

Phonological basis of Misspellings In the Written English of Kimeru Speaking Pupils In Public Primary Schools In Meru

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the misspellings made by learners whose first language was Kimeru. The study was carried out to investigate whether the phonology and orthography of Kimeru as a learners' first language affected their spelling of English words. Data was collected from creative compositions and dictation of words written by primary school learners whose first language was Kimeru. Using Error Analysis as the theoretical framework, all the misspelt words were identified and classified into ten categories according to the nature of the spelling errors. The categories were as follows: errors due to silent graphemes, errors due to pre-nasalization of graphemes, errors due to homophones, errors due to vowels length, errors due to epenthesis, errors due to absence of the sound in Kimeru, errors due to metathesis, errors due to double consonant graphemes, errors due to the discrepancy between the English sound system and the spelling system and errors due to retention of letter „e“ before a suffix. These errors were then described in terms of the relationship between the misspelt word and the phonology of the first language. After description, an explanation was provided on the possible causes of misspellings by examining the nature of the misspelt words. Remedial measures that could be instituted to eradicate the spelling errors were also provided.

Key Words: Phonological basis, Misspellings, Written English, Pupils

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I. INTRODUCTION

In contractive linguistics, errors are thought to be caused by unconscious transfer of mother tongue structures to the system of the target language. Corder (1967) says; like any other human learning, language learning is closely associated with the making of errors. In traditional second language situation, relying on behaviorist learning theory, errors are regarded as the linguistic phenomena deviant from the language rules and standard usage, reflecting learner's deficiencies in language competence and acquisition device. In accordance with this thought, many second language (SL) teachers simply correct individual errors as they occur, with little attempt to see patterns of errors or to seek causes in anything other than learner ignorance. Instead of seeing errors as problems or evils to be eradicated, most second language (SL) teachers tend to consider errors as evidence of the learners stages in their target language (TL) development, which can provide information that can be used to sequence items for teaching or device remedial lessons (Ellis 1985).

Therefore, the researcher focused on the misspelt English words that could be attributed to the influence of phonology of Kimeru. That is where the speech habits in the first language (L1), which in this case is Kimeru, are transferred to the learning of the second language (L2), which in this case is English. Primary school pupils in Meru are second language learners of English language and they are prone to making errors when they are trying to acquire communicative competence. A number of errors are seen in their written compositions. However, the exact nature of the errors that they make has not been investigated, but with the experience the researcher has in teaching English, this, to a large extent, is contributed by the misspelling of English words which can be as a result of first language influence among other causes. Examples of commonly misspelt words by Kimeru public primary school pupils include:

a) *Frend in stead of friend b) *Bit instead of beat

Therefore, this study investigates the spelling errors in English words which can be accounted for in terms of first language influence and whether such influence (if established) may be attributed to the influence of the sound system of Kimeru as their first language and the relationship between this sound system and the Kimeru writing system or orthography. In other words, it is suspected that spelling errors seen in the learners' written English could be as a result of the transfer of the graphemes used to represent Kimeru

sounds to English. With this knowledge, the learner is made aware of the errors made and how they may be rectified.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted the Error Analysis (EA) paradigm as its theoretical framework. The movement can be characterized as an attempt to account for learner errors that could not be explained or predicted by contrastive analysis (CA). It is therefore a systematic study and analysis of errors made by the learners of SL in an attempt to account for their origin, their regularity, their predictability and variability. It views both first and second language acquisition as a process involving the active participation that must occur when learning the first or second language before language rules are completely analyzed. Ellis (1994:48) states that „EA provided a methodology for investigating a learner’s language. For this reason, EA constituted an appropriate starting point for the study of learner language and L2 acquisition.” According to Ellis (1994:48) quoting Corder (1974), the EA research is useful as it provides the following guidelines to be used in the study of errors.

1. Collection of a sample of learner language.
2. Identification of errors.
3. Description of errors.
4. Explanation of errors.
5. Evaluation of Errors.

Each of these guidelines is discussed below. The first guideline is the collection of a sample of learner’s language. In Error Analysis (EA), the starting point is deciding what samples of learner’s language to use for the analysis and how to collect these samples.

The second guideline is the identification of errors. Once a corpus of a learner’s language has been collected, the errors in the corpus have to be identified. It is necessary to decide, therefore, what constitutes an „error” and to establish a procedure for recognizing one, Ellis (1994:50). Ellis (1994) defines an error as „a deviation from the norms of the target language”. The third guideline is the description of errors. According to Ellis (1994:54), the description of learner errors involves a comparison of the learner’s idiosyncratic utterances with a reconstruction of those utterances in the target language. He also argues that it requires an attention to the surface properties of the learner’s utterances (i.e. it does not attempt, at this stage, to identify the sources of errors).

The fourth guideline is the explanation of errors. According to Ellis (1994:57), explanation is concerned with establishing the source of the error, i.e. accounting for why it was made. In order to arrive at effective remedial measures the analyst must understand fully the mechanism that triggers each type of error. The source of an error could be interlanguage or intra-language.

The fifth guideline is the evaluation of errors. Ellis (1994:63) argues that whereas all the preceding stages of EA have involved an examination of errors from the point of view of the learners who make them, error evaluation involves a consideration of the effect that errors have on the person(s) addressed. He further argues that the effect can be gauged in terms of the addressee’s affective response to the errors. The design of error evaluation studies involves decisions on who the addressee (i.e. the judges) will be, what errors they will be asked to judge and how they will be asked to judge them (Ellis 1994:63).

Two of the causes of errors are discussed in this paragraph. The first cause is the Negative Transfer. This refers to where a learner transfers his L1 habits to the target language but these habits do not conform to the target language and this results to an error. If the learner of a foreign language makes some mistakes in the target language by the effect of his mother tongue, that is called inter language error. The second cause is the Target Language. In this case, learners may make mistakes in the target language, since they do not know the target language very well; they have difficulties in using it. For example, they may say „mens” instead of saying „Men” as the plural form of „man.” In that way, the learner over generalizes the use of the plural suffix.

III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher collected written composition scripts from primary school learners whose first language was Kimeru. These were pupils in standard seven and eight, and were all native speakers of Kimeru. Five public schools in Igembe central district were selected. The schools were Ncunguru, Thamare, Kithare, Kaumone and Thuuru primary schools. The participants were given a test in form of a normal creative exercise. The learners were asked to write a composition each on the topics provided by their teacher. They were asked to write the compositions in forty minutes as this was the standard duration used by Kenyan National Examination Council (KNEC). In addition to this, the researcher generated a list of commonly misspelt words by Kimeru learners and dictated to them.

The five schools were selected as all of them were in Igembe central district and shared the same dialect with the researcher. The schools were selected randomly. The number of learners used in each of these schools was as follows: Ncunguru 55, Thamare 35, Kithare 32, Thuuru 27 and Kaumone 25. The total number of the learners examined was one hundred and seventy four (174). Therefore out of one hundred and seventy four scripts, seventy of them were selected to be used in the study.

After getting both the compositions and the other written scripts on dictation, all misspelt words were identified by underlining them. Classification of selected scripts was then done to analyze errors according to their nature and possibility of being attributed to the influence of first language phonology. Therefore the scripts were classified into ten broad categories. These were: errors due to silent graphemes, errors due to prenasalized graphemes, errors due to homophones, errors due to vowel length, errors due to epenthesis, errors due to absence of sounds in Kimeru, errors due to metathesis, errors due to double consonants graphemes, errors due to discrepancy between the English writing system and the spelling system, and lastly, errors due to retention of letter „e“ before a suffix. In each of these categories, descriptions and explanations of errors were then given.

Misspellings In the Written English of Pupils In Public Primary Schools In Meru

In this chapter, the misspelt words from the data collected are identified and classified according to the spelling anomaly in specific segments in the words. The errors are then described in terms of the relationship between the misspelt words and the phonology of the first language. Some of these erroneous words were found to be correct in terms of spelling but did not reflect what the learner meant or wanted to say and in that context, they were treated as misspelt words in accordance with Corder (1973), who states that errors are either „overt“ or „covert“. He observes that overt spelling errors are easy to identify as they portray a direct deviation from the correct form such as when a learner writes; *Kichen instead of „Kitchen“ On the other hand, a covert error will occur in a word that is correctly spelt but the meaning intended is wrong, as it is a wrong word in that given context. For example, the use of word „this“ in example 6 below;

6. „Look at *this pictures“ instead of

Look at „these“ pictures.

In this chapter then, we consider words in terms of correctness in spelling and appropriateness in form and use in a given context. Two sources of spelling errors were observed which include; the phonology of English as the target language and the influence of the phonology of Kimeru as the learners“ first language on the pronunciation of words in English. Therefore, the scripts were analyzed and classified into ten broad categories, according to the general nature of the error as shown in tables below.

a) Errors due to Silent Graphemes

Evidence of the errors in segments of a word with a grapheme that is not articulated in speech were common in the corpus. The classification in Table 1 below indicates that there are some words with letters present in spelling but they are not produced during pronunciation. The learners who made such misspelling seemed to have used pronunciation as a guide to spelling and hence write only what they have in speech. By using pronunciation as a guide to writing, the silent sounds are left out leading to misspellings.

Table 1: Frequency of Errors due to Silent Graphemes

Misspelt words	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *lisen	Listen	4	5.75
(b) *sup	Soup	5	7.1%
(c) *suprise	Surprise	3	4.2%
(d) *saicology	Psychology	3	4.2%
(e) *nock	Knock	4	5.7%
(f) *kichen	Kitchen	2	2.8%
(g) *now	Know	1	1.4%

(h) *immediatly	Immediately	5	7.1%
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(i) *wachman	Watchman	6	8.5%
(j) *ment	Meant	2	2.8%
Total		35	50.0%

In example (a) in Table 1, the letter „t“ is omitted. In the pronunciation of the word listen /lisn/, the sound /t/ is silent. Therefore, the learner of English whose mother tongue is Kimeru, tended to put into orthography what they hear in the pronunciation of the word. Since Kimeru phonology has no silent sounds, Kimeru pupils tend to omit the sounds that are not articulated in the target language. Therefore, the spelling system of English is the cause of this spelling error.

In example (b) in Table 1 above, the word soup is pronounced as /su:p/. In Kimeru phonology, sound /u/ is equivalent to letter „u“. Again, sound /o/ is silent. As said earlier, Kimeru language has no silent sounds. Therefore, the learners who made this error relied on their Kimeru phonology which they transferred to orthography of the English word, hence misspelling it.

In example (c) in Table 1 above, the word surprise is pronounced as /sɔpraiz/. In the misspelt word, letter „r“ has been omitted. As a matter of fact, the orthography of English is characterized by some graphemes that are not articulated in speech. The letter „r“ between „u“ and „p“ is silent in the English word „surprise“. The learners try to model the written language from the spoken language. This gives rise to the misspelt form.

In example (d) in Table 1 above, the word psychology is pronounced as /saikɔlɔdʒi/. In the above misspelt word, the letters „sai“ have occupied the place of letters „psy“ of the correctly spelt word. Kimeru orthography has no three consonants following each other. Just as Table 8 (a), (b) and (c) above, example (d) shows that Kimeru does not also have silent graphemes unlike English. So, in this case, the learners tend to use their L1 skills to compensate for the sound they hear in English speech, i.e. /sai/. These learners then transfer their L1 phonology to their written work of English, hence causing a spelling error.

In example (e) in Table 1 above, four learners misspelt the word knock. In English pronunciation, the word knock is pronounced as /nɔk/. As earlier said, the orthography of English is characterized by some graphemes that are not pronounced in speech. The letter „k“ is silent in the word knock. In writing English sentences or words, the learner will tend to model the written language after spoken language. By so doing, they will end up misspelling the English words.

The same case applies to example (f) in Table 1, whereby in the word kitchen, there is an omission of consonant sound „t“. The motivation behind the misspelling in this case is the learners over reliance on the phonology of Kimeru as a guide in writing. The learners whose first language is Kimeru in most cases write what they speak. In English, the word kitchen is pronounced as /kitʃɪn/. Therefore the Kimeru speakers produce the same in writing. Examples (g), (h), (I), and (j) in Table 1 above manifest the same kind of error whereby letters „k, e, t, a“, respectively, are omitted as they are all silent in the articulation of the words. The learners try to model the written language on the spoken language, and this gives rise to the misspelt form.

b) Errors due to Prenasalized Graphemes

Prenasalisation is a process whereby nasal sounds are added before another sound. In Kimeru, most of the stops, for example, voiced stops /b, d, g/ and voiceless stops /p, t, k/ are prenasalized .

Table 2: Frequency of Errors due to Prenasalized Graphemes

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *visitend	Visited	2	2.8%
(b) *cemetery	Cemetery	3	4.2%
(c) *bedroom	Bedroom	1	1.4%
(d) *frongs	Frogs	3	4.2%
(e) *loudly	Loudly	7	10%

(f) *twing	Twig	6	8.5%
(g) *desernt	Desert	7	10%
(h) *cound	Could	2	2.8%
(i) *ondest	Oldest	3	4.2%
Total		34	48.1%

For example in Table 2 above, two learners misspelt the word „visited“. In the misspelt word, the alveolar nasal /n/, which is represented in writing by letter n, has been added between letters „e“ and „d“. The correct pronunciation of the word visited in English is /vɪzɪtɪd/. In Kimeru, the voiced alveolar stop /d/ is always prenasalized hence the cause of misspelling in the above word.

In example (b) in Table 2 above, it is an evidence from the corpus data that three learners misspelt the word cemetery. In English pronunciation, the word cemetery is pronounced as

/semɔ̃t(ɔ̃)ri/ but the learners spelt it as *cemetery. The learners inserted the alveolar nasal /n/ before the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ hence misspelling it. This is a characteristic of Kimeru language where the voiceless alveolar stop is prenasalized. In 9(c), a learner misspelt the word bedroom whereby she inserted a nasal consonant /n/ before the voiced alveolar stop /d/. As earlier said, in Kimeru, all voiced alveolar stops are prenasalized. In 9(d), three learners misspelt the word frog. In Kimeru, the voiced velar stop does not exist in its pure form but it is always prenasalized. Therefore, the learners who made this error prenasalized the voiced velar stop hence misspelling the word. We can therefore say that the L1 influence is the cause of the misspelling of the above word.

In the word „loudly“ in example (e) in Table 2 above, seven learners misspelt it. They inserted alveolar nasal /n/ before the voiced alveolar stop. Again, as said earlier, voiced alveolar stop is always prenasalized in Kimeru. Therefore, the L1 influence is the cause of the misspelling of this word. In the word desert, seven learners spelt it as „*desernt“. In English pronunciation, the word desert is pronounced as /dezɔ̃t/ but the learners who made that error spelt it as /dezɔ̃nt/. Since most of the stops are prenasalized in Kimeru, the learners relied on their Kimeru skills hence misspelling the above word. Therefore, the same case applies to the other two remaining examples, „*cound“ and „*ondest“ whereby the learners added alveolar nasal before the voiced alveolar stops as shown in example (h), and (i) in Table 9 above.

c) Errors due to Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but are different in spelling, meaning and origin.

Table 3: Frequency of Errors due to Homophones

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *their	There	8	11.4%
(b) *our	Hour	4	5.7%
(c) *here	Hear	5	7.1%
(d) *herd	Heard	2	2.8%
Total		19	27%

In the example (a) in Table 3 above, both the words „their“ and „there“ are pronounced the same way, hence they are homonyms. This means that they are spelt in the same way but they have different meanings. So their pronunciation is /ðeɪ/. Since they are homonyms, the learners use them interchangeably regardless of their meaning. This misspelling can hence be said to be attributed to the phonology of English as the target language. On the other hand, it may mean that they do not know the difference in meaning, hence using them interchangeably. Likewise, in example (b) in Table 10, the words „our“ and „hour“ are pronounced the same way. In English pronunciation, the two words are pronounced as /aʊ/. They are also spelt the same way but they have different meanings. Since they are homonyms, the learners use them interchangeably just as in example (a) in Table 10 above. In example (c) in Table 10, the words „here“ and „hear“ are pronounced as /hɪə/. Since they are homonyms, the learners tend to use them interchangeably regardless of their difference in meaning. The same case also applies to example to example (d) in Table 3 above where two learners interchanged them. They are pronounced as /hɜːd/ in English and this made the learners to interchange them hence misspelling the word heard.

d) Errors due to Vowel Length

Vowel length is used in this case to refer to the distinction between short and long vowels. If a learner does not distinguish between short and long vowels, they are likely to make spelling errors in their written work. The Kimeru learners' failure to distinguish between long and short vowels led to the errors in corpus data as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 11: Frequency of Errors due to Vowel Length

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *ant	Aunt	3	4.2%
(b) *bit	Beat	5	7.1%
(c) *shit	Sheet	3	4.2%
(d) *result sleep	Result slip	1	1.4%
(e) *to	Too	2	2.8%
(f) *to	Two	5	7.1%
(g) *lives	Leaves	4	5.7%
(h) *sit	Seat	5	7.1%
Total		28	39.6%

If we take example (a) in Table 4 above, the word „aunt“ is misspelt as „*ant“. In English, the correct pronunciation of the word aunt is /ɑ:nt/ whereas the pronunciation of the misspelt word „ant“ is /ænt/. Therefore, it can be seen that the contrast in the vowel quality between the two words contributed to this misspelling. The learner in this case failed to distinguish between a short and a long vowel. This misspelling can hence be attributed to the influence of the first language where mostly short vowels are used. In speaking English, such a learner produces short vowels and does the same in writing.

In example (b) in Table 4 above, five learners misspelt the word „beat“ as „*bit“. The misspelt word is pronounced as /bit/ whereas the correctly spelt word is pronounced as /bi:t/. In this case, just like example (a) in Table 11 discussed above, the cause of spelling error can be said to be failure by the learner to distinguish between short and long vowels. This misspelling can therefore be attributed to inadequate mastery of the phonology of English. Learners usually pronounce both words as /bit/. They then use the same trends in writing and transfer the mispronounced form into their written work.

Another example is the word sheet. As shown in example (c) in Table 4 above, three pupils misspelt the word „sheet“ to „shit“. The misspelt word is pronounced as /ʃit/ whereas the correctly spelt word is pronounced as /ʃi:t/. In this case, the learners fail to make an auditory discrimination between the two vowels. This misspelling can then be attributed to the phonology of Kimeru which ends up affecting the learners' pronunciation in English and is translated into written English. In example (g) in Table 4, four learners misspelt the word „leaves“ as shown in the table above. In English pronunciation, the word leaves is pronounced as /li:vz/. The misspelt word „lives“ is pronounced as /lɪvz/. Therefore, learners failed to distinguish between short and long vowel hence misspelling the word „leaves“. The same case applies to the other examples which include „result sleep“ instead of „result slip“, „to“ instead of „two“ and „sit“ instead of „seat“.

e) Error due to Epenthesis

Kimeru language has a preference for open syllable structure. This is where a vowel is inserted to break a consonant cluster for the ease of articulation. This is motivated by the fact that Kimeru language has no more than two consonants following each other. Due to epenthesis, the words were misspelt as seen in table below;

Table 5: Frequency of Errors due to Epenthesis

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *workashop	Workshop	2	2.8%
(b) *respectfully	Respectfully	4	5.7%
(c) *withini	Within	1	1.4%
(d) *championi	Champion	2	2.8%
(e) *enafu	Enough	1	1.4%
Total		10	14.1%

In the example (a) in Table 5 above, two learners misspelt the word workshop by inserting a vowel sound /a/ between letter „k” and letter „s” as shown in (5) above. In the misspelt word, a vowel has been inserted to break a consonant cluster. The correct pronunciation of the word workshop is /wɔ:kʃɒp/. Therefore, this insertion of a vowel sound between consonants marks the process of epenthesis which is a phonological process of Kimeru language. In this process, a sound is added to separate the consonants in a cluster. This mostly takes place in borrowed words and helps to ease the articulation of those words as Kimeru does not allow more than two consonants to follow each other in a word. It also helps the words to conform to the phonological structure of L1. The same strategy is transferred to another language when a Kimeru speaker is speaking a foreign language. Kimeru phonology can be said to be responsible for the misspelling of this word.

In example (b) in Table 5 above, four learners misspelt the word „respectfully”. They misspelt it as „*respectfully” as shown above. In English pronunciation, the word „respectfully” is pronounced as /rɪspektfli/. In the misspelt word, the learners inserted a vowel sound /i/ between the letter „t” and letter „f” hence misspelling it. In example (c) in Table 5, a vowel sound is added after a word final consonant as shown in the table above. The above word is pronounced as /mɪnɪ/. In Kimeru phonology, no word ends with a consonant sound. Therefore learners tend to insert vowel sounds after a word final consonant. Therefore, the learners, who made this error, relied on their L1 phonology and orthography to spell the English words.

f) Errors due to Absence of the Sound in Kimeru

As discussed in chapter two, there are a number of sounds in English which do not exist in Kimeru. Examples of these sounds include /h/, /ʃ/, /v/, and /f/. The misspelling of English words occurred due to the absence of some sounds in Kimeru, as shown in Table 13 below;

Table 6: Frequency of Errors due to Absence of the Sounds in Kimeru

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *as	Has	6	8.5%
(b) *and	Had	3	4.2%
(c) *sit	Sheet	2	2.8%
(d) *faberite	Favourite	2	2.8%
Total		13	18.3%

In example (a) in Table 6 above, six learners misspelt the word „has”. They instead misspelt it as „as”. In English the correct pronunciation of the word „has” is /hɑz/ whereas the pronunciation of the misspelt word „as” is /æz/. In this case, the learner omitted the consonant sound /h/. This error can be attributed to the influence of the Kimeru phonology as the sound /h/ is not available in the phonemic inventory

of the language (Kimeru). In example (c) in Table 13 above, two learners misspelt the word „sheet“. In English pronunciation the word „sheet“ is pronounced as /ʃi:t/. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two section 2.3.1, the sound /ʃ/ i.e. the voiceless palato-aveolar sound is not present in the Kimeru sounds system. Therefore, the learners who made this error tended to use the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ in the place of /ʃ/. Therefore Kimeru phonology contributed to the misspelling of the word „sheet“.

In example (d) in Table 6 above, two learners misspelt the word „favourite“ and instead misspelt it as „*faberite“. As indicated in Chapter Two, the sound /f/ (voiceless labio-dental fricative) is not found in Kimeru. So the learners who made this error used the closest sound to /f/ which is the voiced bilabial fricative /β/ whose spelling is „b“ in kimeru hence misspelling the word favourite. The motivation behind this is the phonology of Kimeru as the learners' first language.

g) Errors due to Metathesis

Metathesis is a phonological process where two or more segments are interchanged within a word without a change in meaning thus creating a misspelling. Though, these types of errors were minimal compared to the other perceived causes. The words were misspelt as shown in table 14 below.

Table 7: Frequency of Errors due to Metathesis

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *ni	In	1	1.4%
(b) *no	On	1	1.4%
(c) *deks	Desk	1	1.4%
Total		3	4.2%

In example (a) in Table 7 above, one learner misspelt the word „in“ and spelt it as „*ni“ instead. In the above misspelt word, the sound segments are interchanged. The learner who made this error repeated it severally in her work. Though, to some extent, this can be taken as a mistake, the occurrence of the same error severally shows that this learner relied on Kimeru phonology as this is a characteristic of Kimeru, i.e. the process of metathesis where some sound segments change their positions in a word.

In the example (b) in Table 7 above, another learner misspelt the preposition „on“ and spelt it as *no“. As discussed in (14a) above, this learner relied on Kimeru phonology as this is a characteristic of Kimeru phonology. Therefore, the learner's L1 phonology was the cause of this spelling error. The same case applies to the word „desk“ which was misspelt as „*deks“ as shown in (14c) above.

h) Errors due to Double Consonant Graphemes

Errors in spelling were detected where learners failed to double consonants in a word. These words were misspelt as shown in Table 15 below.

Table 8: Frequency of Errors due to Double Consonant Graphemes

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *inocent	Innocent	3	4.2%
(b) *corrupt	Corrupt	3	4.2%
(c) *normaly	Normally	2	2.8%
(d) *comitee	Committee	4	5.7%
(e) *super	Supper	3	4.2%
Total		15	21.1%

In examples (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) in Table 8 above, the learners misspelt the words because they failed to double the consonant to conform with the writing conventions of English. Therefore, unlike in English orthography where consonants are doubled, there is no doubling of consonants in Kimeru orthography. For example, the English word innocent, which is pronounced /ɪnɔ̃sɔ̃nt/, has its letter „n” doubled in the orthography. Therefore, since Kimeru orthography does not double consonants, some learners of English learners whose mother tongue is Kimeru spelt it with only one „n” hence misspelling the word.

i) Errors due to the Discrepancy between the English Sound System and the Spelling system.

Errors in spelling were detected where learners misspelt words due to the discrepancy between the English sound system and the spelling system. Examples of the misspelt words due to this nature are shown in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Frequency of Errors due to Discrepancy between the English Sound System and the Spelling System.

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *cought	Caught	2	2.8%
(b) *saday	Sunday	2	2.8%
(c) *bilive	Believe	3	4.2%
(d) *woll	Wall	5	7.1%
(e) *minite	Minute	6	8.5%
(f) *wos	Was	2	2.8%
(g) *enaf	Enough	1	1.4%
Total		21	29.6%

In example (a) in Table 9 above, two learners misspelt the word „caught” and spelt it as „*cought”. In the above misspelt word, the letter „o” takes the place of letter „a” in English. Since the word in target language is pronounced as /kɔ̃:t/, the learners relied on their first language knowledge where they used sound /ɔ̃/ to match the pronunciation they hear from the English word /kɔ̃:t/. Therefore, the discrepancy between the English sound system and the spelling system are the cause of misspelling in the above word. In example (b) in Table 16 above, two learners misspelt the word „Sunday”, which is equivalent to almost 3% of the total learners who were tested, i.e. seventy learners. The word Sunday is pronounced as /sʌndeɪ/ in English. In Kimeru, the equivalent of the sound /ʌ/ is sound /a/ which is represented by letter „a”. Therefore in orthography, the learner applied the phonology of Kimeru and its writing convention and hence produced the wrong form above.

Referring to example (c) in Table 16 above, three learners misspelt the word believe. The word is pronounced as /bɪli:v/ in English. In this case, the sound /i/ takes care of the letters „ie” in English pronunciation. In kimeru, sound /i/ is equivalent to letter „i”, so the learner tends to use letter „i” wherever there is sound /i/ in English pronunciation. In example (d) in Table 16 above, the word „wall” was misspelt by five learners. They, instead, spelt it as „*woll”. In English, the word wall is pronounced as /wɔ̃:l/. In the misspelt word, letter „o” replaces letter „a” of the English word. In Kimeru phonology, the sound /ɔ̃/ is represented by letter „o”. Therefore, the learners use letter „o” in orthography to match with what they hear in the pronunciation of English words. So this spelling error is as a result of over reliance on Kimeru phonology which is transferred to the words of the target language. The same case applies to the rest of the examples shown in the Table 16 above.

j) Errors due to Retention of Letter ‘e’ before a Suffix.

In many English words that end with the vowel „e”, it is usually lost when a suffix is added to the root. A misspelling occurs when the letter „e” fails to be dropped in writing. In speech, it is silent. Spelling errors were detected where learners failed to delete letter „e” before adding a suffix as shown in Table 10 below;

Table 17: Frequency of Errors due to Retention of Letter ‘e’ before a Suffix

Misspelt word	Correct spelling	Number of learners who misspelt	Percentage of the learners who misspelt
(a) *argument	Argument	1	1.4%
(b) *rescueing	Rescuing	3	4.2%
(c) *loveable	Lovable	3	4.2%
(d) *preparering	Preparing	1	1.4%
Total		8	11.2%

In the above examples, spelling errors can be said to be caused by the influence of the first language phonology since there are no deletion of sounds in Kimeru or any silent sounds.

IV. CONCLUSION

Using Error Analysis as a theoretical framework, the following categories of errors emerged:

- i. Errors due to silent graphemes.
- ii. Errors due to prenasalization of graphemes.
- iii. Errors due to homophones.
- iv. Errors due to vowel length.
- v. Errors due to epenthesis.
- vi. Errors due to absence of the sound in Kimeru.
- vii. Errors due to metathesis.
- viii. Errors due to double consonant graphemes.
- ix. Errors due to discrepancy between the English sound system and the spelling system.
- x. Errors due to retention of letter „e” before a suffix.

Among these categories, on one hand, the errors occurring due to silent graphemes and prenasalization of consonants happened to be the major causes of spelling errors among Kimeru learners. The errors due to silent graphemes were made by 50% of the pupils tested while the errors occurring due to prenasalization of consonants were made by 48% of the pupils. On the other hand, errors occurring due to metathesis had the least number of learners. This category of errors had only three pupils which is equivalent to 4%. It is therefore concluded that misspellings of English words arise from the influence of L1 phonology and the Kimeru writing system.

The findings of this study lend credence to the fact that the first language phonology and orthography influence orthography in English. By looking at the ten categories of misspellings, it is concluded that there are spelling errors which are caused by the influence of the phonology and orthography of Kimeru as a first language as well as the manner in which some of the English words themselves are pronounced. The findings indicated that to a large extent, the subjects in this study relied on phonology for orthography. In most of the misspelt words there was a one to one mapping between the misspelt word and its correct form. The subjects’ reliance on phonetic guidance when judging the spelling of a word in English affected spelling because the English language lacks consistency between orthography and phonology.

Wilson (2001) observes that the target language overgeneralization is also a potent influence on spellings as those misspellings arise from overgeneralization. He says that the difficulty of the English spelling system provides evidence that whatever proves difficult for native speakers of a language can also prove difficult for its non native speakers but the latter are bound to make more errors as the influence of their L1 also makes its contribution. He also observes that when the phonological knowledge required in English had not been developed in the first language, ESL students resorted to the form of a word closest to their native language.

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