

**An Analytical Study of Patterns of  
Spelling Error of Freshmen Ethiopian  
Student at AAU Main Campus**

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**ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this study is to examine some of the causes and occurrences of the spelling errors of the freshmen Ethiopian students and thereby account for these errors.

According to Error Analysis (EA) theories and inter-language (IL) studies, the learners' errors are developmental and systematic by nature. The systematicity in the error data indicated a more or less natural progression (development) in the learners' acquisition of English language showing adherence to "learner-generated' or 'built-in' syllabus" (see Corder 1981) i.e. the stages of development in learning English.

To verify the claims of EA and IL studies with regard to the occurrences of the learner' spelling, a total of 140 freshmen Ethiopian students with differing mother-tongue (MT) and background were given two tests i.e., dictation and composition writing. The same composition tests were also given to 24 multilingual group of children at the English Community School (ECS).

The spelling errors obtained from each test written by the Ethiopian group were superficially classified into categories induced by the

error types. These errors were then further classified into clearest error patterns that emerged and were given psycholinguistic explanations.

These patterns were cross-checked with the nature of the spelling errors obtained from the ECS group of children. Moreover, spelling error patterns of the Ethiopian group were compared to the stages in the developmental spelling errors of the native (English) children that Margo Wood has established.

The result of this study, therefore, revealed that the spelling errors of the freshmen Ethiopian students could be accounted for by three factors namely:

- a) those errors directly related to  $L_1$  interference upon TL (English)
- b) those errors of intralingual confusions
- c) those errors caused by  $L_1$  interference but also reinforced by intralingual confusion.

Moreover, the spelling errors of the freshmen group matched significantly, with the phonetic and transitional stages of developmental spelling error established by Wood. The majority of the error patterns were also found out to be similar to the nature of the ECS group of children. In addition, it was found that students are likely to make less spelling errors in composition than in dictation writing tests when the error percentages are computed against words correctly spelt in these tests.