show examples of identified spelling errors.

All data will be managed securely to ensure confidentiality and integrity throughout and after the study. The students' information will remain strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside the research.

9. Analysis and Discussion of Results

Fig. 1. Frequency of spelling errors made by students



Source: Writing essays
Elaborated By: Researchers

Cook (1999) classifies spelling errors into four main categories: substitution, omission, insertion, and transposition. This classification serves as the foundation for analyzing the spelling errors in "First B" and "First C." A total of 507 errors were recorded, with First C consistently making more errors across all categories. A detailed examination of each error type reveals significant differences in spelling accuracy between the two groups.

Substitution Errors

Substitution errors were the most frequent, with a total of 258 occurrences. First B recorded 102 errors, while First C had 156, reflecting a notable difference of 54 errors. Substitution errors occur when students replace one letter with another, often due to confusion between phonetically similar graphemes or letters with similar visual structures. This type of error significantly affects word accuracy; as incorrect substitutions can alter the meaning of words or create non-existent words in English.

The substantial difference between the two groups suggests that First C faces greater difficulty in distinguishing correct letter choices, which may indicate a weaker grasp of spelling conventions. The high frequency of substitution errors also shows that students may have difficulties with phoneme-grapheme correspondence, leading them to exchange letters by error.

In addition, the data confirm that substitution errors are the most difficult for both groups, appearing more frequently than any other type of error.

Omission Errors

Omission errors were the second most common, with a total of 147 cases recorded. First B made 62 errors, whereas First C recorded 85, marking a difference of 23 errors. These errors occur when students leave out necessary letters in words, which can disrupt word structure and affect readability.

A closer look at omission errors indicates that students may struggle with maintaining the correct sequence of letters, particularly in longer or more complex words. The higher number of omission errors in First C suggests that these students face greater difficulties in recalling complete spellings or paying attention to details when writing. Omission errors can make words incomplete, which in turn affects sentence clarity and comprehension. The consistent pattern of more errors in First C highlights a gap in spelling accuracy between the two groups.

Insertion errors

Insertion errors accounted for 85 cases, with First B registering 39 and First C 46, a smaller difference of 7 errors. This type of error occurs when students add unnecessary letters to words, potentially due to overgeneralization of spelling rules or confusion about letter placement.

While the gap between the two groups is smaller in this category, First C still produced more errors than First B. This indicates that First C students may struggle with identifying the correct length and structure of words. Insertion errors often make words appear unnatural and harder to read, which can hinder overall writing fluency. The relatively lower frequency of insertion errors compared to substitution and omission suggests that students are more aware of excessive letter use but still make occasional errors.

Transposition errors

Transposition errors were the least frequent, with a total of 17 recorded cases. First B made 6 errors, while First C recorded 11, nearly double. This type of error involves reversing the order of adjacent letters, leading to spelling inconsistencies that affect word recognition.

Although transposition errors occurred less frequently than other errors, they still highlight challenges in maintaining letter order. First C, once again, demonstrated a higher frequency of errors, suggesting that these students have greater difficulty in keeping letter sequences intact. This can negatively impact spelling development, as correct letter placement is essential for proper word formation.

When comparing the total number of errors in both groups, it is evident that First C struggles significantly more with spelling accuracy. First C made more errors in all four categories, with substitution and omission errors being the most prevalent. The total distribution of errors shows that:

- **Substitution errors:** 258 (First B: 102, First C: 156)
- **Omission errors:** 147 (First B: 62, First C: 85)
- **Insertion errors:** 85 (First B: 39, First C: 46)
- **Transposition errors:** 17 (First B: 6, First C: 11)

These numbers confirm that substitution is the most common type of spelling error among students, followed by omission, insertion, and finally transposition. The consistently higher number of errors in First C suggests that this course faces greater challenges in spelling, possibly due to a weaker understanding of word structure and letter placement.

In summary, the results reveal clear differences in spelling performance between First B and First C. First C students make significantly more errors in all four categories, highlighting the need for further analysis of the factors influencing these ones. The prevalence of substitution and omission errors suggests that students may need more support in recognizing correct letter patterns and maintaining word integrity. The data strongly indicates that spelling accuracy varies between the two groups, with First C (se A 6) displaying a higher frequency of errors in every category.

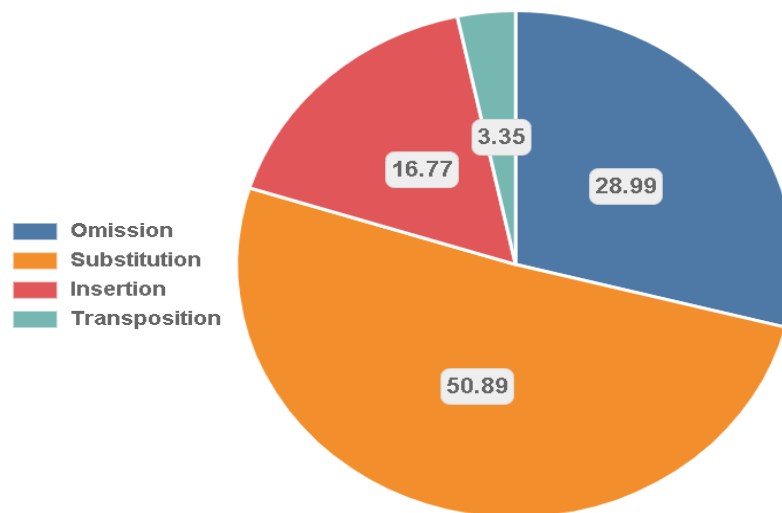
Cook (1999) classifies spelling errors into four main categories: substitution, omission, insertion, and transposition. These categories provide a structured way to analyze the spelling performance of "First B" and "First C." A total of 507 errors were recorded, with First C consistently making more errors across all categories. The distribution of errors is as follows:

Table 1. Frequency of Errors based on OSIT/English First-Cycle Students – UTC.

| Type of Errors | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|------------|-------------|
| Omission | 147 | 28.99% |
| Substitution | 258 | 50.89% |
| Insertion | 85 | 16.77% |
| Transposition | 17 | 3.35% |
| Total | 507 | 100% |

Source: Writing essays
Elaborated By: Researchers

Fig. 2. Errors in percentage



Source: Writing essays
Elaborated By: Researchers

Analysis of Errors in Percentage

A detailed analysis of each error type reveals significant differences in spelling accuracy between the two groups.

Substitution Errors

Substitution errors were the most frequent, accounting for 50.89% of all spelling errors (258 cases). First B recorded 102 errors, while First C had 156, marking a significant difference of 54 errors. Substitution errors occur when students replace one letter with another, often confusing similar-looking or similar-sounding letters.

Substitution errors had the highest occurrence in both groups, indicating that students frequently struggle with recognizing correct letter choices. The fact that First C made more than half of all substitution errors highlights a consistent difficulty in maintaining accurate spelling. This error type has the greatest impact on writing clarity, as incorrect letter substitutions can alter word meaning or produce non-existent words.

Omission Errors

Omission errors ranked as the second most common, comprising 28.99% of all errors (147 cases). First B made 62 errors, whereas First C recorded 85, showing a difference of 23 errors. These errors occur when students leave out necessary letters in words, which can distort word structure and readability.

Omission errors affect word integrity, making words incomplete and sometimes unrecognizable. The higher number of omission errors in First C suggests that these students face greater difficulties in retaining all required letters in a word. This error type significantly impacts writing fluency, as missing letters can disrupt comprehension.

Insertion Errors

Insertion errors accounted for 16.77% of the total errors (85 cases), with First B registering 39 errors and First C 46. These errors occur when students add extra letters to words, possibly due to overgeneralization of spelling rules or a lack of familiarity with word structures.

Although insertion errors were not as frequent as substitution or omission, their presence still indicates spelling challenges. The smaller difference between First B and First C in this category suggests that both groups struggle with unnecessary letter additions at a similar rate.

Transposition Errors

Transposition errors were the least common, representing only 3.35% of all errors (17 cases). First B made 6 errors, while First C recorded 11, nearly double. These errors involve reversing the order of adjacent letters, which affects spelling accuracy and word recognition.

Although transposition errors had the lowest occurrence, they still contribute to overall spelling difficulties. The difference between the two groups remains consistent with the overall trend, with First C making more errors.

When analyzing the total number of errors across both groups, it is clear that substitution and omission errors are the most prevalent, accounting for 79.88% of all spelling errors. The lower frequency of insertion and transposition errors suggests that students are somewhat more aware of letter additions and order, though challenges still exist.

A comparison of errors between the two groups shows that First C made more errors in every category:

Table 2. Frequency of errors per course

| Type of error | First B | First C | Difference |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Omission | 102 | 156 | +54 |
| Substitution | 62 | 85 | +23 |
| Insertion | 39 | 46 | +7 |
| Transposition | 6 | 11 | +5 |
| Total Errors | 209 | 298 | +89 |

Source: Writing essays
Elaborated By: Researchers

Overall, First C made 89 more errors than First B, confirming that this group struggles more with spelling accuracy. The most noticeable differences were found in substitution and omission errors, with First C making significantly more errors than First B.

In conclusion, the results indicate that First C has a higher tendency to make spelling errors across all categories, with substitution being the most problematic. The clear differences in spelling accuracy between the two groups suggest that First C struggles more with recognizing correct spelling patterns and letter sequences. The data highlights the importance of understanding spelling error patterns to assess students' writing accuracy effectively.

7.1 Errors of Omission

First-cycle students, mostly beginning writers, frequently made omission errors by leaving out vowels or silent letters in words (See annex 1). This occurred because they relied heavily on how English words sounded when pronounced, which influenced their spelling. Their tendency to omit certain letters demonstrated a stronger dependence on phonetics rather than conventional spelling rules.

Table 3. Examples of Omission errors

| Spelling Errors | Correct spelling |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chiken | Ch <u>ic</u> ken |
| Beatiful | Bea <u>u</u> tiful |
| I decided swim. | I decided <u>to</u> swim. |
| Brefast | Brea <u>k</u> fast |
| Delicius | Delic <u>i</u> ous |

Source: Writing essays

Elaborated By: Researchers

7.2 Errors of Substitution errors

First-semester college students frequently made substitution errors (See Annex 2), especially in the use of irregular verbs and past forms. They often substituted correct verb conjugations for incorrect ones, showing difficulty in distinguishing between regular and irregular patterns. In addition, there were problems with sentence structure, such as incorrect use of prepositions and inconsistent application of grammatical rules. These errors highlight the difficulties faced by students in applying standard grammatical conventions when writing in English.

Table 4. Examples of substitution errors

| Spelling Errors | Correct spelling |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| I didn't danced on the beach. | I didn't dance on the beach. |
| The vacation is in Baños. | The vacation was in Baños. |
| The family eated breakfast. | The family ate breakfast. |
| We studyied in a hotel. | We studied in a hotel. |
| My family was to Quevedo. | My family went to Quevedo. |

Source: Writing essays
Elaborated By: Researchers

7.3 Errors of Insertion

First-semester college students often made insertion errors (See annex 3), adding unnecessary words, letters, or phrases to their sentences. These errors included redundant prepositions, incorrect use of the article, and additional words that disrupted the flow of the sentence. Such errors suggest that students had difficulty identifying when certain elements were grammatically unnecessary, so they often overcompensated in their writing.

Table 5. Examples of Insertion errors

| Spelling Errors | Correct spelling |
|-------------------------------|--|
| We visited differents places. | We visited <u>different</u> places. |
| I went to at the beach. | I went <u>to the</u> beach. |
| We had a lunch. | We had <u>lunch</u> . |
| I went go by my father's car. | I <u>went</u> by my father's car. |
| In the nignht. | In the <u>night</u> . |

Source: Writing essays

Elaborated By: Researchers

7.3 Errors of Transposition

First-semester university students frequently made transposition errors (See annex 3), where the order of words or letters in a sentence was incorrect. These errors often disrupted sentence structure, making their writing less clear or awkward. This suggests that students struggled with proper word order in English, likely influenced by direct translations or unfamiliarity with standard sentence patterns.

Table 6. Examples of Transposition errors

| Spelling Errors | Correct spelling |
|---|--|
| I was reading one history horror. | I was reading one <u>horror history</u> . |
| The was weather cool. | The <u>weather was</u> cool. |
| I my ate favorite dish. | I <u>ate my</u> favorite dish. |
| They ate lunch in a restaurant beautiful. | They ate lunch in a <u>beautiful restaurant</u> . |
| I boughth the clothes in Baños city. | I <u>bought</u> the clothes in Baños city. |

Source: Writing essays

Elaborated By: Researchers

According to the study conducted by Cando et al. (2024), omission is the most frequently occurring error among students, followed closely by substitution, which also appears at a high percentage. These findings highlight the prevalence of both types of errors in students' writing. However, in our data, substitution errors are the most common, followed by omission errors. The difference between the occurrence of these two errors in our study is similar to the patterns identified in Cando's research, suggesting that while both omission and substitution are

significant issues in students' writing, their frequency may vary depending on the specific context and sample analyzed.

10. Conclusions

For the development of this research project, there was a wide availability of bibliographic resources related to the topic, including previous research, academic articles, theses, and books. These sources provided theoretical support for the study and a solid frame of reference for analyzing spelling errors in English writing.

On the other hand, this research concluded that the most frequent spelling error among first-cycle students of the English Mayor of the Technical University of Cotopaxi is substitution. The course that made this type of error most frequently were the students of First C compared to first B. Substitution errors were identified as the most common due to factors such as the incorrect use of appropriate verb tenses or the use of incorrect prepositions, these being some of the most common errors found in the writings.

In conclusion, substitution errors emerged as the most frequent spelling errors among first-cycle students. Their persistent occurrence highlights a significant challenge in students' writing, reinforcing the need for further attention to this aspect of spelling accuracy.

11. Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that learners pay special attention to spelling correction, especially substitution errors, as they are the most common. In fact, regular exposure to correct spelling in various contexts can help them improve their written English. In addition, teachers are recommended to spend more time checking the spelling accuracy of students' writing and to constantly reinforce correct spelling patterns.

More studies on this topic are strongly recommended, as research on its importance is limited. Spelling errors, especially errors of omission, substitution, insertion, and transposition, play a

crucial role in learners' written proficiency and overall linguistic development. Expanding research in this area would provide a better understanding of the most frequent errors and their impact on English language learning. Further analysis of these errors could bring valuable ideas to academia and support future studies on spelling accuracy and language acquisition.

It recommended a special emphasis on spelling in English writing to help learners reduce errors. Addressing this aspect in the learning process can help improve students' written accuracy and overall language proficiency.

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