

Enhancing EFL Learners' Autonomy through CALL

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ملخص

يعتبر الحاسوب واحدا من الاختراعات الأكثر ذكاء في القرن العشرين. يستخدم حاليا في جميع جوانب الحياة بما في ذلك مجال التعليم. وبالتالي، فإن الدراسة الحالية هي دراسة استكشافية تتعلق في المقام الأول بطلبة اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية ودرجة استقلاليتهم في مخابر اللغة التي تعتمد على أجهزة الكمبيوتر كأدوات للتعليم. والغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التحقق ما إذا كانت هذه المخابر تنطوي على إمكانيات وآثار على استقلالية الطلاب. تم استخدام ثلاث تقنيات لجمع البيانات بما في ذلك مراقبة الفصول الدراسية، استبيان للطلبة ومقابلة مع الاساتذة لتقييم الدافع، والمصالح، والانطباعات، والتوقعات والتصورات. أظهرت البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها أن معظم الطلاب اظهروا زيادة في الحكم الذاتي عند تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية باستخدام أجهزة الكمبيوتر. ومع ذلك، هذه النتائج الإيجابية تعتمد كليا على المهارات الإدارية للمعلمين وتوفر الأجهزة المناسبة بالإضافة إلى إصلاح في مستمر للأجهزة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استقلالية الطالب، تكنولوجيا الحاسوب، مخابر اللغة الأجنبية

Abstract:

Being one of the cleverest inventions of the 20th century, the computer is currently used in every aspect of people's life, including the field of education. The present investigation, therefore, is an exploratory case study primarily concerned with EFL students' autonomy in the environment where computer devices are used. Its purpose is to investigate whether CALL environment has potentials and effects on students' autonomy. Using a number of psychological perspectives that explained autonomy as construct related to a variety of psychological variables, three data gathering techniques have been employed including classroom observation, questionnaire and interview to assess motivation, interests, impressions, expectations and perceptions. The obtained data demonstrated that most of the students show increased autonomy when learning English using computers. However, these positive results were totally dependent on the teachers' managerial skills and the availability of the appropriate devices in addition to the constant technical repair.

Key words: Autonomy, Language Learning, Computer Technology, (CALL) Computer-Assisted language Learning.

Introduction

EFL teaching is a complex and demanding process where the teacher plays an ever-significant

role especially in today's classrooms where technology is claimed to be an innovative pedagogical solution to promote learners' autonomy. Since the 1970's, the concept of learner autonomy has grasped considerable attention within the field of education in general, and in the area of foreign language teaching in particular. This given attention is to a large extent due to the left impact of Piaget's (1952) and Lev Vygotsky's (1978) writings in the circle of educational psychology. Autonomy is an area of interest in educational psychology, refers to the students' degree of independence and capacity to take charge of both the strategy and content of learning. It can be also discussed under the labels of self-regulation, learning-how-to-learn, learner independence, self-directed learning or self-access learning. The self-determination theory postulated that students' intrinsic motivation to learn increases when they are provided with opportunities to take personal responsibilities for their own learning. It also stressed the role of external social circumstances in fostering students' internal drives. In addition, the constructivists have also recognized the importance of autonomy for motivated learning. Thus, according to both theories any learning task requires autonomy supporting classrooms (Schunk, 2012).

In fact, autonomy in foreign language learning implies the learners' capacity to take responsibility for their own learning through practicing independently, making decisions and solving problems. Recently, it is specifically proposed that computer technology can be used to enhance learners' autonomy in the area of language education to promote learning and reinforce students to perform in a self-directed manner. In this vein, Erben et al. pointed out that, "technology enhanced classrooms have been found to promote discovery learning, learner autonomy and learner centeredness" (2009: 81)

Making use of computers as part of the language course is referred to as CALL which is an acronym stands for Computer-Assisted Language Learning. CALL is defined by Brown as, "computer programs designed especially to teach language." (qtd. in Murray, 2007: 748). Currently, the advanced technologies have made CALL a broad teaching approach that incorporates the employment of the internet in learning like the access to multimedia resources and online dictionaries; communication tools such as email, chat rooms, and audio/videoconferencing; specific software and applications designed for language learning, digital audio and video materials, all of these aim at promoting and enhancing language learning (Brett and González Lloret, 2009). One of the claimed outcomes of CALL programs is the ability for learners to learn at their own pace in their own time. CALL programs are designed to give teachers the role of facilitators rather than spoon feeders or knowledge providers. This role fits well with the constructivist view of learning which stressed offering students with more opportunities to handle responsibility for their own learning (Murray, 2007).

The fact of using computers to solve the problem of learner autonomy in EFL classrooms stimulated the researcher to investigate the usefulness of CALL in higher education as a means to promote autonomy of second year undergraduate EFL learners at the University of Tlemcen (Algeria). Based on the analysis of the significant role of autonomy in learning English as a foreign language and the benefits of CALL resources in foreign language labs, the main objective sets out to this research work is to assess the impact of CALL on learners' autonomy in EFL learning labs focusing on the question of how may CALL integration in EFL classrooms contribute to learners' autonomy?

Materials and Method

In order to probe the potential advantages of CALL on autonomy, the researcher has opted for a certain methodology to discover answers to the research question. An exploratory type of case study was chosen to investigate systematically a randomly selected sample of eighty (80) LMD2 EFL learners enrolled in oral expression lectures where CALL is essentially used as a tool for the delivery of instructed materials, management and instruction, in addition to ten (10) teachers using a mixed-methods approach which includes the joint use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches for the

sake of collecting reliable data. Ultimately, the main objective of this case study is to explore the role of CALL in increasing second year EFL learners' autonomy at the University of Tlemcen. It will do so by assessing whether CALL environment has potentials and effects on learners' autonomy, and examining its claimed outcomes for better learning. In this study, the researcher has used the two approaches to provide both quantitative information about the degree and incidence as well as qualitative information from participants' opinions and the researcher's evaluation of the studied phenomenon. Therefore, the investigator has first explored the data qualitatively taking notes through classroom observation with the purpose of identifying the variables that need to be tested in another quantitative instrument. In this vein, three research instruments have been utilized in order to triangulate the results including classroom observation conducted by the researcher in the studied setting, a questionnaire administered to learners attentively designed to address autonomy related constructs and an interview prepared for teachers to find out about their opinions, evaluations and expectations from CALL use in the EFL context.

In fact, the research methods employed in this study were carefully designed to result in complementary data, i.e., the points that cannot be addressed in classroom observation like learners' perceptions, expectations and impressions were evidently examined in the questionnaire. On the other hand, the issues that were not tackled in the questionnaire such as learners' actions, interactions, the physical environment and the techniques employed by teachers to manage the classroom were assessed in a number of classroom observations. Furthermore, a semi-structure interview was used to ask for the teachers' personal point of views regarding the autonomy supporting role of CALL in order to increase the reliability and validity of the gathered data. In this way, the researcher has tried to capture all the possible variables that contribute to students' autonomy. The obtained information were treated using both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Results

As a pedagogical mainstream, CALL aims at promoting learners' sense of autonomy by offering them with a learning environment that allows them to interact independently with the computer which in turn gives diverse sources of information and options. After conducting fifteen observation using a rating scale, it has been found that learning English as a foreign language through computers has considerable positive effects on learners' autonomy. Indeed, the results of the questionnaire demonstrated that (63%) of the students recognize the role of CALL in enhancing their self-directed learning to a large extent, (17%) stated that the degree to which CALL helps them to direct their language learning is average and (20%) did not see that CALL is effective in helping them to be autonomous learners at all. The findings of teachers' interview; which aimed at gathering in-depth information about the autonomy supporting role of CALL in EFL classrooms and confirming the results gained from other sources, fundamentally, classroom observation and students' questionnaire; revealed that most of the respondents are of the view that computers should be adopted in teaching as they are the tools that almost all university students use outside the classrooms. They further stated that by using computers the aim is to attract the learners' attention to learn the language and moving them out of classical learning modes to updated, open and engaging learning environment.

Discussion

Attending CALL sessions within the selected sample has given the researcher the opportunity to assess all the possible elements that may contribute to learners' autonomy. The obtained results have given a clear idea about both external conditions and students' internal events. While using technological devices such as computers and data show in learning, most learners were excited and enthusiastic. It has been found that applications such as Word Processors, graphic tools, and presentation software were helpful in enhancing their task enjoyment and persistence. Moreover, the

learners have shown high levels of interest, curiosity, attention and willingness during the majority of the observed sessions which indicated that they were motivated to learn the language through technology. Nonetheless, these internal states were too dependent on the learners' perceptions of the environmental factors, that is to say, if a supportable CALL atmosphere was created, the students were curious and interested in learning, but once they encountered problems they lost their interest which directly resulted in lower rates of curiosity and attention and thus, their capacity to direct their own learning.

Over fifteen observations, students' autonomy has been rated as high in eight observations when a stress-free atmosphere was provided. It has been noticed throughout these eight sessions that while interacting with the computer, the learners were able to write recordings and create presentations that reflected their degree of motivation and engagement. Therefore, CALL experiences were autonomy supporting when students were able to direct and control their own learning in the appropriate environment. The following table summarizes students' autonomy during all the fifteen observed sessions.

Table 1: Rating EFL learners' level of autonomy while learning through CALL

Observations	Ratings	Extremely low	Low	Fair	High	Extremely high
Observation 1						
Observation 2						
Observation 3						
Observation 4						✓
Observation 5						
Observation 6						
Observation 7						
Observation 8						
Observation 9						✓
Observation 10		✓				
Observation 11						
Observation 12						
Observation 13						
Observation 14						
Observation 15						

Throughout fifteen observations the results denoted that the entire class was highly autonomous in two occasions, and in six observations the majority of students showed high levels of autonomy. They were neither autonomous nor dependent during five observed lectures. Nevertheless, the students were totally dependent on their teacher in two observations when they experienced the use of new computer components which demonstrated their lack of technical knowledge.

The analysis of the collected data from learners' questionnaire revealed that most of the informants, who are young adults, have positive attitudes towards the use of technology in learning. The quantitative analysis makes it clear that almost all of the learners under investigation admire utilizing technology in classroom lectures and more than half of them (63%) consider their technical knowledge as advanced. They appreciate its effects on making language learning more effective and acknowledge its roles in raising their self-direction in learning English and enhancing their task enjoyment which demonstrated that technology greatly supports EFL learners' autonomy.

Fostering the students need to feel autonomous is considered as a motive and a well-known premise afforded by CALL activities. From their responses it is obvious that autonomy while learning through computers is, for the majority of the informants (63%), high. In addition, it has been found that their interest in learning was offered by CALL programs since (83%) of the informants were of the view that they were reinforced to complete tasks on their own when they are placed in front of computers because it is the tool they enjoy and like to use in learning. Thus, CALL proves again that it can foster EFL learners' autonomy. Additionally, the treatments of quantitative data point out that most of learners (85%) enjoy learning through CALL and (75%) of them stated that they are encouraged to engage in learning experiences assisted by computers.

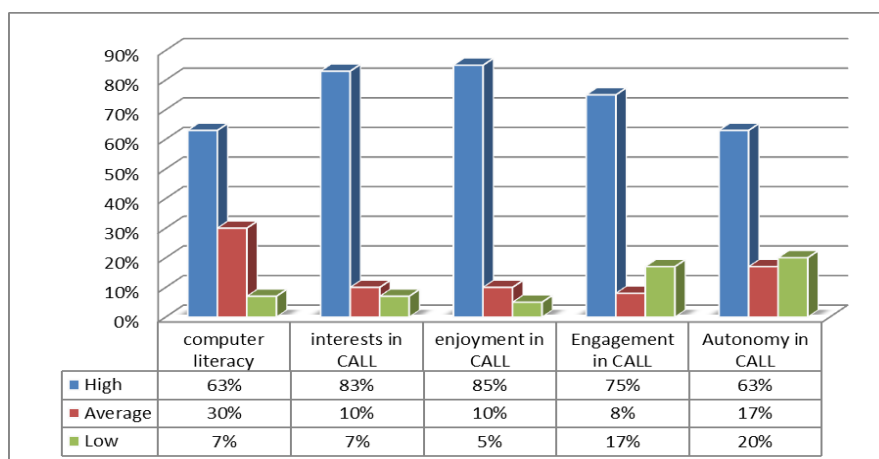


Figure 1: The Results of learners' questionnaire

Further examination of the autonomy supporting role of CALL was done through interviewing a number of teachers in order to have data of diverse sources. The findings revealed that most respondents are in favor of using technological devices in teaching English as they find them effective in supporting learners' autonomy. There was a general perception among the majority of teachers that learning English would be directed by learners themselves if technological tools are used. Furthermore, the interview results revealed that students displayed a strong desire towards using technology in learning English. From their responses to the questionnaire items, it becomes apparent that this sample is agreed with and enthusiastic to be self-regulated EFL learners through CALL.

Conclusion

The obtained data have encouraged the investigator to generalize that CALL is a resourceful pedagogical method that may increase EFL learners' autonomy as computers are the mediums which they understand and prefer to learn with. In addition, it can be farther claimed that the more teachers and students are well trained to use computer devices the more CALL atmosphere will result in higher levels of students' motivation and, then, a successful acquisition of the foreign language.

To conclude, the present study has been undertaken in an attempt to highlight the benefits that may CALL bring about in EFL classes and, thus, encouraging teachers to rely on computer technology to diagnose students lack of autonomy as they reported positive responses towards learning English through CALL about themselves. The results are presumed to offer valuable insights to teachers and university administrators to better use computers for the sake of teaching English to Algerian students.

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Spelling errors of the language transfer and cultural origins Among Beginner Algerian EFL Learners in Writing

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Abstract

Our focus in this paper is put on spelling errors of the language transfer origin first year LMD students of English commit while writing. There is no doubt that beginner learners of English face many of the problems in writing; an issue which makes instructors worried. Hence, the objective behind is to determine the kind of errors students make as a primary stage basing our observation on the students' writings when responding to our activities in the classroom during our classes. Then, we need to specify the mistakes to spelling errors of true friends with the French language as a more specific issue making the core of the secondary stage of the present research. Such kinds of errors are due to language transfer caused by the good knowledge our students have on the French language and culture. For these objectives, we have stated two hypotheses. For the first hypothesis, dictations that contain 34 true friends helped us classify the most recurring errors in spelling putting focus on the French influence (the psychological basis of Error Analysis). Taking the Algerian context in general and the case of Bejaia in particular makes the idea of this issue broad. In other words, learners are more likely to confuse between the use of English and other languages they master better. It is not a mere native language, but a mixture of Berber as a native language, Arabic as an academic and official language and French as a second language; hence, a real multicultural context. Our problem is, then, limited to the language mostly similar to English; that is French. In this case, we used two dictations containing thirty four true friends. Finally, we used a semi-structured interview with six teachers to construct the recommendations for classroom practice as concerns spelling. Here, the inclusion of spelling in teaching to improve the learners' writing was strongly recommended.

Introduction

English is becoming the internationally used language recommended in all fields of study all over the world. Nevertheless, the position of French in our country leads to specific problems among which we may have the French interference on learning English; that is language transfer. In fact, French became a dominant language after colonization and remained co-existing in the Algerian socio-cultural context and more particularly in the Kabyle regions. It is indeed acceptable that when French schools worked to educate Algerians that linguistic as well as cultural conceptions and perceptions changed in the citizens' social, cultural and linguistic characteristics. In this, Vincent Monteil and Kateb Yacine (In Monteil and Amrouche, 1990) pointed out that the first French schools date back to 1873. In the kabyle region, French is considered as a vehicle of an effective and intellectual communication, high style, "civism" and literature, and families are increasingly basing their speech and cultural habits on the French lifestyle and language. In addition, the modern Kabyle family is increasingly adopting the French language for a first language (L1) and their children speak it fluently. In this concern, thinking in the L1 is becoming practically unavoidable. This might have a direct impact upon language transfer, as well as an indirect impact on French interference on English in spelling words. Thus, how could we neglect, then, the influence of French on learning foreign languages in the Algerian-Kabyle context? For the sake of our study, and for all the reasons cited above, we consider French as an L1 in this present work.

1. Background

It is common knowledge that when language is used in social contexts for communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways. That is, both society and culture have a direct

or indirect influence on the learning and the use of the language by the learner especially in case it is a foreign language. In our case, English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Algeria. Hence, we can assume that both our society as well as our culture affects its learning especially that we live in a multicultural context when dealing with university EFL learners.

To begin with, the human world is social and meaningful, and speech is the most important device by which humans create and distribute meaning. Furthermore, different societies mean different cultures. Thus, learning a language appropriately needs the learning of the culture of its people/ users. In foreign language education, there is a direct effect of both society and culture on language use. Additionally, given that the present work puts focus on the influence of French on English learning, we believe that the way our participants think influences their EFL learning. That is why; we shall introduce the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis in our context.

1. 1. Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis makes the claim that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves. One might notice that the hypothesis emphasizes language use. Furthermore, there is a weak version, supported by the findings that there are cultural differences in the semantic associations evoked by seemingly common concepts. What interests here is the association made between language, culture and thought. This is what both linguists captured as linguistic relativity. We believe that our participants commit errors because they tend to think in French and this reflects their knowledge about the French culture. The work of Sapir and Whorf has led to two important insights. The first one relates to culture as semantically encoded in the language itself; the second concerns culture as expressed through the actual use of the language. These insights may, thus, be summarized as follows (Kramsch, 2000: 11-14):

1. There is nowadays recognition that language, as code, reflects cultural pre-occupations and constrains the way people think.
2. There is recognition of how important context is in complementing the meanings encoded in the language.

However, as in our multicultural and multi-lingual context, overlap of thoughts and use of the languages and the cultures by bilingual and/or multilingual people in our case is more likely to occur. Kramsh (2004: 239) cited, in relation to this, that there is a growing body of research on bi- and multilingualism that counteracts the monolingual bias prevalent until now in applied linguistics (e.g. Romaine, 1995; Cook, 2000; Pavlenko, in press). She added that this research is enabling us to consider the conceptual and cultural make-up of people who use more than one language in their daily lives (Pavlenko, 1999) (Ibid). That is evidence about the influence of culture on language use.

1.2. The Study of Language in its Cultural Context

To deepen the above discussion, it is worth to cite the modern classification of language which is given by Abercrombie (1956). He describes language first as a means of social control which makes human society possible, and the communication of thoughts is but a small part of this. Secondly, it acts as an *index* to "*various things about the speaker, particularly his personality*"; the *indexical features* give information about permanent or relatively permanent facts about the speaker (e. g. age, sex) and about temporary facts, both physical (e. g. that he has cold, he is tired) or emotional (e. g. that he is bored, sad). Many of the latter affective indices are conditioned by the speaker's *culture* and are hence liable to misinterpretation by those of the different linguistic background (Simpson, 1984: 172).

Always within the relationship between culture and language, Kramsch (2000: 3) believes that language is the principle means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple ways. Moreover, Simpson points out that

culture refers to "the way of life" of a community, "what people do and think", it embraces occupations, religious and political organization, ceremonies, customs, habitual ways of thinking, beliefs, education, morals, etc. these can also lead to the different errors language learners commit.

To end up this discussion, we shall refer to Whorf (1942), he states:

Actually, thinking is most mysterious, and by far the greatest light upon it that we have is thrown by the study of language. This study shows that the forms of a person's thought are controlled by inexorable laws of patterns of which he is unconscious. These patterns are the unperceived intricate systematizations of his own language shown readily enough by a candid comparison and contrast with other ... And ever language is a vast pattern system, different from others, in which are actually ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyses nature, notices or neglects types of relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (In Carroll, 1956:252)

1.3. Language Transfer and the Study of French Influence on English: Case of Spelling

We use the concept of language transfer in this work to refer to the shift from a language to another when speaking or writing a given language. More particularly, we focus upon the use of words belonging to the language learners master better than the target language, especially when the items used are similar in terms of spelling. It also should be noted that language transfer is not only limited to the transfer of words; it can be a transfer of ideas or structures from L1 to L2. In this concern, Nicholls (2003) pointed out:

"We have seen that similarities between words in different languages can lead to false assumptions about shared meaning and entice the learner into sometimes perilous traps".

(Nicholls, September, 2003)

Nicholls put focus here on the similarities between languages that lead to transfer of the negative kind. She pointed that such errors made due to these similarities are called *Language interference*, i.e. *Language transfer* (Ibid). Using the language the learner masters better reflects also his thoughts and call the knowledge he knows to use the target language. In this, Nicholls cited (October 2002):

"When confronted with something new it is a neutral instinct to look for similarities with things that are familiar, to try to draw some comparison with what we know already. Consciously or unconsciously, we bring what we know to what we do not..."

Concerning spelling, she argued (July 2003) that the slight spelling differences existing between French and English –French considered as L1 and English as L2, "account for a significant proportion of spelling errors made by learners of English". That is, this can be an explanation we adopt in the Algerian context of the confronted English spelling errors, and this is the core of the present study.

Always under the heading of language transfer, Berthold et al. (1997) provided a definition to each of phonological, grammatical, lexical and orthographic interferences. However, we are more focused on orthography. Thus, they pointed out that: "...orthographic interference includes the spelling of one language altering another..." (In R. Skiba, October 1997). That is, orthographic or spelling interference remains a contributing factor that leads to a considerable number of errors. To end up this section, we may be best served by Lindenfeld's (1993-1994) work. She studied the interference of English on French among individuals residing Metropolis and a set of small towns in

Oregon. Her work dealt with the influence of English on French speech patterns in bilingual situations. In her examination, she argued that “...it is a common experience for bilingual speakers to be particularly hesitant about the spelling of words which happen to have the same meaning but slightly different spellings in the two languages”. She considered three categories:

- Substitution of the letter **z** for the letter **s**, as in organization / organisation and utilize / utiliser though the differences here are between British and American English.
- Substitution of the letter **c** (pronounced as **s** in these particular cases) for the letter **s** or **t**, as in dancer / danseur or diplomacy / diplomatie.
- Deletion of final (mute) **e**, as in système / system.

All in all, spelling errors that result from the interference of French on English are due to the lexical as well as the orthographic similarities both languages have. We shall in no way neglect the cultural influence of French as already advocated in our first sections.

2. Methodology

2.1. The Outline of the Problem

It is common knowledge that the problem on which our research is based and the stated hypotheses we need to verify are to be presented before ever proceeding in presenting this study in details. This seems accurate to make the usefulness of this work clear. Thus, our problem may be stated as follows:

To which extent can intercultural and inter-lingual link lead to Language transfer (French influence) and cause the most recurring spelling errors first year LMD students of EFL at Béjaia university commit?

Here, this questioning can be supported by a number of questions:

- Does language transfer shape the first year EFL learner's spelling errors in relation to French in Béjaia University?
- Is the intercultural identity our learners have the reason behind spelling English words in French?
- Do spelling errors appear mostly in a given category of words?
- If yes, what are they?

Here, we assume right from the beginning that students make many of the errors in spelling due to the confusion they make between different systems of different languages they know better than English; and French is the language we are highlighting here. Such knowledge is more likely the result of the cultural and linguistic knowledge they possess about French. However, to make our investigation precise, we also assume that our participants are more likely to encounter difficulties in spelling words containing approximations with the French language. That is, students seem to confuse between words they know in French and find in English with slight differences. To classify and describe this kind of confusion, we have opted for Error Analysis for us to recognize and explain the spelling errors in the students' written productions. The explanation we are going to focus upon has to do with the psychological basis of error analysis to which we add intercultural reason that lead learners to commit errors. Technically speaking, this kind of language influence is what we know as language transfer. On the light of what have been said above, we state our two hypotheses as follows:

1. First year LMD students of English at Béjaia University commit spelling errors resulted from the interference of French on English
2. First year LMD students confuse between the French and English spelling systems when similarities occur.

To test our hypotheses and answer our questioning, we shall first determine the major types of errors caused by the influence of French on English in English words' spelling. For this, we categorized the errors into six major types that are:

- a. First year LMD English students substitute a middle or final consonant for another when spelling similar French / English words.
- b. Beginner LMD English learners substitute an initial, middle or final vowel for another when spelling similar French / English words.
- c. First year LMD English learners confuse whether to spell similar French / English words with a single or double consonant.
- d. Beginner LMD English learners confuse between dropping or not a vowel that occurs in the middle position of similar French / English words.
- e. First year LMD English learners omit final vowels as (e) when spelling similar French / English words.
- f. Beginner LMD English learners submit a vowel for a consonant when spelling French / English words?

Through this present study, we aim at analysing the spelling errors made by first year LMD English students of Bejaia University. It is important to mention, here, that we focus only on the misspelled English words that are extremely similar to the corresponding French ones. In this concern, we aim at explaining the confusions that learners face once trying to spell specific English words, as well as finding possible solutions to overcome such a problem.

2.2. The Setting and Subjects

This study is designed to identify spelling errors of first year university students of English inscribed in the LMD system during the whole academic year 2009/2010. There was an observation phase of about five years of teaching under this system starting from its launching in 2004. Errors in writing among first year students seem perturbing and they are from diverse part. Diverse errors call upon diverse origins. Hence, new learners, as our subjects, face many of the difficulties in one of the important skills they are supposed to master; that is writing and spelling in particular. Specifically, the objective of this study is to recognize, classify and explain these errors among two groups containing fifty two students surveyed at Abderrahmane Mira University. What seems original in our participants is that they are all new learners who have neither experienced university before nor have they attended English university courses. That is, our sample has many of the characteristics which make of it homogeneous in terms of EFL but heterogeneous in terms of the cultural and linguistic characteristics apart of English, a detail worth mentioning to have accurate results on their previous and past learning experiences of English. That is, our subjects live in a multicultural and multilingual context. Our university hosts people from different ethno-linguistic and multi-cultural regions the thing that makes a kind of heterogeneity at this level while learning EFL. The reason behind is that the LMD system is not applied in all universities.

2.3. Techniques, Method and Procedure

2.3.1. The Dictations: Error Analysis

To collect data, we relied on two research techniques; dictations and interviews. We dictated two passages to our 52 participants where thirty four similar English/French words are included. We have chosen terms which are more likely to create confusion given the similarity they have in spelling with the French spelling system. The aim of giving two dictations is to present a representative number of words for study. That is, varying words might permit to see different situations, and thus allow a better outcome. In this concern, we have tried to detect the committed errors, categorise them and, then,

interpret and study the said categories. Here, we relied on error analysis. Our main concern using this method was to diagnose the influence of French on English, especially because of the lexical resemblance and similarities existing in both languages.

It should also be stated that the dictations are produced by our third year students¹ who made the effort to collect these words and write two creative pieces. As cited at the beginning of the description, the suggested passages are composed of two different dictations. The first one is entitled *Béjaia University and the LMD System*, while the second one is entitled *The Best Way to Learn Words*. The first dictation contains 15 words which are similar to French ones, with slight differences from French to English. The second dictation contains 19 words of the same type. Thus, we aim at suggesting a considerable number of words, so as to assure validity and reliability in the results.

3.2.2. The Interview

The second method is qualitative. We used face to face interviews made up of five questions developed according to the obtained results from the dictations. This interview's aim is to help construct our recommendations after collecting the six teachers' views about their learners' common errors when writing. Here, we are interested in:

- Making our participants (teachers) aware of our interest in the learners' spelling problems related to French / English interference.
- Providing them with a brief view on the six selected categories of French interference on English in spelling under study.
- Completing the obtained results from our case study, i.e. first year LMD students of English.
- Verifying our hypothesis through the qualitative data we collect from experienced and qualified teachers of writing and translation.
- Involving the six instructors in the proposition of tasks as educative French / English games that may help learners overcome their spelling problems related to French / English interference.

In what follows, we shall present the results of both techniques. The dictations are analysed through error analysis and the interviews through thematic analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Error Analysis of the Dictations

It should be noted that through the present analysis, we ignore all the other factors that may lead to the errors but focus merely on "Spelling" and more specifically on the similarities existing between a significant number of words in French and English languages. In other words, we only focused on the errors related to the psychological basis and more particularly to language transfer.

In the present table, we have summarized the number of suggested words, the number of committed errors with their respective rates.

Table 01: The Number of the Suggested Words and Committed Errors

First Year LMD English Students	Words		Errors	
	n°	%	n°	%
52 Subjects	34 words	100%	530 errors	100%

¹ The students' names are : Lamia Ait Saidi and Mourad Temine

As one might notice, for 34 words, we calculated 530 errors. This means that our participants do not in fact know how to spell such words since they repeatedly err in writing them.

To begin our analysis, we have classified in the following table the different categories to emphasize the comparison of the learners' percentage of errors with the different stated categories. Seven lexical items are proposed in each of the four first categories, while the fifth and sixth contain three words in each. Thus, we may say that making a logical comparison between the different results obtained throughout our case study is possible, as far as the number of the suggested words is the same in each category. It is clear that the more the suggested words belong to one of the six categories, the higher the percentage of learners' errors is as well. However, submitting *z* for *s* is apart as the reader might notice in the following section. As far as our subjects' spelling errors are concerned, we have created table 02, containing the six categories of spelling errors collected from the learners' copies:

Table 02: The Participants' Errors

Categories						
Words	Omitting a Vowel, Submitting a Vowel for another	Single/ Double Consonant	Omitting or Adding Initial/ Final (e) & Submitting Two Vowels for One)	Omitting a Consonant – Submitting a Consonant for another	Submitting z for s)	Submitting a Consonant for a Vowel
	abundance agreably announciation approching Europeen exemple pronounciation	abbreviation adress carott litterature biologie futur sociologie	additionnal agressive litteral frontieres phrmacie systeme Specially	alcool antibiotique aristocratie autorize caracter scolar suprematie	brasil brasilian breese	academie economie philosophic

The number of errors in each of the six suggested categories as already stated in the early sections of this article (**c.f. 2.1 Outline of the Problem**) was calculated. Here are the results presented in the coming table:

Table 03: The Percentage of The Spelling Errors Committed in Six Categories of Errors

Categories	Description of the categories	n°	%
1	Omitting a Vowel/ Submitting a Vowel for another	172	32.45%
2	Confusing between “Single / Double Consonant”	157	29.62%
3	Adding or Omitting Initial / Final (e) & Submitting Two Vowels for One	82	15.47%
4	Omitting a Consonant / Submitting a Consonant for another	66	12.45%
5	Submitting z for s	48	9.05%

6	Submitting a Consonant for a Vowel	05	0.94%
	Total	530	100%

The statistics show that the category where spelling errors are most noticeable is the first one (*Omitting a Vowel / Submitting a Vowel for another*) with 32.45% of errors. Then, follows the second (*Single/ Double Consonant*) with 29.62% of errors, the third (*Omitting or Adding Initial/ Final (e) & Submitting Two Vowels for One*) with 15.47% of errors, the fourth (*Omitting a Consonant – Submitting a Consonant for another*) with 12.45% of errors, the fifth (*Submitting z for s*) with 9.05% of errors, and finally, the sixth (*Submitting a Consonant for a Vowel*) with 0.94% of errors. As one might notice, we ordered the six categories from the most common to the least. Concerning the fifth category, we notice that although only three words are proposed comparing to the first four categories, the percentage of the spelling errors (on S /Z letters) is also of a specific importance (9.05%). We can interpret this that beginner English learners are more likely to confuse between both consonants, or might over-generalize British English and American English. That is because overgeneralization covers instances where the learner creates a deviant structure on the basis of his experience of the other structures in the foreign language (Dianpu Xing, 2007). However, the last category is not apparent, especially that we gave dictations. Learners might have heard the pronunciation of the words to guess their spellings (whether the word is pronounced with a consonant or a vowel).

To have a clear picture of the similarities and differences existing between the suggested words, we have summarized them in Table 04, where the six categories are presented with both the number and percentage of errors made by our subjects.

Table 04: The Erroneous Words' Spelling and their Correct Forms in French and English

1 st Dictation/ 2 nd Dictation			The Correct Words' Selling	
Learners' Errors	n°	%	In English	In French
abondance	21	3,96%	abundance	
agreably	34	6,41%	agreeably	agréablement
annunciation	27	5,09%	annunciation	annonciation
approch	31	5,84%	approach	approche
Europeen	15	2,83%	European	Européen
exemple	15	2,83%	example	exemple
pronunciation	29	5,45%	pronunciation	prononciation

ab bre vation	39	7,35%	abb re vation	abr é vation
additi on nal	13	2,45%	additi on al add re ss	additi on nel
ad re ss	23	4,33%	agg re ssive	ad re ssive
ag re ssive	22	4,15%	car ro t	ag re ssive
car ro tt	18	3,39%	l it eral	car ro tte
l it teral	06	1,13%	l it erature	l it téral
l it terature	36	6,79%		l it térature
biolog ie	06	1,13%	biolog y	biolog ie
fronti er es	08	1,50%	fronti er s	fronti er es
futur	35	6,60%	future	futur
phr ma cie	05	0,94%	pharm a cy	pharm ac ie
sociolog ie	05	0,94%	sociolog y	sociolog ie
Sp eci ally	15	2,83%	Es pe cially	Sp é cialement
syst em e	08	1,50%	system	syst è me
alco ol	08	1,50%	alco h ol antibiotic	alco ol
antibiot iq ue	11	2,07%	Aristocr a cy	antibiot iq ue
aristocr at ie	05	0,94%	author iz e	Aristocr at ie
author iz e	05	0,94%	char acter	autor is er
car acter	19	3,58%	scholar	car act ère
scol ar	16	3,01%	suprem a cy	scol a ire
suprem at ie	02	0,37%		supr é mat ie
bras il	19	3,58%	Braz il	Brés il
bras il ian	18	3,39%	Braz il ian	Brés il ien
bree se	11	2,07%	Bree ze	Brise
acad em ie	03	0,5%	academic economic	acad ém ie
econom ie	02	6%	philosoph ic	écon om ie
philosoph ic	00	0,37%		philosoph iq ue
		0,00%		(ie)
Total	530	100%		

3.2. The Interview Findings

3.2.1. Teachers' Classification, Explanation and Interpretation of the Students' Spelling Errors

When asked about whether students do commit spelling errors and confuse between French and English, all teachers confirmed the issue. Teacher A and teacher C pointed out that learners commit a considerable number of spelling errors because of the French influence, especially for those words used in both French and English with the difference in final (e). Teacher C gave also the example of (*essai / essay*) where students write the term in French. Teacher B reported that many are influenced by French, but Arabic influence is not to be neglected. It appears at different levels on their exams' sheets. For teacher D, whenever learners use the same words ending with (e), they do not drop the (e) where it should be omitted. Teacher E agreed upon the fact that such spelling errors are frequently found among his students. It sometimes leads, according to him, to the use of new words which exist

in both languages but meaning different things from French to English –false friends. However, we are limited to the study of true friends. To end with teacher F, she argued that spelling errors are committed depending on the words themselves. Those words ending with (*ic*) are generally spelled with (*ique*), learners double consonants where there should be only one consonant such as *developpement* instead of *development*. She also gave the example of *independence/ independance* where learners tend to submit (*e*) for (*a*).

To explain such errors, our informants claimed what follows: teacher A emphasized on the fact that the explanation to take seriously into account is that English is not taught early in schools. At the same time, the media in our society use French in addition to Arabic or Berber. Most of the foreign language TV channels are broadcasted in French, and information (French magazines, newspapers as *Liberté*, *El khabar*, *Le Soir D'Algérie...*) are in French. Even some family speech is from time to time in French (at Bejaia). As English is taught too late, according to her, such an interference problem is unavoidable. Another explanation for her might be that as there is no comparative study of French/ English languages, learners are not really aware of the existence of such a spelling problem. For teacher B, many reasons can be involved. Among them, we may have the fact that students master French more than English, and that they do not do much efforts to overcome the spelling problem. According to her, if learners are not aware of the problem, they will not be able to diminish their errors. The other explanation gotten from teacher B is that students do not make use of English/ English dictionaries. As a result, this fact encourages more language transfer as well as inter language. For teacher C, learners may have learned the words like that. That is, they learned them in French by contact, or they have never seen some of the suggested words before, but they know them in French. So, the interference occurs. The example given by the teacher is *hospital/ hopital*. Teacher D claimed that in order to learn English, learners rely on their subsequent language French, which is according to them, the nearest one to English. So for her, because of the similarities existing between words, problems of transfer occur. Teacher E argued that these spelling errors are due to the fact that beginner English learners do not have a good mastery of the English language. They urge themselves to spell words in French provided that their ideas are expressed. This may be one of their language strategies. For him, as the learners' language register is not rich enough to use English spelling in the right way, they refer to French to aid themselves. Still, learners, according to teacher E, are aware of that, but have no justification for their deeds. Teacher F also spoke about the lack of the English language mastery by first year students. For her, there is a transfer when learners refer to their background in French to spell words in English. Some cases, however, lack concentration or simply think in French.

In this case, for teacher A both spellings are correct; but she pointed out that it is important to underline the difference after having asked learners whether they know the difference or not. Teacher B, teacher D and teacher E simply answered that as they teach R.P. and not dialects, it is not important to take the difference into account. For them, learners should not be blamed. In contrast, teacher C emphasized on the “yes, I do”, mainly at the level of a discourse. That is, in Br E or Am E texts, and especially in spelling. For him, teachers should stress the fact that no mixing up between the dialects is accepted. Thanks to this, learners may acquire the ability to separate French from English, whether British or American. Similarly, teacher F argued that if the text is in Br E and learners use Am E, the spelling of words is considered as wrong, and vice versa. Yet, accepting both dialects as correct should be avoided according to her.

Among the six categories presented to our participants, the first one entitled *Omitting a Vowel/ Submitting a Vowel for another* is according to them the category where learners tend to commit a considerable number of errors. The classification according to their answers is as follows:

1. Omitting a Vowel / Submitting a Vowel for another.
2. Confusing between Single/ Double Consonant.
3. Adding or Omitting Initial/ Final (e) & Submitting One Vowel for Two others.
4. Submitting Z for S.

5. Omitting a Consonant / Submitting a Consonant for another.
6. Submitting a Consonant for a Vowel.

In this concern, we may say that their classification goes practically hand in hand with what learners showed in their errors, except for the fourth and fifth categories which they reversed. It proves that our informants are experienced enough to detect the most common spelling errors made by learners and categorize them according to their experience.

3.2.2. Teachers' Recommendations:

According to the analysis of the teachers' interview, we tried to summarize the important suggestions made by our participants when asking the last item. Thus, each of the instructors and learners has a role to play in improving the students' English spelling. The main and useful suggestions cited all along the meeting to retain are the following:

Learners should:

1. Read in English without neglecting French.
2. Get rid of French / English dictionaries.
3. Check the spelling of words in dictionaries.
4. Have a spelling words curiosity.
5. Present a course in French / English spelling differences.
6. Make efforts to learn some words by heart like for irregular verbs.
7. Practice the spelling rules.
8. Think in English.
9. Be serious and concentrated when writing or spelling words.

Teachers should:

10. Introduce a comparative teaching to beginner English learners' syllabus.
11. Introduce dictations to first year English syllabus.
12. Be strict when correcting spelling errors.
13. Provide learners with tasks related to spelling.
14. Ask students to spell or write on the board some of the English words existing in French.
15. Try to familiarize learners with French / English similar words.
16. Introduce educative games or proverbs including French/ English similar words to first year English syllabus.
17. Giving learners texts to study, including French / English similar words.
18. Assess students on their knowledge at the level of spelling words.
19. Correct the students' spelling errors by explaining for them the differences between both languages.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, we may say that the interference of L1 on L2 is inevitable. That is to say, learners tend sometimes to over-generalize rules and strategies specific to French / English spelling differences, to think in L1, to spell words in French because they do not know their spelling in English

and also, they do not get involved seriously in learning the spelling of English words. All these factors seem to lead to a negative transfer of French words to English when writing. Our findings showed that learners commit a higher percentage of spelling errors on middle vowels, especially when submitting a phoneme for another. Learners commit also a considerable number of errors related to existing confusions between doubling a consonant or not. These two categories are, according to the results obtained from our survey, the ones where learners find difficulties in spelling English words. We, then, end up by verifying our hypotheses and suggest to deepen this work with another research work where cultural influence is to be highlighted.

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Appendix: The Interview Questions

1. In your teaching experience and when reading your students' answers, have you noticed spelling errors related to the French interference on English?
2. What is the explanation you can give to such kind of errors?
3. When your learners submit z for s in spelling an English word, do you take into account the dialect in which the word is written before claiming that it is wrongly spelled?
4. We have classified errors into six, in which of the six categories of French interference on English do you think that learners make more errors?
5. According to you, what should be done to avoid or diminish this kind of language
6. deficiency, i.e. spelling?