

## The Spelling Error Analysis of the Written Persian Essays of Russian Adult Learners of Persian

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### ABSTRACT

*Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors made by learners in using their second language. This study focuses on spelling errors in the data collected out of 78 written Persian essays produced by 32 adult Russian learners, who were in the intermediate level in Persian language. These errors were first detected and classified into 2 major categories and then divided into several subcategories. This paper further attempts to describe and diagnose errors in accordance with two major categories: interlingual errors and intralingual errors, and some sub-categories were also identified. It was found that the most frequent errors made by the intermediate level Russian students' in their written productions in Persian language at result from the intralingual errors. Finally, some suggestions have been made for the treatment of the errors.*

**Keywords:** Spelling Errors, Russian Learners. Persian as a Second Language, Interlingual Errors, Intralingual Errors.

### Introduction

Errors in foreign language teaching and learning are the cases which are difficult enough to avoid. Weireesh, (1991) considers learners' errors to be of particular importance because making errors is a device the learners use in order to learn. The Error Analysis is known as an approach for studying errors in second language acquisition. It is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make (Abeywickrama, 2010). Weireesh, (ibid.) considers EA as a valuable aid to identify and explain difficulties faced by learners. It involves first describing the learners' Interlanguage (the version of the Target Language (TL) used by learners) and TL itself; it also consists of a comparison between the errors made in the TL and TL itself. However, it is impossible to deny the effects of mother tongue (MT) on TL (James, 1998: 5). The Error Analysis (hereafter EA) is, in fact, the examination of those errors committed by students in both their spoken and written language productions. Corder (1981: 112) held the same view regarding the function of error analysis and that there are two justifications for studying learners' errors: its relevance to language teaching and the study of the language acquisition process. In fact, systematically analyzing errors made by language learners makes it possible to determine areas that need further improvement in teaching (Corder, 1974). According to Richards and Sampson (1974) "At the level of pragmatic classroom experience, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort."

In this analysis, one of studying processes is to determine of level of errors. James (1998) has proposed three levels of language: the levels of substance, text and discourse. If the learner was operating the phonological or the graphological substance systems, i.e. spelling

or pronouncing, we say he or she has produced an encoding or decoding error. If he or she was operating the lexico-grammatical systems of the TL to produce or process text, we refer to any errors on this level as composing or understanding errors. If he or she was operating on the discourse level, we label the errors occurring misformulation or misprocessing errors (Yang, 2010). The next process in error analysis is to determine the sources of errors. In this regard, James (1998) recognized four major categories: interlingual, intralingual, communication-strategy, and induced. According to what has been explained, we will focus on spelling errors. Learning to spell is important to learning writing and reading. Besides, error analysis of spelling in language learning can help us identify areas which need to be remediated in the process of instruction. , since Persian language is made up of about 29 sounds with 32 letters used to represent them; also, Arabic script is writing system in Persian language which is written from right to left in horizontal lines and numerals written from left to right. Besides, there is a marked difference between Russian writing system with that of Persian. The contemporary Russian language is written with Cyrillic alphabet consisting of 33 graphemes for representing 5 vowels and 33 (36) consonants. Thus, error analysis of spelling in languages with different orthographic can provides insight into transfer and into how orthographic knowledge or knowledge about spelling in one language might be used in learning another language (Joy, 2011).

The Error Analysis in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) was established in 1970s by Corder and his colleagues. In his article entitled, “The significance of learner errors”, Corder (1967) as the ‘Father’ of Error Analysis observed that Error analysis (EA) took a new turn. Later, Selinker (1972) propounded Interlanguage Hypothesis introduced in the field of error analysis. J. C. Richards, as a prominent researcher of EA, is in his book on Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition (1971), e argues that many of the learners' errors happen due to the strategies that they use in language acquisition, especially their L2. The problem includes the reciprocal interference of the target language items; i.e. negative effect of their prior knowledge of their L1 on their absorption of L2 (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009).

Sercombe (2000) explains that EA serves three purposes. Firstly, to find out the level of language proficiency the learner has reached. Secondly, to obtain information about common difficulties in language learning, and thirdly, to find out how people learn a language (ibid). There are some studies carried out on the written language productions. James (1998: 135) considered that there are two other noteworthy studies of L<sub>2</sub> spelling (Ziahosseiny and Oller (1970) and Ibrahim (1978)). Ziahosseiny and Oller (1970) showed that learning to spell an L<sub>2</sub> that has Roman script is harder if one's L<sub>1</sub> also uses a Roman script: the learners expect the script to have the same spelling conventions in L<sub>2</sub> as L<sub>1</sub>, so they transfer from L<sub>1</sub>.

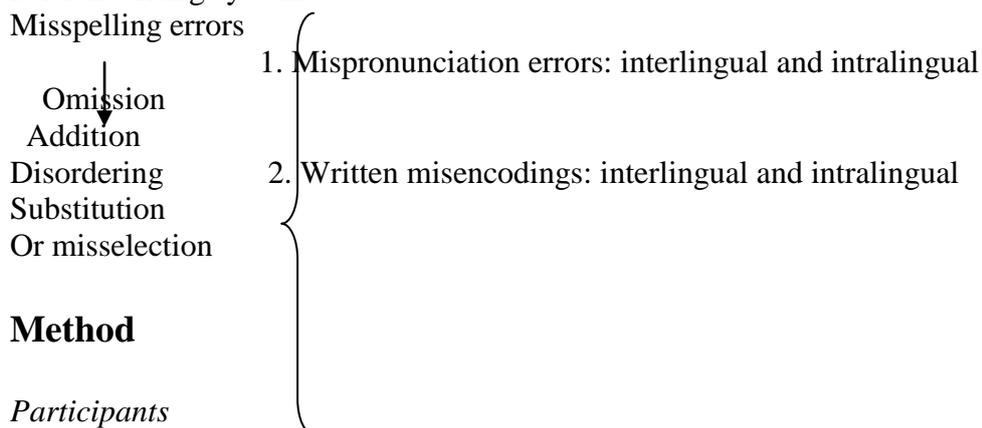
Also, error analysis of spelling in languages with different orthographic depths has been the subject of a number of studies (see San Francisco et al., 2006; Sun-Alperin & Wang, 2008; Wang & Geva, 2003) (Joy, 2011). Matbooei Banab (2006) observed that spelling errors in the English-speaking learners of Persian at the elementary level had a high frequency; intralingual errors were also rather frequent. Ahmadvand (2010) by studying the orthographic error analysis of the German learners of Persian at the elementary level” observed that phonological errors had a high frequency, and intralingual errors were also frequent. The studies on written language productions of Persian as Second Language learners have shown that their writings are full of mistakes.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the errors made in Persian spelling in Russian learners. In this research we aim at detecting types and sources of spelling errors in Russian learners.

## Theoretical Framework

According to James (1998), there are two types of substance errors: the first one is misspellings which consist of mispronunciation errors and written misencodings. The second type is called mechanical errors, which consist of punctuation errors, typographic errors, dyslexic errors, and confusables.

In this study, we have utilized the design by James (1998) for detecting, locating and describing spelling errors. Moreover, writing Persian errors in Russian learners are studied on Persian writing system.



Thirty-two adult Russian learners (male and female) of Persian (as a foreign language) who were selected from four institutes participated in this study. They were in second and third years of undergraduate education and of Persian learning as a foreign language.

**Table 1: Participants**

Participants	Level	Year	Num
Students in Dekhoda Lexicon Institute (International Center For Persian Students)	Intermediate	2012	10
Persian Students in Astrakhan State University	Second year	2012	7
Persian Students in Saint Petersburg State University	Second and third year	2012	6
Persian students in Lomonosov Moscow State University	Second year	2012	9

## Data Collection

In the present study, the source of data was 87 student essays written on different topics appropriate for intermediate level (for example, national celebration; their favorite book, movie, or landscape, and their memories of school, etc)). Each essay consisted of 150-250 words written within 45-60 minutes. All the errors in the essays were identified by researcher who is herself a native speaker of Persian language, and an MA student in Teaching Persian as a Foreign Language and also fluent in Russian language. The collected data consisted of 446 instances of misspelling.

## Data Analysis

Here we start analyzing our data. Spelling errors made in the Persian writings and essays produced by some Russian-speaking people who learn Persian are categorized based on the types and sources of errors made.

### 1. Mispronunciation Errors

Mispronunciation errors are words that are pronounced in a wrong way. They are of two types: the first one is errors, which the learners use, an L<sub>1</sub> substitute phoneme, because of lack of equivalent L<sub>2</sub> phoneme in L<sub>1</sub>. The second type is errors used by the learners as an L<sub>2</sub> substitute phoneme which is a phonetically similar sound. We carried out a contrastive analysis of the Russian and Persian phonologies, and identified four contrasts, in the form of sounds present in Persian but absent from Russian, which would lead to mispronouncing of Persian by Russians: Persian /d̪z/, /h/, /ʔ/, /q/. Now, as a result of mispronouncing the target sound, the learners access a grapheme which they wrongly think represents the target sound. The following examples present the types of errors in mispronunciation.

**Table 2: Mispronunciations: Interlingual Errors**

No.	Persian Error	Persian Corrected Form	Russian Equivalent	English Equivalent	Modification
1	/næχʃ/	/næçʃ/	роль	Role	Substitution
2	/zænvijer/	/zɑnvijeh/	Январь	January	Substitution
3	/gæblæn/	/gæblæn/	Уже	Already	substitution
4	/χitʃkæs/	/hitʃkæs/	Никто	no one	substitution
5	/gitler/	/hitler/	Гитлер	Hitler	substitution
6	/færk nædærim/	/fæg nædærim/	не различаем	don't differ	substitution
7	/tæbijat/	/tæbiʔat/	Природа	Nature	omission
8	/ædʒibtærin/	/ʔædʒibtærin/	самые странные	Strangest	omission
9	/katʃ/	/kadʒ/	Сосна	pine	substitution
10	/nɑrɑχæt bud/	/nɑrɑhæt bud/	она была расстроена.	She was upset.	substitution

In Table (1), errors result because of the lack of L<sub>2</sub> phonemes in L<sub>1</sub>. So, they have an interlingual source, since Russian learners substitute phonemes in the same way as they use it in their language. Phoneme /h/ is substituted with phoneme /χ/. Russian learners usually follow such a procedure while using some proper names in Persian. Rubinchik (2000) mentions some proper names with phoneme /h/ substituted with phoneme /χ/. This is similar to the error observed in error (9). But in error (5, 2), the proper name “Hitler” is mispronounced as /gitler/ and /zɑnvijeh/ is mispronounced as /zænvijer/ (Russian "январь"). In this example, Russian learner has transferred the Russian pronunciation to Persian. Phoneme /q/ is substituted with phoneme /ç/. Both phonemes have co-manner of articulation [+stop]. /d̪z/ is substituted with /tʃ/ both of which have co-manner of articulation. /ʔ/ is not pronounced anymore and only the next adjacent vowel is pronounced.

**Table 3: Mispronunciations: Intralingual errors**

No.	Persian Error	Persian Corrected Form	English Equivalent	Modification
1	/pidar/	/bidar/	awake	substitution
2	/pijtærin/	/bijtærin/	the most	substitution
3	/χoʃmam amæde ʔæst/	/χoʃman amæde ʔæst/	like	substitution
4	/amuzeʃga/	/amuzeʃgah/	institute	omission
5	/bozogtærin/	/bozorgtærin/	the largest	omission
6	/jazdæ/	/jazdæ/	eleven	omission
7	/sobhæt/	/sohbæt/	speaking	disordering
8	/dʒæmiʔæt/	/dʒæmʔiæt/	population	disordering
9	/næzdikeh/	/næzdike/	near by	addition
10	/batʃehgi/	/batʃegi/	childhood	addition
11	/pajtæχteh/	/pajtæχte/	capital	addition

In Table (2), errors have a rather intralingual origin. Errors (1 , 2 & 3) are the result of missubstitution. Learners missubstituted phonemes as a phonetically similar sound or co-place of articulation or co-manner of articulation. These types of substitutions also occur by Persian speakers. In errors (4 & 6), /h/ is deleted in word final position. In spoken Persian, /h/ in final position is not pronounced as well, so learners transferred these forms from Persian to written Persian. Error (6) is also of the same type. Errors (7 & 8) are actually caused by poor listening and lack of clear written picture in memory.

Errors (10 & 11) are caused by a false analogy with such words as /miveh/ (fruit), /nameh/ (letter), and so on. /e/ (the Persian genitive sign which is not reflected in writing) is pronounced as /h/.

## 2. Written Misencodings

Sometimes errors are the result of TL phonographic or sound-to-symbol rules to represent the pronunciation of each phoneme. There are two sources of misencodings: Interlingual and Intralingual.

### 2.1. Interlingual Errors

In these errors, learners might make errors in applying a Russian mother language phonological rules. The following examples present such errors.

**Table 4: Misencodings- Interlingual errors**

No.	Persian Error	Persian Corrected Form	English Equivalent	Modification
1	رعد و برگ /rædobærg/	/rædobærg/	thunder	substitution
2	روسی /rusij/	/rusi/	Russian	addition
3	دیدنی /didænij/	/didæni/	visual	addition
4	دانشگاه /dæneʃgah/	/daneʃgah/	university	substitution
5	تجیک /tædʒiki/	/tadʒiki/	Tajik	substitution
6	بیلاروس /bilarus/	/Belarus/	Belarus	substitution
7	چیک /tʃik/	/tʃek/	Czech	substitution

In error (1), the learner has applied a rule in Russian language that /g/ ([+voiced]) in final position is converted to its voiceless equivalent /k/. Errors (2 & 3) are of interlingual origin. Mispronunciation in this error is resulted in transferring of phonemes /ий/ that in Russian words come together so wherever Learners faced with /i/, they pronounced and wrote /ij/. Errors (4 & 5) are result in substituting vowel /a/. In the example (5), the learner has transferred Russian form (таджик /tædʒiki/), so it is substituted /a/ with /æ/. However, it is important to know that in Persian, there is not any grapheme to reflect short vowels, so it causes problems for Russian learners and other non-Persian-speaking people to read and to write. Errors (6 & 7) also are caused by transferring vowels of Russian words (Белоруссия & Чехия).

## 2.2. Intralingual Errors

In the following errors, learners might use an inappropriate PG rule of Persian L<sub>2</sub>. The following examples present the types of errors in intralingual misencodings.

**Table 6: Misencodings- Intralingual Errors**

No.	Persian Error	Persian Corrected form	English equivalent	modification
1	/χanei χodæʃ/	/χanje χodæʃ/	her home	mischoice
2	/toziʔ/	/tozih/	explain	homophone
3	/bozork/	/bozorg/	big	omission
4	منتظر /montæzer/	منتظر /montæzer/	waited	homophone
5	جذاب /dʒæzab/	جذاب /dʒæzab/	attractive	homophone
6	تحصیل /tæhsil/	تحصیل /tæhsil/	education	homophone
7	ترج /tærh/	ترج /tærh/	pattern	homophone
8	/qalebæn/	/qalebæn/	often	homophone
	قالباً	غالباً		

9	ساهر /sahel/	ساحل /sahel/	sea side	homophone
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Most errors in Table (6) have an intralingual origin. These errors consist of misselection of genitive sign, homophone graphemes and spoken forms in writing. The genitive sign in Persian is /e/. This sign is not written and is only pronounced. In some contexts, it can appear in the form of the letter /je/, which comes after vowels and /h/. Besides, this sign is sometimes confused with the indefinite article sign in Persian (/i/); this case is seen in error (1). Error (2) is a case of confusion between similar sounding words. It is considered as an error because /tozi?/ means "distribute", and /tozih/ means "explain". In error (3), learners misused spoken forms in writing under the effect of Persian. Words are often appear differently in spoken and written forms, so it may cause problems for learners of Persian. Homophone graphemes, as mentioned, in this table occupied more space. Homophone graphemes in Persian include /s/ «ث» «ص» «س»; /z/ «ظ» «ض» «ذ» «ز»; /t/ «ط» «ت»; /q/ «غ» «ق» and /h/ «ه» «ح». So, it is problematic for even Russian learners at the intermediate level.

## Results

Table (2) shows the analysis of spelling errors based on type of error, number of errors and percentage of errors committed by the participants.

**Table 7: Representing Type of Errors**

Item	Type of Error	No. of Errors	Ratio
1	Mispronunciations	117	35.87%
2	Written misencodings	209	64.11%
3	<b>Total</b>	326	

**Table 8: Representing Source of Error**

Item	Source of Type of Error	Interlingual errors	Intralingual
1	Mispronunciations	55	62
2	Written misencodings	22	187
3	<b>Total</b>	77	249
4	<b>Ratio</b>	23.62%	76.36%

Tables (7) & (8) represent a general analysis of the distribution of errors. Table (7) shows that the total number of spelling errors in learners' writings is 326. There are both errors of the type of mispronunciation and misencoding; moreover, two sources of errors (interlingual and interlingual) are diagnosed in the data (Table 8). Among those errors, there are 209 written misencodings which account for 64.11% of total. Next comes mispronunciation by taking up 117, 35.87%. Table (8) shows that the number of intralingual cases is 249, 76.36% and the number of interlingual errors is 77, 23.62% of 326 errors. So, it can be resulted that misencodings as type of error and intralinguals as source of errors have a high frequency.

## Conclusion

This paper is a study on the spelling errors made by Russian students in their Persian writings. We tried to discuss more on the situation and causes of the problems occurred in the writing practice through an error analysis approach. We found that problems of Russian learners of Persian lie mostly in written misencodings. The detailed analysis of these errors

also show that the learners' most important source of errors is mother-tongue transfer; unawareness of the rules of target language can be considered as the origin of some of these errors. Spelling Persian words among Russian learners is confused, because of completely different Persian and Russian writing systems. Therefore, in order to improve the spelling and writing ability of the learners, teachers should pay more attention to the two alphabet systems and rules. To meet this purpose, teachers' knowledge of both L<sub>1</sub> and L<sub>2</sub> languages can be helpful. Also, teachers should put an emphasis on these errors in the upper level of learning, because with repetition of these errors, they may be fossilized in the learners' interlanguage.

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