Investigating the Use and Impact of Spell Checker among QUEST under Graduates by Using Computer Based Software Word Processor

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Abstract

In present era computer is required for students at university level. The most used software in computer by students is word processors. Main concern of this study is "Spell checker" in word processors. This is one of main proofing tool in word processors. Mostly students use word processor for spell checker and proofing tool to make their document error and misspelling free. Spelling mistakes affect perception of readers regarding writer's quality of writing and along additional perfunctory errors the expression of writer's original idea can be affected too. The objective of this study is to find out the use of spell checker on writings (spelling) of students of Quaid-e-Awam University of Science and Technology. A quasi-experimental study was conducted on 52 students from The Quaid-e-Awam University of Science and Technology, Nawabshah Pakistan. The population of this study was divided into two groups namely control and experimental each group consist of 26 respondents. Control group was given pre and post handwritten dictation. While the experimental group was given three dictations: two hands written, and one typed on word processor with spellchecker. The typed test with spell checker is the treatment given to the experimental group. The collected data was analyzed on SPSS software which shows minimal differences between both groups. The findings reveled that spell checkers only helps students at surface level rather than helping students by generating productive results at cognitive level.

Keywords:

QUEST, Spell-Checker, Software Word Processor.

1. Introduction

At university level, students have more work on Word Processors type of software (i.e., making assignments, thesis, and proposals). Becker (1999) indicates that, today most common educational use of computer by student is word processor for proofreading and spelling correction. The word possess helpful and useful features i.e., spell checker, grammar correction synonym and antonyms etc. According to Walfish et al., (2000) Word processing program help users to form error free documents by providing editing and proofing tools to discover and correct errors. More-or-less all word processors contain spell-checkers that either correct spelling mistakes automatically or give a list of intended words and those

spell-checkers in computers help students to correct misspelling instantly (Po-Han Lin, 2017). These features play a notable role in student marking and writing.

As there are so many reasons of spelling problem faced by younger generation students; the aim of this study is to confirm out what is the role of spell checker in spelling problem? Either it decreases its ratio or increases it because according to cognitive load theory ease can be risky for learning for the reason that the amount efforts are decreased in learning process which students are supposes to do.

The ability to write clearly and effectively is the one of important component in academic and vocational success (Po-Han Lin, 2017). Many people having strong grip or command on languages may have spelling problem. And spelling mistakes do not only affect perception of readers regarding writer's writing but with other perfunctory errors it can also be unsuccessful to express the original thought of the writer. Word processing program or word processor helps users to produce error free documents by serving editing and proofing tools to identify and correct errors (Walfsh et al.2000). Therefore, it is really curtail to identify this problem. However, it is not clear how reliance on this understandable hi-tech solution named "spell checker" affects spelling learning (Po-Han Lin, 2017). This study investigates the use of spell checker in Word Processor by younger students and its effects on their spellings. As MacArthur, Graham, Haynes and DeLaPaz, (2005), concludes that despite the potential of spelling checkers, petite research has been done to date on their use with students with or without disabilities. The aim of this study is to find out the effects of spell checker on spellings of undergraduate students of Qaid-e-awam University who are learning English as a second Language.

1.2. Literature review

Initially errors in learning process were considered as sin. In 1960 Nelson Brooks wrote a book "Language and Language Learning" and it was considered "manifesto" of the Language teaching profession in 60's (Hendrickson, 1978). Brooks (1960) asserted in his book that the relationship of error and learning is analogous to relationship of sin and virtue. Nelson (1960) asserted like sin, error is to be avoided and its influence overcomes, but its presence is to be.

The concept of error as sin changed with time passage and new thought emerged "error as sign of learning. Many researchers believe that errors are the signal which indicts learning is taking place and in Language learning errors reflect the progress and success of students (Hendrickson, 1978). Further Hendrickson emphasis importance of feed back in this study he said Teachers should be reminded that during learning new things or skills errors are normal and obvious things and students learn a lot from their errors when they receive periodic, supportive feedback. Lyster and Ranta (1997) argues that aim of all error correction should be for the purpose that learner should self-correct their errors. Nevertheless DKeyser (1993) concluded that error correction is beneficial but at low extrinsic motivation, but it has no overall effect on students' proficiency in the L2. Milicev asserted that teachers have their own attitudes about corrective feedback which reflects their practice of teaching on conscious and sub conscious level. The main aim of corrective feedback is to make students able to self-correct their errors consciously and subconsciously. As Rimbar (2017) asserted spell checker only corrects (it doesn't teach students self-error correction) surface errors, no training of self-correction, no feedback. According to Po han (2017) differentiation of error detection and error correction is crucial further he gave reason by quoting Zamel (1983) that the incapability to correct the unusual Language could have resulted from (a) failure of finding misspellings although students possess healthy vocabulary knowledge (b) students can have lack of vocabulary knowledge to make the correction. Whereas (Ellis, 1997) is of the view that feedback from teachers should aim for students to self-error corrections instead of repeating corrections after the teacher.

Error correction by teacher or by any software like spell checker should not affect students' self-error correction ability rather it should enhance and increase student's ability to self-correct their errors instead of just repeat correct forms after teacher by giving them feedback. The main difference between error correction by teachers and by spell checker (which rise questions on student's future in spellings or is cause of this study) is highlighted by Rimbar (2017) during error correction teacher will decide which error to correct or which error to ask students to self-correct the error while the spell checker does not differentiate this thing.

2. Methodology:

A quasi-experimental design study has been conducted on two groups of students from Quaid-e-Awam University of Science and Technology, Nawabshah. There are two groups required in quasi-experimental design study; one group is experimental and other is control group. In quasi-experimental design study, the treatment is not randomly given to all participants. Participants of experimental group are given the treatment while control group is not given the treatment it is due to check or measure the affect of treatment on participants.

2.1. Research Design:

Typed dictation is the treatment of this study which was employed on experimental group. The control group was given two tests, both handwritten. While the experimental group was given three dictations; one handwritten on paper, second on computer typed test and third and final dictation was also handwritten on paper. Both groups were given some time after test for rechecking written dictation and correction of mistakes. The text of all dictations was same. Students were given additional time for rechecking: until they were sure that there is no need for more correction.

2.2. Data collection

The data was gathered from 52 studentes from Qaid-e-Awam University of Science and Technology, Nawabshah. As it is a quasi-experimental design study in which use, and impact of treatment is analyzed. There are many designs of quasi experimental study but here we applied nonequivalent groups design. For that the 52 students were divided in to two groups of 26 one group is called control group which was given two handwritten dictation and second group is Experimental group which is given three dictations which include treatment.

The treatment was a typewritten dictation in which the spellchecker was employed to test their spelling errors. The control group was given two handwritten dictations (pre and post) while the experimental group was given three dictations; first is handwritten, second dictation was typed using a word processor, and the third handwritten as well. In all dictations, the students were given some time to reread their work and make corrections accordingly.

The number of corrected items in the post-test is the dependent variable. All the dictations used the exact same text consisting 20 sentences. Oxford University Press (2012) published a list of words which are rottenly mistaken in daily writings. Rimbar (2017) also has used these words in her study to make text for data collection. Only thirty words are taken from the list of commonly misspelled words published by Oxford University Press (2012) and only these thirty words are analyzed.

A pilot test was conducted before pre and post test or before starting data collection. It is very crucial to select right and accurate samples for data collection. Students who already possess problems regarding FLA or SLA or in language proficiency like learning disability will be not suitable for data collection, students who are proficient enough in English language are the gemstones for this research. For that purpose, a pilot test was given to population to check their spellings proficiency in English.

Students with good spellings were selected for the research.

2.3 Data Analysis:

As it is a quantitative study, the data is analyzed on SPSS software to see the difference and effect of spell checker on both groups. The data in an experimental study is collected by an instrument and is analyzed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2009). The researcher has checked all pre and post test and has analyzed them. Later on the mistakes of both groups' posttest were analyzed on SPSS software and the Independent Sample T. test was applied to find out the difference of mistakes in both groups. The results of both groups are presented in mean. It shows whether spell checker affects students' self-generating repairing ability or not.

Table.1. Means and Standard Deviation of Dictation Score

Groups	N	Pre-test		Treatment		Post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Control	26	22.2692	5.73800	-	-	20.3846	5.46316
Experimental	26	20.5000	4.04228	1.3462	.97744	18.5385	4.31954

2.4. Results

Table 1 results show compression between results of control and experimental (pre, typed and post) tests. The mean Pretest result of control group is mean 22.26 and experimental group mean score is 20.50. Table one shows

As it is shown in above table mistakes in control group pretest are 579 while mistakes in Experimental group posttest is 533 so difference between both groups mistakes is 46 which is minimal. That indicates proficiency and

A shown in above table difference between mistakes in post test control and experimental is 1 to 2% which is minimal.

3. Discussion:

The finding of current study indicates that results of both groups have minimal difference which means treatment given to experimental group does not have any countable affect or influence in results of posttest of experimental group. This means Spell checkers in word processor are not useful or help full at cognitive level.

The difference between Spelling mistakes of participants of control group and experimental group in posttest is minimal. Which shows treatment (spellchecker)

ratio of mistakes of students of both groups before treatment was equal there was no such difference in proficiency and competency of students of both groups. Results after treatment are not different from results of pretests. Which are mistakes of control group posttest are 530 and posttest of experimental is 482. Results of posttest of both groups also show minimal difference which is 48.

given to participants of experimental group have minimal near to zero effect on participants. This shows negative effect of spell checker in word processor. It is a critical issue which needs to be revising the reality that spell checker affects writing and spelling habits of university students. Involvement of New technology in studies is very helpful for university students it save students time and correct mistakenly done errors and many more but its excessive use affect student's habits and ways of using new technology and at the end students totally relay on gadgets without using their mental and physical abilities which is really critical thing. More attention should be given to Students during working on word processor with spell checker to control their involvement or total dependence on word

processor with spell checker for writing without misspellings. Only at need of time students should be allowed to work on word processor or other software with spell checker. The activities of writing on paper and memorizing spellings should be included in daily class routine as their habit of memorizing spellings can enhanced and groomed.

4. Conclusion

Students did more mistakes (add no of mistakes) during writing on paper as compare to during composing on word processor. Because most of mistakes were automatically corrected and remaining mistakes were informed to user by red underline by spell checker in word processor. If a word is detected as a misspelled Word then a correctly spelled alternate Word is generated (Walfish et al, 2000). So mostly students were unaware about their mistakes they have committed and were automatically corrected by spell checker. Furthermore, students were allowed to correct remaining mistakes which were underlined as misspelled word by right click. Moroco (1990) reported that the use of a word processor-based spelling checker assisted the participants in correcting as many as 80% of their spelling errors. As participants were L2 learner of English language result shows they prefer word processor for writing because of its proofing tool specially spell checker. They found it more convenient and easier to use because they don't have to write by their hand or put any efforts by just clicking and pressing buttons, they make an error free text with minimal spelling mistakes and get higher marks in assignments. Problem occurs when their writing especially spellings are misspelled in their handwritten assignments. The results of current study indicate that spell checker does not help students to generate repairs by themselves. In a nutshell spell checkers doesn't enhance, groom and develop self-generating repair ability in students. On the contrary it spoils students' habit of not using efforts on their writing, searching, grooming, and repairing their errors.

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