The Impact of Spelling Strategies Instruction on the Iranian EFL Intermediate Learners' Writing Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the impact of using spelling strategies on writing performance among intermediate EFL learners in Iran. To this end, 40 intermediate female students aged between 15 to 25 were selected in Khorram Abad, Iran. They were homogenized based on their performance on Oxford Quick Placement Test, were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received writing instruction based on a number of spelling strategies during 12 sessions lasting 60 minutes. In contrast, the control group was instructed based tradition approach where no spelling strategy was explicitly taught. Furthermore, two parallel writing tests, designed by a panel of well-experienced EFL teachers, were administered as pre-test and post-test to measure the participants' writing ability before and after the instructions. Results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in terms of gain scores on the writing post-test. In addition, it was found that "applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes" was the most frequently used and "asking a superior speller for help" was the least frequent strategy used by the experimental group. Finally, pedagogical implications for the EFL teachers and learners were discussed in light of the findings.

1. Introduction

Spelling is regarded as central component of language. The definition of spelling is standard for most researchers, even for those in different theoretical camps. It is often viewed as simple letter-sound identification for young children who are learning how to spell. The basic question is, however, how children learn to spell and what strategies they use as they improve their spelling ability. Spelling strategy is a means for a child or young person to recover a correct spelling choice using a method compatible with the learning style. A child should choose his own strategy. Effective spelling teaching enables the child to keep the frequent look, shape and feel of the word. Teaching spelling can also "fully support underlying knowledge and skills required in reading and vocabulary development" (Westwood, 2014, p. 18). Research has shown that the most common spelling strategies learners tend to use at different stage development include: 1) rehearsing the spelling of the word by repeating the names of the letters in sequence (often referred to a simultaneous oral spelling; 2) using phonic knowledge to segment and then encode the word, or an approximation to the word, by attending to component sounds such as phonetic spelling; 3) using knowledge of the spelling of another word that sounds a little like (or rhymes with) the target word spelling by analogy; 4) applying spelling rules in conjunction with any of the above strategies; 5) creating easy-to-remember mnemonics to help recall tricky words; 6) applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes; 7) using a dictionary and/or computer spell-checker; and 8) asking a superior speller for help (Westwood, 2006, 2011, 2014).

There appears to exist a lack of consensus among scholars. Research has demonstrated that the development of new

spelling skills emerges at different levels (Beers, 1980; Ehri, 1987; Ellis, 1993; Schlagal, 2001, 2003). For example, in the early stage of spelling, children spell words using alphabetic principles, but the next stages involve the use of some phonetic clues to spell. Each new stage is an improvement upon the last, meaning that the child's ability increases as s/he adds one new spelling strategy at a time. However, Moats (1995) cautioned that not all children progress in the same way or at the same rate in the spelling process.

Stanovich and Cunningham (1993) pointed out that spelling requires other cognitive domains in addition to alphabet knowledge such as larger spelling patterns and morphemes. They hypothesized that frequent exposure to print facilitates a developmental progression from alphabetic to spelling strategies. The process of spelling can be time-consuming and tedious mostly when generating difficult words. Students, especially children, may be distracted by the lack of spelling knowledge hindering their ability to write. There may be also much focus on spelling of the words correctly while the generation of the text would be overlooked. The act of composing is slowed down and the train of thought is altered when one cannot spell a word correctly regardless of the extra tools used (Graham, 1999).

It is argued that children use various strategies at any point in time of spelling (Rittle-Johnson & Siegler, 1999). In addition, the use of strategy should be adaptive; i.e., dependent on the difficulty of the word being spelled. Previous research done on spelling strategies by Rittle-Johnson and Siegler (1999) verified that children use different strategies. They were not, however, able to directly address the adaptability and frequency of the use of strategy. Since the use of spelling strategies has not widely been explored before in the EFL context, the present study will set out to fill the existing lacuna by exploring the influences of using spelling strategies on improving the Iranian intermediate EFL learners' learning writing. It also aims to reveal which kinds of spelling strategies are used more frequently by the Iranian intermediate EFL learners to control writing.

Treiman and Bourassa (2000) indicated that although the English sound/spelling correspondence is inconsistent or not completely regular, knowledge of these with visual memorization can help spelling development. There are two different mechanism by which spelling of a word can be produced that affirm by dual-route model of spelling. First is a lexical route that words are processed orthographically through visual whole word recognition using the top-down approach. Second is a non-lexical route where by words are processed phonologically that is the transfer of letter-sound associations using the bottom-up approach (Brown & Ellis, 1991). It is commonly accepted that the connection of orthographical and phonological is essential for good spelling. Kamhi and Hinton (2000) indicated that all assumption of spelling are involved a dominant role for phonological knowledge. Phonological knowledge is very important in the development of spelling and from the beginning stage of learning to spell. Learners without sound realization and phonological knowledge face problems in acquiring orthographic knowledge and will be embarrassed. Phonological knowledge is the most important in the development of spelling, reading and writing. However, language development has been closely related to the concept of phonological knowledge.

In learning to spell, students' progress along a developmental pathway until they can successfully integrate the four forms of spelling knowledge: phonological, visual, morphemic and etymological. Students who need additional support in spelling should be provided with a program that recognizes their current developmental level and builds an understanding of word patterns based on each of the four forms of spelling knowledge. Systematic teaching of spelling will involve initial teacher modelling of strategies, followed by guided and then independent practice. The teacher's role is to organize the examination of words in such a way that students understand how particular spelling features and patterns operate (Templeton & Morris, 1999). An explicit and systematic spelling program should: 1) focus on teaching appropriate words related to the students' current levels of performance as well as the class program and student needs; 2) explicitly teach spelling patterns; 3) teach in small chunks; 4) provide opportunity for sufficient practice and feedback; 5) ensure maintenance of previously learned words; 6) provide for generalization of newly acquired spelling skills; 7) emphasize the importance of

correct spelling; and 8) include dictionary skills..

Writing is the process of conveying thoughts and ideas into written messages. Writing is a contemplated and cognitive process which requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. Good writing requires the writer to state himself/herself in a more effective way to concern spelling and writing. Many writing components are including in writing thus, to accomplish a composition task, writers go through different stages of writing. Jenks (2003) stated that "the writing process is categorized in a five stages sequential pattern (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing)" (p. 1). In second language instruction, writing ability is also a difficult skill and basic learning element for English as foreign language learners. Unfortunately, writing is a difficult skill to be improved in a short period of time. The gravity of writing skill and its outstanding role in demonstrating students learning extent is obvious in the first or the second language.

Academics (e. g., teachers and professors) most favorably evaluate students through their writings. Thus, poor writing ability of students may endanger their academic success to a deliberate ability (Tan, 2011). Poor spelling also confines the writer's choice of words, which negatively affects creativity and guides to short and sometimes incoherent pieces of writing. However, it is more important for non-natives especially EFL learners in Iran provided with only restricted exposure to write in English. In order to transfer messages effectively, accurate spelling is strongly required. Spelling includes the connection of several skills, involving semantic and grammatical knowledge, knowledge of phonological representations, formulation of analogies with words in visual memory, knowledge of orthographic rule and conventions (Bradley & Bryant, 1985). Fagerberg (2006) suggested that, spelling is essential since one misspelling may change the meaning which the writer wanted to convey in the text. Teaching sound/letter corresponding to Iranian learners could be very complicated and that makes writing as a time consuming task.

2. Empirical Studies

This part aims to review critically some related studies done in the literature. In an early study, Rittle-Johnson and Siegler (1999) investigated spelling strategies in young learners who were learning to spell.

They examined spelling strategies longitudinally by looking at (a) the type of strategies used, (b) how effectively the strategies were applied, (c) what words were spelled correctly with which strategies, and (d) how long it took to apply the different strategies used. The findings showed that their model appears to accurately represent children's development of spelling and they concluded that children used six different strategies to spell including: (a) retrieval, (b) sounding out, (c) drawing analogies, (d) relying on rules, (e) visual memory, and (f) checking and syllabification. They also found that most of the children used more than one strategy to spell a word and seventy percent of them used a combination of various strategies.

In another study, Baleghizadeh and Dargahi (2011) investigated the frequency of children's spelling strategy use in the primary levels of learning English. They compared the use of these strategies in good and average spellers with those of poor spellers. The participants of this study were 32 Iranian children at the first stages of learning to spell rated as being either low, average, or above average spellers. The results revealed that retrieval was the most frequently used strategy by the participants followed by sounding out and analogy. Considering the use of strategies in good, average, and poor spellers, the researchers concluded that the most common strategies for spelling were used more often by good and average spellers and less often by poor spellers.

Davis (2013) carried out a study on the extent to which students learn spelling strategies through visual perception (i.e., by eye, for instance) and how visual skills development can be involved in spelling and proofreading. The researcher concluded that effective visual processing skills are crucial for learning, remembering and encoding words correctly.

Mohammadi and Gorjian (2015) examined the effect of contextualized spelling activities on improving learners' sound/symbol interactive writing errors among high school students. 45 third grade learners were non-randomly selected and assigned to three experimental groups of contextualized, decontextualized and sentence level, each with 15 participants. Statistical analyses reported that contextualized group improved effectively compared to the decontextualized and the sentence level groups. Their findings showed that contextualized spelling rules

may foster learners' sound/symbol interactive writing and help them to develop their spelling in English language.

Most recently, Al Bulushi and Al Seyabi (2016) investigated the spelling strategies used by EFL students in Oman. Their study focused in particular on finding out the frequency of use of the strategies used by grade four and ten students, and the differences between both grades in the use of these strategies. The study sample consisted of 757 students from grades four and ten as they represent the exit level of cycle one and cycle two in Oman. Their findings showed statistically significant differences in the use of the strategies with respect to gender and achievement levels.

As can be inferred from the above study, there has been a paucity of research regarding the effectiveness of spelling strategies teaching on intermediate EFL learners' writing performance in the Iranian context. Therefore, to fill up the lacuna, the present study aims at shedding light on the impacts of spelling strategies teaching on writing performance among Iranian EFL intermediate learners. To accomplish these objectives, this study made attempts to provide comprehensive answers for the following research questions:
1. Does spelling strategies instruction improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing ability?
2. Which types of spelling strategies do have more effectiveness on intermediate EFL learners' writing ability?

3. Methodology
3.1. Participants and Setting

In order to conduct the present study, 40 EFL intermediate learners out of a population of 100 students whose scores were one standard deviation (SD) above the mean and one SD below the mean (based on the participants' Quick Oxford Placement Test (OQPT) scores) were selected and randomly assigned into two groups namely, control and experimental group where 20 students existed in each class. It should be noted that this procedure was followed to ask the participants who were at the same level of language ability to participate in the study. The participants were all female whose age ranged from 15 to 25. In fact, the study was run in the setting of Bahar Language Institute in Tehran in Ahvaz, Iran in winter semester. Based on the institute's placement criteria, it was made sure that all the participants' proficiency were beginning level. They have been learning English as a foreign language in three to four hours a week. All the four language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing and language components, consisting of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling were worked on and emphasized in the institute. The participants were trained by the same methodology and they studied the same textbooks under the instruction of proficient English language teachers. The institute follows standard teaching practices and all language teachers are required to follow the classroom procedures of the institute.

3.2. Instruments

To accomplish the objectives of the current study, the following instruments were used to collect the required data. First, before running the treatment and main study, as noted earlier, QOPT was administered so as to homogenize the participants in terms of their general language proficiency in English. It is worth noting that the test was designed and developed by Oxford University Press and Cambridge ESOL (2005) and it can be used for learners of all levels and all ages. It has two parallel versions: computer-based version and paper-pen version. It must be pointed out that the paper-pen version was used in this study due to its ease of administration and logistical considerations. In fact, the test consists of 60 questions in multiple-choice format taking approximately 75 minutes to be answered; it includes reading, grammar and vocabulary. It has two parts; Part 1 (questions 1–40) is taken by all candidates and is aimed at students who are at or below intermediate level. The second part (questions 41–60), were taken only by candidates who scored more than 35 out of 40 on the first. The test is quickly marked out of 40 or 60 using a simple overlay, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Look-up table for paper and pen scores adopted from Geranpayeh, 2003

Level	Description	Part-1 Score out of 40	Parts1&2 Scores out of 60
0.1	Beginner	0-9	0-10
0.2	Breakthrough	10-15	11-17
1	Elementary	16-23	18-29
2	Lower intermediate	24-30	30-39
3	Upper intermediate	31-40	40-47
4	Advanced		48-54
5	Very advanced	If a student scores 36 or more it is recommended they complete Part 2 of the test.	55-60

What is worthy to note is that to make sure the reliability and validity of OQPT for the context, it was piloted on a sample of 20 students at the same level at another private in Ahvaz. The test reliability (0.78) was calculated through Cronbach ά

considered acceptable for the purposes of the current study. However, regarding validity, it was gauged through experts' judgment meaning that the QOPT test was given to a number of experienced EFL professors to evaluate its face and content validity. All of the teachers confirmed that the instrument have a high level of face and content validity so that it can be used in the study.

The second instruments designed and developed by a panel of well-experienced EFL teachers who had at least 10 years of experience comprise a writing pre-test and post-test consisting of 30 multiple-choice items. The tests were designed based on the participants' course book and they included four paragraphs in which the words would be missed to examine the participants' writing competence. The paragraphs contained 5 missing words in the form of close passage followed by multiple choice of the words' sounds. Following the same procedure for OQPT, the reliability and validity of the writing tests were measured through pilot study. Indeed, they were piloted on a sample of 20 students carrying the characteristics of the main study. Based on the students' responses a number of the items were modified or omitted. It should be noted that the reliability (pre-test = 0.82 and post-test = 0.79) of the tests were calculated. Finally, two well-experienced professors were asked to evaluate the used tests in relation to their validity. They confirmed that the test had the required validity to the study.

Another instrument to measure the kinds of spelling strategies used by the participants during the writing test was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of a number of spelling strategies that the students preferred to use while doing a writing.

3.3. Procedures

To carry out the current study, the following steps were undertaken in turn. Prior to running the main study, the pilot studies were conducted at other private English schools so as to determine if the QOPT, writing pre-test, and post-test were reliable and valid enough for the purposes of the study. Then, at the onset of the study, the QOPT was administered to all 100 learners to determine their homogeneity in terms of general English proficiency. The participants whose scores fell between -1 to +1 SD from the mean were filtered in and assigned into two homogeneous groups, namely, experimental (n = 20) and control (n = 20)

groups. It should be noted that since there existed the probability that more than forty of the participants fall between -1 and + 1 SD, only forty of the students were chosen. Next, the pre-test, writing test, was administered to both groups in order to assess their initial writing ability prior to the treatment sessions. After administrating the pre-test, the participants received instructions during 12 sessions lasting 45 minutes for each session. The important point to keep mind is that the participants in the experimental group were instructed based on explicit instruction about the spelling strategies and how to utilize them when writing of words and sentences. These activities included as follows:

1. Rehearsing the spelling of the word by repeating the names of the letters in sequence.
2. Using phonic knowledge to segment and then encode the word, or an approximation to the word, by attending to component sounds such as phonetic spelling.
3. Using knowledge of the spelling of another word that sounds a little like (or rhymes with) the target word spelling by analogy.
4. Applying spelling rules in conjunction with any of the above strategies.
5. Creating easy-to-remember mnemonics to help recall tricky words.
6. Applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes.
7. Using a dictionary and/or computer spell-checker.
8. Asking a superior speller for help.

In contrast, the control group was instructed based on the traditional instruction where some spelling strategies such as repetition, explanation, pen and paper drills, writing, etc. were worked on. After completing the instruction, the post-test was administered in order to measure the participant' achievements in relation to the effectiveness of spelling strategies on writing performance in both groups. That is, the participants were asked to write a paragraph including 100 words about the given topics. Finally, the questionnaire to measure which kinds of strategies were more used was given to the participants and they wanted to check those strategies when taking the tests.

3.4. Data Analysis

In order to answer the raised research questions of the present study, a quantitative approach was employed to analyze the collected data. To achieve these aims, using SPSS version 22 software packages for

statistical analysis in social sciences, a summary of the basic descriptive statistics of the QOPT test, the pre-test, and the post-test scores of the writing tests for the experimental and control groups were calculated. Two Independent sample t-tests were run to identify the differences between the two groups in terms of their gain scores. Indeed, the gain scores were calculated for both groups to determine whether the students in the experimental group made any significant improvement than the control group from the pre-test to post-test with respect to spelling strategies after receiving two different kinds of instructions. For the second research question, the obtained data were used to provide a descriptive profile of the perceptions related to use and significance of the spelling strategies. The number of responses for each item and the corresponding percentages were tabulated. In fact, the frequency and percentage data were shown in frequency tables.

4. Results

Before offering the treatments, the participants of the experimental and control groups took a writing test on which they were given a passage including five paragraphs with 20 missing words. The participants had to write the words after hearing them. Table 2 shows the basic descriptive statistics of the groups' pre-test scores on the writing test employed in this study. As seen, for the control group, M (8.90), SD (3.02), and for the experimental group, M (7.95), SD (2.25) were calculated, respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Writing Score in the Pre-test Phase

Group		N	Mini mum	Maxi mum	Mean	Std. Deviatio n
C-Group	Pre-test	20	4	15	8.90	3.02
E-Group	Pre-test	20	4	12	7.95	2.25

At first, the normality assumption of the scores for the pre-test was established. Table 3 displays the results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of normality for the writing pre-test scores of the groups. As noticed in Table 2, the significance values are both above the critical value of 0.05 and thus the data sets are fit for parametric tests.

Table 3: Results of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality for the Scores of the Groups

	Pre_Contr iol	Pre_Ex pe	Pro_Cont rol	Pro_Ex pe
N	20	20	20	20
Most Extreme Differences Absolute	.150	.137	.121	.150
Positive	.090	.137	.089	.113
Negative	-.150	-.106	-.121	-.150
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.752	.684	.606	.751
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.624	.738	.857	.626

a. Test distribution is Normal.
b. Calculated from data.

To determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group's means and if the participants were at the same level of writing ability before running the instruction, an independent sample t-test was run. As shown in the table 4 there was not a statistically significant difference (Sig= 0.26, P < 0.05) between the experimental and control group's scores on pre-test. Therefore, it was concluded that if there would be a meaningful difference between the groups' performance on the post-test, it could be attributed to the effect of the different instructions offered to them.

Table 4: An Independent Sample T-test for the Pre-test of Writing by the Experimental and Control Groups Table

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Differe nce	Std. Error Differe nce	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre-Test	Equal variances assumed	1.64	.20	1.12	38	.26	.95	.84	-.75	2.65
	Equal variances not assumed			1.12	35.16	.26	.95	.84	-.76	2.66

After receiving the instructions, the participants of the experimental and control groups took the writing post-test on which they were asked to complete a passage with the given words after reading aloud by the researcher. Table 6 indicates the basic descriptive statistics of the two groups' scores on the writing post-test. As it can be seen, for the control group, M (10.95), SD (3.13), and for the experimental group, M (14.90), SD (3.30) were calculated in order.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of the Participants' Writing Score in the Post-test Phase

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
P-Test	C-Group	20	10.95	3.13	.70
	E-Group	20	14.90	3.30	.73

In order to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups' means after receiving the different instructions, again another independent

sample t-test was run. As shown in the table 6, there was a statistically significant difference (Sig = 0.02, P < 0.05) among the experimental and control groups on the pre-test scores. Therefore, it may be suggested this difference may be attributed to the impact of the different instructions offered to the groups.

Table 6: An Independent Sample T-test for the Writing   Post-test by the Experimental and Control Groups

| | | Levene' s Test for Equality Variances | | oft-test for Equality of Means | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Differen ce	Std. Error Differen ce	Lower	Upper
Post-Test	Equal variances assumed	.003	.954	-3.87	38	.01	-3.95	1.01	-6.01	-1.88
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.87	37.89	.01	-3.95	1.01	-6.01	-1.88

As pointed out above, the second research question tried to uncover those spelling strategies that have more effectiveness on intermediate EFL learners' writing. To get this aim, the strategies instructed during the treatment phase was given to the participants in both group through a simple questionnaire. The students went through the questionnaire and checked those strategies that they used in writing tasks. The obtained results are reported in frequency in Table 7.

Table 7: The Frequency of the Strategies Used by the Experimental and Control Groups

Strategy	E-G	C-G
1. Rehearsing the spelling of the word by repeating the names of the letters in sequence.	15	6
2. Using phonic knowledge to segment and then encode the word, or an approximation to the word, by attending to component sounds such as phonetic spelling.	13	7
3. Using knowledge of the spelling of another word that sounds a little like (or rhymes with) the target word spelling by analogy.	17	3
4. Applying spelling rules in conjunction with any of the above strategies.	16	5
5. Creating easy-to-remember mnemonics to help recall tricky words.	19	4
6. Applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes.	20	8
7. Using a dictionary and/or computer spell-checker.	12	8
8. Asking a superior speller for help.	10	6

As shown, the first strategies titled "rehearsing the spelling of the word by repeating the names of the letters in sequence" has been checked 15 times by the experimental group and 6 times by the control group. Regarding the second strategy called "sing phonic knowledge to segment and then encode the word, or an approximation to the word, by attending to component sounds such as phonetic spelling", the data revealed that 13 students in the experimental group and 7 students in the control group checked it. The third

strategy "using knowledge of the spelling of another word that sounds a little like (or rhymes with) the target word spelling by analogy" was selected 17 times by the experimental group and 3 times by the control group. With regard to another strategy, namely, "applying spelling rules in conjunction with any of the above strategies" it was found that this strategy was used 13 and 5 times by the students in the experimental and control groups, respectively.   For the strategy "creating easy-to-remember mnemonics to help recall tricky words" the results indicated that the students in the experimental and control groups selected it 19 and 4 times, in turn. The frequency for "applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes" was 20 and 8 occasions in the both group. Concerning the other strategy titled "using a dictionary and/or computer spell-checker", the findings showed that it was chosen 12 and 8 times by the experimental and control group. Finally, asking a superior speller for help strategy was used 10 and 6 times by the participants. In general, the findings revealed that the experimental group used the spelling strategies more than the control group. In addition, the findings indicated "applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes" was the most used strategy by the participants and "Asking a superior speller for help" was the least used strategy in this study.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Prior to discussing the research findings comprehensively, it is appealing to note that the researchers experimentally measured the effect of teaching spelling strategies on writing ability of Iranian EFL learners. The first research question addressed "Do teaching spelling strategies improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing ability?" To provide a reasonable answer to the above-stated question, our findings demonstrated that there existed a statistically meaningful significant difference between the experimental and control groups performance concerning the teaching of spelling strategies which were exposed to Iranian intermediate EFL learners to improve their writing ability. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, there was not a statistically significant difference among the experimental and control groups on the pre-test scores. Hence, it might be said that the given difference in the performance of the experimental group after treatment may be ascribed to the influence

of the step-by-step instructions given to the group. Referring to the obtained results, it was shown that there existed a statistically significant and meaningful difference between the two groups. Emphasizing on the results obtained, we found that offering explicit instruction of spelling strategies can considerably pave the way for Iranian intermediate EFL learners to develop ability in writing. Therefore, on the whole, it was statistically demonstrated that the experimental group outperformed strikingly on the post- writing test compared to the control group. Concerning results of the above-mentioned question, the surrounding setting within the experimental group, the intervention made by the researcher, the treatment given to the participants, students' explicit attention to the explicit instruction offered by the researcher, and types of task assigned to the students might have influenced the results.

Leipzig's (2000) study provides support to the findings we gained. In his study, Leipzig noted in particular that teaching spelling greatly influenced students' performance on writing tasks. An important outcome of his study was the added emphasis on spelling instruction and the link it creates with literacy. Interestingly speaking, in line with his conclusions, the present study gains support from Leipzig's insightful discussions of teaching spelling. Our findings demonstrated that spelling instruction influenced students' ability in writing tasks. In order to provide a justifiable account, we shall with Leipzig (2000) argue that teaching spelling is an important and vital task that should be given added emphasis in the process of learning language and developing knowledge.

An important consideration is therefore that teaching spelling should be regarded as a key component and aspect of learning about language. Spelling instruction plays a central role in supporting students' underlying linguistic knowledge and skills promoting literacy development (Leipzig, 2000). Furthermore, taking a close look at the available literature can throw light on the obtained findings. As noted earlier, it was statistically proved that teaching spelling strategies influenced learners' writing ability. In support of the findings we gained, Graham (2000) examined the impact of spelling strategies on writing tasks within a natural context. Graham used a range of various diverse spelling strategies. The researcher included the strategy of inventing

spelling which is using knowledge of phonemes to check out words while spelling them. He also used the strategy of analogy, sounding out, and the onset rhyme. Graham's study was seminal because as he argued the employment of such strategies involved brain-based tasks. Brain-based tasks required participants' perceptual and cognitive abilities to integrate the strategies within the context of a particular sentence. Graham's conclusions are noteworthy. He showed that explicit instruction of teaching spelling strategies contributed enormously to the participants' performance in wring tasks. Moreover, his findings pointed out that strategies of inventing, sounding out and analogy were major ones used by the participant to complete the given tasks.

If Graham's (2002) results lend support to our findings, we still argue convincingly that teaching spelling strategies to students is a thinking process. Such a thinking process depends, to a great extent, on teacher's feedback and instruction. It is important at this time to note that spelling strategies should be regarded as a thinking process. As Rippel (2013) emphasizes, spelling strategies are part of effective mental strategies and influence writing, proofreading, etc. Rippel also supports the argument that direct and explicit teaching of these mental strategies is more desirable and students would, as a result, accomplish a particular task more efficiently.

The findings of the present study further revealed that there should be an integration of spelling instruction (including its techniques) and language learning. In this regard, our findings are consistent with Cooke, Slee and Young (2008) who looked into the effect of spelling teaching on dictation and writing from a more theoretical perspective. The researchers noted real writing can be greatly reinforced through teaching spelling within the schools and teachers should provide some engaging tasks through which students get involved in the act of writing to communicate their ideas. Thus, the findings of the present study places additional emphasis on an explicit approach to spelling instruction affecting students' writing ability.

Our findings are further supported by a more recent well-argued research study carried out by Werfel and Schuele in 2012. Werfel and Schuele (2012) highlighted the significance of spelling instruction and argued for teaching spelling skills explicitly.

The researchers cited some evidence when taking up the issue from a functional angle. They maintain that the employment of explicit techniques to spelling instruction plays two simultaneous functions. First, explicit teaching raises students' conscious awareness and helps them register samples of input highlighted by the teacher. Second, direct teaching of phonics skills fosters students' literacy development. As we also noted earlier and the results showed, we favor an explicitly-based approach to spelling instruction which facilitates students' performance in accomplishing writing tasks and writing exercises.

To conclude the discussion on the first research question, we now tend to refer to Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis which provides a powerful support to our findings. Supporting an explicit-based view towards spelling instruction, we outline the essence of noticing hypothesis supportive of the present study findings. Noticing hypothesis proposes that learners learn a language (or a particular aspect of language) when their attention is consciously focused on specific language features (Schmidt, 1993).

An important conclusion that might be reached is that explicit instructional approach to spelling should be based on providing description and explanation of spelling features being taught (Gorsuch, & Taguchi, 2009). Here, noticing hypothesis appears to show the facilitative effects of attention, noticing and awareness on students' writing ability promoted through spelling instruction.

The second research question examined "which types of spelling strategies do have more effectiveness on intermediate EFL learners' writing ability?" intermediate learners in expository writing. Our findings uncovered that "applying knowledge of word meanings, derivations, prefixes, and suffixes strategy" was the most frequently used by the experimental group while "asking a superior speller for help strategy" was the least used by the participants in the experimental group. Furthermore, it should be noted that the students in the experimental group showed more tendency to apply spelling strategies rather than the control group.

In accordance with our findings, Baleghizadeh and Dargahi (2011) took up spelling strategies instruction in the primary levels of learning English. They argued spelling strategies play a range of functions. They, for example, maintained that these strategies help students recognize connections between words, identify the conveyed meaning of an utterance, infer the conceptual meaning of words, etc. Therefore, such findings guide us to get better insights into phonology and morphology.

Although teaching spelling strategies remain an important consideration in language learning, it would be much more beneficial to attach added importance to contextualization of strategies. In this regard, the findings of Davis (2013) lend support to the present study. Davis highlighted that explicit teaching of spelling strategies makes students aware of the benefits of using these strategies in controlling and regulating their discourse, hence writing.

Thus, it would be now clear that correct spelling requires the application of several appropriate cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Extending these strategies to spelling instruction, they help students to provide solutions to a particular task or problem in an organized manner. When applied in a given situation, the strategies help students convey their meaning more efficiently. It should also be kept in mind practical uses of spelling strategies in different situations takes a long time to develop. As (Davis, 2013) notes normal spelling development is a cyclical process and it develops through time. He continues to argue that a central task for language teachers is to teach effective spelling strategies supportive of students' discourse. So, the effective application of various spelling strategies scaffold students' learning and the cognitive chain of interaction.

Some reasons behind the obtained findings might be attributed to the influence of explicit instruction of spelling strategies in the experimental group. Next, another likely reasons might lie in the fact that the participants might have found some strategies more useful and usable compared to other spelling strategies. Finally, it might be hypothesized that the nature of explicit intervention, teacher's feedback, and other factors have affected the results.

The present study offers several implications. First, classroom discourse and curriculum development should include learning activities that help students build essential visual-motor skills to process words successfully. Such learning activities involve learners in recognizing spelling and identifying letter sequences more efficiently.

Gaining help from multisensory teaching approaches, teachers should make effective use of visual methods of presentation to enhance students' mastery of words spelling. Another implication is that students should be taught spelling strategies in a flexible manner. That is to say, teachers should provide authentic contexts in which students can use the previously learned spelling strategies in order to accomplish a particular task.

Also, direct, deductive and conscious teaching of spelling strategies works better in an EFL setting than an inductive one. The result is the conscious use of these strategies in diverse situation when students are involved in writing and proofreading, for instance. Finally, spelling strategy shares ties with literacy development. Spelling instruction, as noted earlier, contributes enormously to students' underlying metalinguistic knowledge and literacy development. Taking up an explicit-based approach to spelling instruction promotes students' literacy when writing a specific piece of discourse.

In what follows an attempt is made to open up new horizons for further research in light of the findings of the current study. As the focus was on writing ability in this research study, it is suggested to explore the effect of spelling strategy on language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) and language component (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling). To get further reliable and valid findings, it is necessary to conduct the present study in other settings with more participants. Further, it is offered to investigate the impact of spelling strategies on writing skills in male gender. In addition, it worth examining influence of spelling strategies on other proficiency levels including intermediate and advanced levels. Last but not least, it seems quite necessary to reveal how learning spelling strategies lead to writing skill in EFL learners in qualitative method.

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