Spelling Difficulties Faced by Arab Learners of English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The field of second language acquisition has acknowledged the importance of good spelling for second language (L2) learners. Learning to spell, in fact, is not a straightforward process rather it involves numerous mental processes. Proponents of this field argue that learning English spelling entails the correct connection of the phonemes and graphemes. The former refers to the spoken sounds and the latter refers to the written symbols. Spelling, also, reflects to a large extent the actual level of people's word knowledge and it can be used to measure the language achievements of L2 users. Nevertheless, the irregular system of English causes different kinds of problems and difficulties for roughly all learners of English including native speakers. This paper aims to highlight the difficulties that Arab learners of English encounter when spelling English words. It describes some spelling approaches such as whole word approach, phonics approach, invented spelling approach, traditional approach and morphemic approach. Then, it considers the different kinds of spelling errors often made by Arab learners of English. It concludes with some suggestions for helping Arab learners of English improve their spelling skills.

Key words: Arab learners of English, spelling, spelling mistakes

Cite as: Alenazi, O. S. (2018). Spelling Difficulties Faced by Arab Learners of English as a Foreign Language. *Arab World English Journal*, 9 (2).

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no2.8>