

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A pilot study was conducted to refine the procedures for the study. The first part of this chapter will describe the pilot study and the second part of this chapter will describe the procedures for the present study. This study is exploratory in nature.

3.2 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to establish appropriate classification of spelling errors by Form One school children. The pilot study accomplished two objectives and they were to:

- a. identify the kinds of spelling errors made by Malaysian secondary school children of Form One level.
- b. classify the errors into categories which were tentatively identified after literature reviews.

The pilot study was conducted on a group of 30 Form One students from Sekolah Menengah Bukit Bandaraya , Kuala Lumpur. The study was carried out with the help of a Form One English Language teacher, Puan Thanes, who read a set of 50 words (refer appendix 1) to the students. These words were basic words that the students are familiar with and the choices of words are mostly from their primary year six English Vocabulary list (refer to appendix 2). Students wrote down the words as the teacher was reading. The students were given 3-5 minutes to write each word. Teacher then collected all the students' written scripts after which she marked all the words and spelling errors were detected. These errors were placed according to the categories designed after reviewing literature (refer appendix 3). The data consisted of a written sample of 50 words from each student. A total of 30 written samples were collected with the number of 1500 words from all the thirty students. The students' written work was used as data in this pilot study. The spelling errors were then identified and categorised as shown in appendix 4.

3.2.1 Procedure

Out of the 1500 written words collected for the pilot study, 677 errors were identified. These errors were placed into fifteen categories (Anderson & Lapp, 1988; Burns & Broman, 1983; De Haven, 1988; Hennings, 1986; Norton, 1985; Rubin, 1980). Categories and examples are shown in table 2.

Table 2

Categories and Examples of Spelling errors

No.	Categories	Examples
1.	Pronunciation	'blous' for blouse, 'dres' for dress and 'flowr' for flower.
2.	Vowel pattern rule	'meet' for meat, 'feld' for field and 'blaus' for blouse.
3.	Homonym	'me' for mee, 'shot' for shorts and 'rise' for rice.
4.	Compounding	'grand mother' for grandmother , 'foot ball' for football .
5.	Plural and Possessive	'sport's' for sports, 'colour's' for colours, 'flower's' for flowers and 'childrens' for children.
6.	Omission of Pronounced letter	'teather' for teacher, 'shool' for 'school and 'libray' for library
7.	Double Consonants	'shapperner' for sharpener, 'arange' for arrange' and 'swiming' for swimming.
8.	Insertion of a Letter	'vegeshtables' for vegetables, 'begg' for bag and 'becaous' for because.
9.	Reversal of letters	'daugther' for daughter, 'freind' for friend

10.	Omission of Silent Letters	'biscut' for biscuit, 'sapene' for sharpener and 'scool' for school.
11.	Affix	'beauticul' for beautiful, 'shorts' for shorts and 'swining' for swimming.
12.	Phonetic	'doter' for daughter, 'hup' for 'hoop' and 'ofis' for office.
13.	Vowel Substitution	'cheir' for chair, teble' for table, 'mi' for mee
14.	Semiphonetic	'draas' for dress, 'cupbert' for cupboard and 'cyilling' for ceiling.
15.	Consonant Substitution	'babminton' for badminton, 'angle' for uncle and 'dauther' for daughter.

The pilot study revealed that there is a lot of considerations need to be looked into in the present study. The constraints were:

i. Difficulty on Hearing Acoustic

Interferences or 'environment bias' such as surrounding noise or acoustic problems, that could have probably hampered the clarity of students' hearing and would have written according to what they assumed that they have heard.

ii. Teacher's Pronunciation

Teacher's pronunciations too need to be considered. When the teacher pronounced a word, how accurate can the pronunciation be? Was the teacher using any accents or slangs that could distort the pronunciation, for example vegetable pronounced as 'washtable' uncle pronounced as 'anggel' and others.

iii. Unknown words

Students might not be aware of the spelling of the words read to them or the words were beyond their range of vocabulary. Students might not have heard of those words before, so to test students' spelling of unknown words, can question the validity of this research, as students have no previous knowledge when the words were concerned.

iv. Time Constraint

A time limit of 3 -5 minutes was given to students to spell the words. This too put some pressure on the students. Students would have found it difficult to spell, as they had to listen and at the same time write the words within the stipulated time given.

3.3 The Present Study

The problems encountered during the pilot study have led to some changes made in the research design and methodology of the present study.

3.3.1 Subjects

A total of 92 Form One students from a secondary school were selected as subjects. Gender and race were not taken into account. Students were picked at random based on their English Language test result. All these students were average students. They scored marks in the range of 50 out of 100 conducted in their school. They were from four different classes, I Tabah, I Inovasi, I Sabar and I Maju. The students were chosen from the 'average' category so as to give a basic description of spelling errors among the Form One students in that school. All these students attended the national primary schools where they have undergone six years of learning English, since Primary One. All these students are not native speakers of English .

3.3.2 Research Design

In order to identify and clarify the spelling errors that Form One students made, students' latest last three written works in English from their composition books were collected. In the exercises, students wrote at their own pace with their own range of vocabulary. This had eliminated certain 'environment bias' such as:

- a. difficulty on hearing acoustic
- b. teacher's pronunciation
- c. unknown words
- d. time constraint

These written works were analysed to identify the spelling errors. Later, the errors were placed under fifteen categories as identified in the pilot study. Apart from the written works, interviews were carried out to check on the students' metalinguistic ability to rationalize their spelling errors. Students' written works and interviews were used to validate the research findings.

3.3.3 Sample

A collection of three written - samples were selected from each student's written exercises from the students' last three latest written works. A total of 276 written samples were collected. These samples vary in length and words.

3.3.4 Interview

Besides the three written works from each student, interviews were conducted to test the metalinguistic competencies or their reasons behind their spelling errors and to understand the spelling errors made by them for example, 'rice' for 'price', 'tress' for 'dress' and 'drownats' for groundnuts. Eleven students from each class were randomly selected to be interviewed to probe the strategies used by the students to spell the words. This was to double - check the accuracy of classification of errors into categories. Students were assured that their misspelled words would not be viewed as right or wrong but rather be looked at as innovative strategies of spelling words.

In the interviews, students were asked to pronounce the words before describing their reasons in spelling out the words. Examples of the spelling error was 'reses' (recess) and a student responded that the word was spelt in accordance to the sound - symbol relationship or 'phonetic', 'untill' (until) was another word that was asked and the respond was that there was no mistake in this spelling or the reason was denial and etc.

All questions were structured and focus towards spelling errors. Examples of questions asked were:

"What is this word?" (Pointing to the word)

"How do you spell this word?"

"Why do you spell this word like this?" (Referring to the spelling written by the student).

3.3.5 Data Analysis

Three written samples were selected from 92 students (from the latest last written works). Each sample was checked for spelling errors. These errors were then 'marked' for classification later. The spelling errors from the classes were then examined and placed under the fifteen categories. However, one category was added to the total original fifteen categories in the pilot study in order to categorize the spelling errors identified. The added category was 'Bahasa Melayu'. The error types were identified and classified. A frequency count was taken and the most common error types were determined and listed in descending

order from the most common to the least common errors. Words that cannot be configured were ignored.

Students' spelling developments were further decided by analyzing their spelling errors, stages of their spelling development, their metalinguistic competencies and their cognitive level. To ascertain the classification of errors, interviews were carried out.

In this chapter, information gained from the pilot study was reported and the present study was based on the categories of spelling errors used in the pilot study. The pilot study indicated some alterations in order to more fully understand the types of errors that the students made.