

Improving English Spelling of Class IV Students of Namgaycholing Primary School

Abstract

This research is being carried out with the main objective, of studying how I can improve the English spelling of class IV students at Namgaycholing Primary School. The intent of the study has originated from my own experiences and shortcomings in the field of English spelling learning and teaching. Students' performance in language classes and the marks obtained in the examination became a concern and through observation, poor spelling abilities were the major cause. So as the researcher, this research project intends to make students learning English as a 'Second Language' become good spellers by improving their reading, writing, and communication skills.

In this study, data was collected by analyzing documents of students which are notebooks, test papers, and exam papers. The documents collected were from all 36 grade four students. The documents analyzed for the data covered all the types of learners in the classroom.

The study brought changes in the spelling abilities of students learning English. As my focus was on improving spelling skills through using various strategies in the classroom, achieving this objective brought immense improvement in their spelling. Hence students became good spellers and were encouraged to do better.

Key words: Second Language, Students, Learning English, Good spellers

Introduction

Bhutanese children start learning all the subjects in English right from their first year (age 6) in school except Dzongkha (the national language). Therefore, children must become proficient in the English language which includes four basic skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Spelling is crucial to students' success in reading and writing; this is because word recognition and spelling both rely on similar funds of knowledge (Pierre, 2012). Poor spelling can cause dire consequences for struggling learners. Poor spellers are very limited in their ability to communicate, since spelling plays a critical role in reading and writing fluency, as well as in developing capacity within students to become articulate speakers (Hameed, 2016). Students need a level of proficiency in spelling to continue their academic or professional career in the future.

In Bhutan, the English language is not only used as a medium of instruction in schools and universities but also widely used as an official language across the nation and for everyday communication (both verbally and in written form). While there is no research conducted in the Bhutanese context, anecdotal evidence indicates that writing in general and spelling errors, in particular, are common problems among Bhutanese students (Tshomo et.al, 2008). Making use of correct spelling is important for effective communication as a misspelled word is likely to convey a wrong message. However, it is not an easy task for non-native learners to use correct spellings. English is a second language for all Bhutanese students and learners are inevitably bound to make errors. What is more important is identifying the difficulties students face and supporting them to experience success and meaningful second language learning (Baleghizadeh,

2010). Hence the purpose of this study was to explore strategies to help students of class four at Namgaycholing Primary School to become good spellers.

Situation Analysis

Country Background

Bhutan is a tiny Buddhist Kingdom sandwiched between two giant countries, India and China. It is known as the last Shangri-La throughout the world. The country is known to the world through its unique but magnificent culture and nature as well as the GNH policy. It has a diverse range of flora and faunas along with various traditional occasions such as Tsechu which attracts tourism from all over the world. The country is divided into twenty regions called Dzongkhags with various sub-regions but remains unified under less than one rule, the Wangchuck dynasty.

Education in Bhutan

The country has a policy to provide free education to children till grade twelve. The Government has established schools all over the country ranging from primary schools to tertiary institutes and even has schools for special needs students. English has been the medium for instruction in all institutions regardless of the school level as it is implemented in the curriculum from Pre-Primary classes. Namycholing Primary School is located 35.9 Km away from Samtse Dzong and falls under Tashicholing Drungkhag. There are 248 students with 24 staff including the supporting staff.

Education System of the country

Monastic education was the only formal education available to Bhutanese students until the 1950s. Modern education was established in the country during the reign of the first king, Ugyen Wangchuck. The first modern school was started at Haa and one at Bumthang in the following year for the crowned prince and the children of the people serving in the King's court. By the late 1950s, there were twenty-nine government and thirty private primary schools. By 1961 the systematic efforts towards the education sector began with the introduction of the First Development Plan that provided free and universal primary education. The Government established 400 schools by 1988. However, even in the twenty-first century, there is still a shortage of schools with adequate facilities.

The schooling starts with preschool at the age of five for a year, followed by five years of primary school, three years of secondary school, and then three years of high school. Instructions in the schools are provided through the national language Dzongkha and English. As of 2020, there are 319 primary schools, 61 lower schools, 71 middle schools, 82 high schools, and 2 special institutes including private schools.

Problem Statement

English spelling is one of the most common problems the majority of the students are facing despite English being the most frequently used language in schools. While teaching English to our class IV students we found out that they make frequent spelling errors in their writing. Due to this, when they were asked to share their points or answers with the class they mispronounced the words. When the words were mispronounced the audience was not able to understand the

terms or the points the speaker was sharing and in such cases, the speaker failed to provide the information they wanted to share with the audience. Afterward, they started losing confidence in themselves and they did not participate in the class discussions actively because they were often criticized by their friends even though when they possessed good writing and reading skills.

Poor spelling abilities affected the writing and reading skills of students for they could not convey the message they had written as it had lots of spelling errors. Then they stopped taking initiative in writing as well as reading. As they mispronounced the words, their reading skills were greatly affected because as reader they have to be fluent and pronounce words correctly. Therefore, the students needed to have good spelling abilities as it is a vital factor in their speaking, reading, and writing.

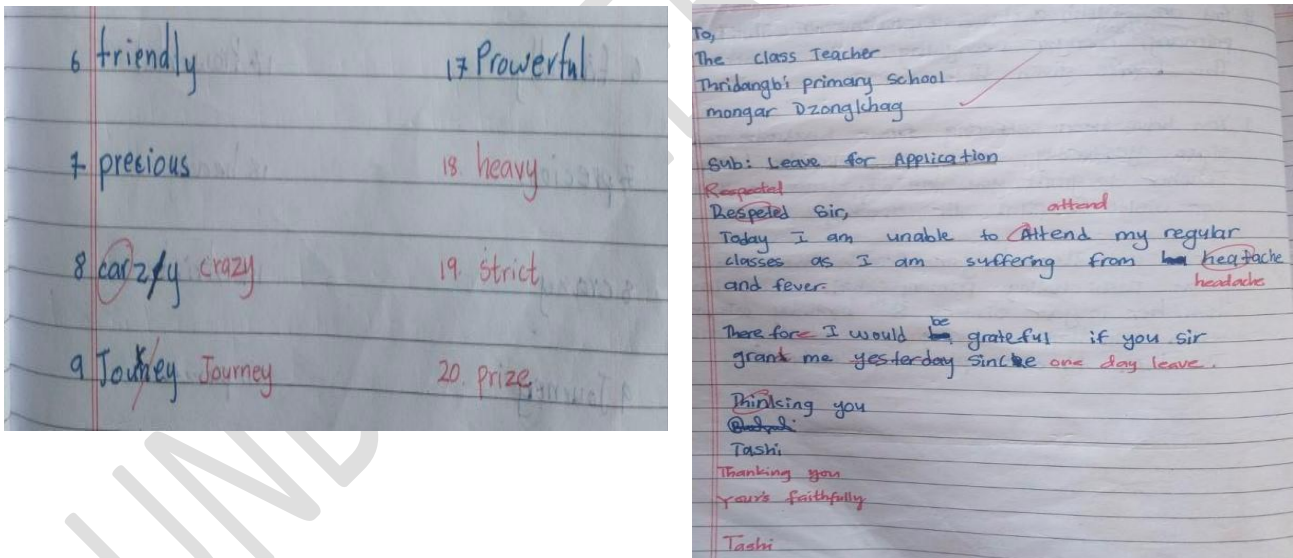


Fig 1. Poor spelling abilities

Even during my school days, I tend to lose certain marks in writing due to spelling mistakes. As we used to spell the words incorrectly, I tended to mispronounce the words when I read a text.

Even while speaking I used to stammer to pronounce the words I intended to say correctly so that

my teachers and friends could understand what I was trying to talk about. My poor spelling ability has been with us throughout my school days and even today I still face it at times. Recently while teaching class IV students, I noticed that the students have the same poor spelling abilities as ours and they are facing similar difficulties due to this. Students had good reading, speaking, and writing skills but due to poor spelling abilities, they were performing poorly in English as well as English Medium subjects which was a concerning issue.

I have always been concerned about the students having problems with spelling skills as it was affecting their academic performance as well as interest in English. Teachers tried various teaching strategies to enhance their learning in English but with poor spelling abilities, it was always a challenge. Recently I assigned them a task to write a passage about themselves. As I corrected the task I found that they had written the points beautifully but the poor spelling of the words made their writing look poor so we had to correct the words written now and then in most of the books. Even the high achievers had spelling errors in their writing. As a result, I had to spend a lot of time trying to correct their text so that other readers could understand their writing.

The points were accurate but spelling errors made it hard for us as the readers to understand the writing of the writers (students) so I had to re-read the passages again. When a few of them were asked to read their passage to the class, the ones who had made several spelling mistakes mispronounced lots of words that the audience couldn't understand their points and even made fun of them. I started to observe them after this assignment and I noticed that the students participate less in the class and group discussion as they are afraid of mispronouncing the words. They even communicate less with their peers whereby there is less social interaction among them and they even hesitate to write as well as read. Due to the poor spelling abilities, I find our

elementary-level students losing social interaction, active participation, and literacy skills in the class as well as in the subject.

Objectives of the study

- Develop communication skills

Communication skills are essential for students to grow and interact with the world. Spelling is a critical component of communication (Best, 2017). Good spelling facilitates communication among the students. Incorrect spellings in the written text can change the meaning of their communication to something completely different or make it a bit unclear. Even while talking to each other, due to incorrect spellings the students have in mind, they mispronounce the word making the communication vague and funny. They do not participate in class and group discussions as they make a lot of pronunciation mistakes while sharing their points. The students should possess effective communication skills to interact with other people in and around them and this is not possible with poor spelling abilities.

- Improve reading skills

Learning to spell and learning to read both involves understanding the relationship between letters and sounds (Jones, 2009). The students need to understand the letter combinations and sounds of the letters to spell the words correctly. After that, they need to use these understandings to decode new words in the text while reading. Students who struggle to spell words correctly are unable to read the words in a text and use them in their spoken vocabulary. As a result, students are not able to read fluently and comprehend the written text while reading.

- Improve writing skills

Spellings also play a vital role in creating confident and able writers. Students with good spelling skills can use a wide range of vocabulary and select precise words in their writings to communicate their message. If they have poor spelling skills, they might stop constantly in between to think about how to spell the words as they write which can interrupt the flow of their ideas. On the other hand, they prefer to play safe by only using the words they already know how to spell which leads to loss of vocabulary power as well as clarity in their writing.

Significance of the Study

This study was expected to give me and other teachers to understanding of how poor spelling skills of the students result in poor reading, writing, and communication skills. I was able to adopt strategies to improve their spelling skills after observing and analyzing the observations. I was also able to improve our students' reading, writing, and communication skills as I had the concept of why they were poor spellers. As I was able to help them to become good spellers I had good readers, writers, and communicators who became active participators in the class. I started to have interactive classrooms as well as effective teaching and learning with our students. On the other hand, I had to manage time between our regular teaching and carrying out activities to improve their spelling. Thus, students' cooperation was required to fulfill these objectives.

The students became good readers, writers, and communicators when they started to improve their spelling skills. They interacted and participated in the class activities as they were able to speak their points well and with clarity. They began to show their interest in English classes and

shared their opinions and thoughts on the topics we taught. Through this study, students were able to identify why they lacked spelling skills and adopted various strategies to improve their spelling. They became skilled in spelling a wide range of words without a struggle to some extent as per their ability. They could comprehend various texts whereby acquire reading fluency, write easily, and communicate with others, bringing a lot of opportunities for themselves and the school.

Through this study, the school and students were informed how this research would benefit them. It helped the school achieve its goal of every student being able to speak and write English. When the learners acquired good spelling skills, they performed better in their academics by scoring good and average marks as they now made fewer spelling mistakes. The school was able to have interactive classrooms where learning was collaborative as per Kagan's structure. I had to work towards time management to teach and implement the interventions and learning activities to improve their spelling skills. Hence improving the English spelling skills of the students was essential for us as their teachers, themselves, and the school to have effective learning and teaching outcomes.

Personal Competence

I had a clear concept of what action research is and what makes up action research. I knew that it just could not be theoretical but needed to have strong evidence and justifications as its database. I understood that it should come up with resolutions better than those of existing ones and should be practical. I was aware that I have to undergo various processes from planning to data collection and then reflecting. I was aware of what could go wrong if I failed to undergo all the processes involved and what kind of action research paper I would produce.

Possessing all the concepts mentioned above about action research, I carried out the research in a proper and systematic order. I carefully planned the research and completed it without many issues. I already noted down a set of strategies I was going to apply to the students as I researched to study the impact of each strategy on their English spelling. I had even research articles and other kinds of literature to read that helped us explore further. After I had done the research, I reflected on the whole process and was ready to take up another round of research if required as I was aware of what I was supposed to do after the reflection on the research.

In the process of the research, I paid proper attention to each student in the class. I cautiously observed our students to make sure that we understood the spelling ability of each child. As I am good at remembering the names of the students, I was able to make out of their writings if they were good or poor spellers. My good communication skills helped me to interact with students coherently. As I interacted I was able to find if their poor spelling was hindering their communication as well as participation in the class. Having taught for the last few decades, I have the skills to use various teaching methods through which we are going to improve the spelling of our students.

Literature Review

I reviewed literature about how to improve English spelling. It was a comprehensive summary of previous research on English spelling improvement. The reasons for researching English spelling improvement were to learn how other researchers have defined and measured key concepts about English spelling and see ourselves what came before, and what did and didn't work for them.

I wrote a concept note about our topic (the meaning of English spelling) in the literature review. I

also wrote the findings and strategies suggested by other researchers to improve the English spelling of our children.

Scope of the study

Kernaghan (2007) defines spelling as the encoding of linguistic forms into written forms. In language, sounds are provided by oral language and letters are provided by written language. This is the essence of reading and writing. Kernaghan (2007) states that spellings encode speech and reading decodes writing. Encoding of linguistic form is all about using individual sounds of letters to write words. Also, Bakshi (n.d) states that spelling is the writing of one or more words with letters and diacritics. Spellings are important because they build connections between letters and sounds, and then between words and sentences.

McPherson (1984) refers to spelling as a system of using symbols in the letters of the alphabet to represent the sounds of speech. In some of the languages, the correspondence between the speech sounds and written symbols is almost exact. For each speech sound, there is a single letter and that letter always stands for the same sound. But this however does not exist in modern English as the alphabets do not correspond to the sounds when we speak.

Spelling can be defined as the forming of words using the letters in the correct order. When one has to write the spellings, they have to arrange every single alphabet letter in proper order to give out the correct sound. Spelling as we know it today consists of a complicated set of rules and conventions for writing down words. As these sets of rules are complicated, students tend to develop poor spelling abilities. The complication of the rules leads the children to confusion

whereby they spell words incorrectly. Thus, I wanted to find out strategies on how I can improve the English spelling of class IV students of Namgaycholing Primary School.

Bridging the Gap

Trends in the education system have shifted over time from teaching children to read phonemically to teaching children to read more holistically. However with the change in time, as stated by Angelisi (2000), the rate of poor spellers among students is increasing. She asserts that the reason behind this issue is not the way students learn but the way students are taught. Memorization and taking spelling tests are the common methods teachers use to teach spelling and make students learn spelling. But in this 21st century with cooperative learning strategies being implemented throughout the schools, are the teaching methods of spelling similar to date? The changes in strategies of teaching and learning and their effectiveness on spelling improvement remain unknown due to the absence of studies on it. This research found the effectiveness of various teaching strategies in teaching spelling to students and proposed strategies to help teachers.

It has often been said that the English language is the most difficult, of all languages, to read, write, speak, and understand. There are only 26 letters of the alphabet; however, there are many phonics and spelling rules that correspond with each letter. Tshomo et al. (2018) state that some errors regarding spelling out the words are because of phonetic difficulties of words whereby students make errors when words are difficult to pronounce. This problem has also been seen in Islamic students and some other parts of abroad countries. Therefore wrong pronunciation of the

words leads to spelling errors in English learners. Could this be similar to the Bhutanese students? Due to a lack of adequate research, it is uncertain if Bhutanese students also commit spelling errors due to pronunciation difficulties, and through this research, one was able to understand if it is the same or not with Bhutanese students. The other problems were also considered and analyzed.

Critical Review

Spelling is an essential literacy skill that has a significant effect on students who are learning English as a second language for their educational as well as career status. However, students are not able to master this skill because most of the spelling teachings in the schools are done through traditional approaches. Yahmedi, et al. (2019) state that the Word Study approach is an important approach for teaching children spelling and seems to be quite successful. When the teacher uses the word study approach, there is an increase in orthographic knowledge and spelling abilities in the students as they learn spellings by understanding patterns in words. Similarly, Angelisi (2000) found that encouraging students to search for certain spelling patterns in words can help them remember the spelling of the words better. Rather than simply making students memorize the spellings of the words in isolation, the word study approach helps every child to complete the same or similar activities with words on time.

Visualization is another strategy to be implemented in the classrooms to help students build spelling skills. Research by Nahari et al. (2016) states that visualization is an effective and valuable methodology for improving spelling skills. Visualization refers to students' ability to see the letters of the words in their minds. Through this, they can recognize possible and impossible letter sequences, notice if a word looks incorrectly spelled, identify the part of the word that

looks incorrect, and replace it with an answer option. Even Tshomo et al. (2018) suggest that teachers should continuously develop the kind of visual memory that enhances spelling ability. Another visualization strategy refers to visual aids including flashcards, word walls, and word charts. This is the reason why lower primary classrooms in the schools have word charts or word walls. Education Ministry should prepare and distribute instructional materials to increase teachers' knowledge and use visualization strategies as new and effective strategies for teaching spelling so that students become confident spellers.

Another approach becoming popular these days is teaching and learning through games. Teachers in the training centers are trained on how to integrate games into teaching-learning sessions. A significant impact on spelling skills has been found when one uses games in their teaching. A study by Rello et al., (2015) claims that action games improve children's spatial and temporal attention, which is essential for decoding words. When students can decode the words they develop their spelling ability. Teaching through Games always captures the concentration of students which makes them attentive enabling them to decode words. Similar to it Nurhayati (n.d) in his research found that when teachers used effective teaching and learning process through games they could improve their student's spelling abilities. While using various interesting activities through games the students become very energetic as they need some activities that could make them move so that they don't get bored easily. Learners learn to spell better when they enjoy the lesson.

As the world of today is driven by technology, teachers can help students improve their spelling abilities through integrating ICT in their lessons. ICT provides a range of opportunities for students to learn through its diverse facilities. Vedora et.al (2006) when conducting an

experiment using computers with students found that the use of computers was an efficient and effective way to teach spelling to children. The need to blend the use of computer technology with spelling skill acquisition is recognized by various researchers and practitioners. Similarly, research by Bushnell et al., states that texting using cell phones helps children to play with words exposing them to various spellings. Though the debate that cell phones are declining students' literacy skills is still an issue when it comes to spelling skills, texting can benefit them if they use it properly. On the other hand, research carried out by Hameed on his 26 Arabic student participants found that extensive use of the dictionary to improve students' spelling abilities proved efficient as the participants could spell better after using a dictionary. It is a means through which children learn the meanings of difficult words but as they look up for meaning, they go through various words in sequence. Looking up for words sequencings help them to remember spellings. Spelling skills require good sequencing skills of the words.

Teachers are always the reason behind students' learning so is they for their spelling skills. If a teacher teaches spelling effectively by using various strategies, it results in good spellers. Research by Hutcheon et al., (2012) states effective spelling instruction not only can increase children's performance on spelling tests but also may increase the length and proficiency of their compositions. When they are exposed to spelling instructions, they acquire techniques on how to develop their spelling skills. On the other hand, research by Lee et al., (1982) found that chained practice of spelling probably accounts for the improvement in spelling. To improve one's spelling skills; they have to practice the spelling on their own. As they practice spellings in a chain manner, they learn the spellings and can remember all the spellings. Hence both teachers' instructional strategies and students' practice determine the improvement of spelling in students.

Summary

Various researchers have found various strategies and approaches that can be used to improve the spelling of learners. From traditional approaches to teaching such as memorization to modern approaches such as games, teachers can help students with their spelling skills. Teachers need to integrate different techniques or approaches in their teaching. However, no single technique can cover all aspects of teaching and learning spelling and suit all language students, with their diverse needs, expectations, and achievements. Successful teaching and learning depend on the efforts of both teachers and students and their desire and ability to implement the most effective approaches and techniques.

Methodology

Research Tool/s

The research tools are very important to carry out research and to collect data. To collect the information or data, I used document analysis tools to make the information more authentic. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning to an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). It is valuable for collecting qualitative data. Wilson (n.d) as cited in Bowen (2009) states that analyzing documents includes coding content into themes, similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed. Rubrics or scoring guides can be used to evaluate documents.

Improvement of spelling in students was analyzed through their notebooks. The documents to be analyzed for the research were readily available as well as reliable and accessible. As the documents were reliable I could evaluate the earlier claims regarding spelling of students. It

helped to track the development and monitor the progress of our students with their spelling after the interventions made. I could also verify progress or claims made by other researchers. The data we obtained were specific and stable for our presence did not affect the data to be analyzed. Thus the data collected was accurate to be claimed. Moreover, it was cost-efficient as I did not have to spend a lot on gathering data as the sources of data were readily available. Hence document analysis assisted in attaining accurate data for the research.

List of documents to collect data

1. Notebook
2. Test papers
3. Exam papers

Table 1. Action Research Matrix

AR Question: How can we improve the English spelling of Class IV students of Namgaycholing Primary School?				
Indicators/ Areas of improvement	Specific Actions (New Inputs)	Action Timing (Development Sequence)	Data Collection Method (Tools)	Remarks
Mixing up of Homophones	Teach different homophones through games and activities that would enhance correct spelling and word usage in the right content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1Collect baseline data on the use of homophones - Week 2- 4 intervention. - Week 5-6post-intervention data gathering and 	Collect the data on which homophones are mixed up and analyze the information through document analysis	

		analysis.		
Phonological awareness	<p>Teach phonics of each alphabet</p> <p>Teach blending of sounds</p> <p>Teach rhyming words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1 collect baseline data on the use of phonological awareness. - Week 2-4 intervention. - Week 5-6 post-intervention data gathering and analysis. 	Collect data on the use of phonological awareness through document analysis.	
Mixing letter sequences in a word	Teach the correct sequence of words by practicing strategies such as visualization and games related to letter sequence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Week 1 collect baseline data on the use of syllabification. - Week 2-4 intervention. - Week 5-6 post-intervention data gathering and analysis. 	Collect data on mixing letter sequences and how a student has improved over time.	

Baseline Data Collection

Namgaycholing Primary School has classes PP till Six. For the data collection of the study, I analyzed the documents of class IV students. The students study English as one of the major learning subjects in the class and their age ranges from 10 to 14 years old. The classes have a total of 36 students. I directly consulted with the concerned authorities such as the school administration, the class teacher, and concerned parents. I verbally explained to them the purpose of our study and asked for permission to carry out this study with the respective students as the participants. Fortunately, I was granted permission and we could carry out this study without many challenges.

The learners maintain their own English notebooks for the English classes. To collect data on the spelling errors they make, I collected notebooks, test papers, and exam papers. and they were then examined for the spelling errors they made. I captured the pages of their notebooks at times to analyze their writing for our study. Meanwhile, other aspects of language were ignored as the sole purpose was to determine the spelling errors.

After marking the misspelled words of the learners, the total number of errors was recorded under each category in a table (Table 3). The misspelled words were categorized into four groups of errors. I adapted these errors from the research paperwork carried out by Tshomo et.al (2018) as it was relevant to the study I carrying out. After analyzing each number of errors in each category and later on as a total, we determined the percentage of each type of spelling error. Types of errors and their simple explanation along with examples have been given in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of errors

Types of errors	Meaning	Example
Transposition Error	Transposition of two consecutive letters	Firend for friend
Homophone and Confusable errors	Errors in words with similar spelling or pronunciation	There for their
Pronunciation errors	Spelling according to the sound of the letter	<i>Nife for knife</i>

Table 3: Total number of errors

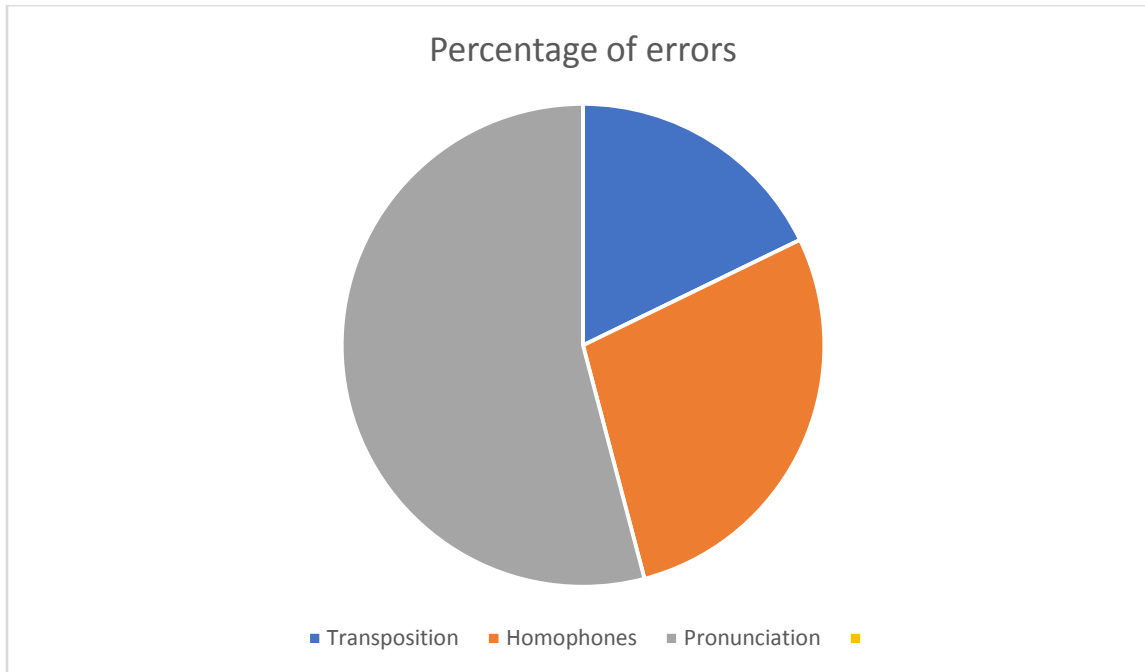
Type of error	Transposition Error	Homophone and Confusable errors	Pronunciation error
No. of errors	43	68	131
Total	242		

While examining their books and papers for spelling errors, I found a total of 242 errors. We noted down the number of each type of error and found the percentage of each error. The highest type of error was pronunciation error with 54.1% and the lowest type of error was transposition with 17.8 %.

Table 4: Percentage of types of error

Type of errors	Number of errors out of total no.	Percentage
Transposition errors	43	17.7%
Homophone and Confusable errors	68	28.1%
Pronunciation errors	131	54.1%

Fig. 2. Percentage of types of error



From the findings, after analyzing the documents of the learners we concluded that the spelling errors mentioned above fall under the following three areas which are the indicators of poor spelling abilities in learners.

1. Weak Phonological awareness

Weak phonological awareness is the children's knowledge of phonics of individual letters and words which leads them to the pronunciation of words differently than how they are supposed to sound resulting in poor spelling of the learners.

2. Mixing up homophones

Homophones are words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings and spelling. However, as they have the same pronunciation students tend to use the incorrect word in a sentence, which changes the meaning. A learner with poor spelling usually is confused between homophones and tends to use the incorrect word in the sentence.

3. Mixing sequence of letters in a word

It is when the writer mixes up the sequencing of a letter or two in a word while writing. The position of the letters in a word is switched. Often only a few letter sequences are changed but at times almost the sequence of all the letters is switched.

Intervention

Building on the insights gained from our assessments and literature review, I introduced targeted interventions. These interventions ranged from adapting teaching methods to incorporating new resources and providing additional support to students identified as needing extra assistance. I identified three indicators that indicated that the learners had spelling difficulties after the data collection findings. As a response to each indicator from the findings, I came up with various strategies as follows.

1. Weak Phonological Awareness

a) Sound it out strategy

It is a process of decoding a word by identifying the sounds of each letter in a word and then blending those sounds. I taught the learners the sounds of each alphabet letter and letter own taught them to blend the sounds of the letters. After that,I asked

them to spell out the words by first sounding out the individual sounds of each letter and then blending the sounds. I carried out this strategy with the words they learned in each session.

b) Word sorting

Yahmedi et.al (2019) as cited in Read (1971) states that word sorting is based on theories such as that “children make consistent, overt judgments of sound similarities”. Learners are required to sort words according to common patterns of their sounds. During our intervention process we carried out activities in which learners were required to sort and organize words by 4 ending sounds; -ing, -at, -an, and ad. They first carried out the sorting of -ing and -at words. Later on, they did the sorting of -an and -ad words.

c) Word boxes

Gullory (n.d) states that word boxes are an appropriate intervention to use with a whole class, small groups, or individual children and it is intended to help with the acquisition of phonemic awareness skills. It consists of divided boxes where children have to place the counters according to the number of sounds in the word. In the later stage, they place the letter squares of the words after removing the counter. While I was intervening, for the first week or session, I simply let them fill the boxes with counters according to the number of sounds in the words. E.g. wish= 3 counters as w/i/sh/. In the next session, I then made them first fill the divided boxes according to

the sounds in the words and after that, they then filled up the divided boxes using the letter squares of the words.

2. Mixing letter sequences in words

a) Visualization strategy

Visualization is believed to be crucial for helping students spell correctly as explained by the fact that spelling is a visual process: we need to visualize or see a word we have encountered before, to spell it (Nahari, 2016). It involves a range of processes until the child can visualize the spelling of the words. I started by writing 5 targeted words each (frequently misspelled words) in a session on the board and read each letter out as I wrote. Then students traced those words in their notebooks along with reading out. Later on, I wrote each word 3 times and students did the same in their notebook along with reading out. Next, I now started to write each letter of the word in the air as I read out each letter and students did the same. At last, I asked the learners to close their eyes and then write each word with their letters in the air. After that, I moved to the next 5 targeted words in the next session.

b) Hangman game

It is a guessing game where one has to guess the word an opponent or other person is thinking by guessing one letter at a time. It involves the gradual drawing of a stick figure hanging from the gallows on each incorrect letter guessed. I used this game in the session for two weeks as a brain break. However, I made them guess the words related to their content as well as the words they misspelled the most. I conducted the game in groups.

c) Word Scramble

It is a word puzzle game where one has to re-arrange its letters to reconstruct the original word. For intervention, we listed targeted words or frequency words on the chart and provided a chart to each group of 4 members. Learners were to unscramble the listed word and the group who finished unscrambling the most correct original words was the winner. I used a different set of scrambled word lists for each intervention period.

3. Mixing up homophones

a) Illustrated word chart

Illustrated word chart is a collection of words with illustrations that are displayed in large visible letters on a wall, bulletin board, or other display surface in a classroom. The illustrated word chart is designed to be an interactive tool for students and contains an array of words that can be used during writing and reading. It helps students see patterns and relationships in words, thus building spelling skills. During the intervention period, we made illustrated word charts in which students matched a word with the correct illustration and an illustration with the correct word. For example; if the word on the chart is sun, then they need to find an illustration that matches the word sun. Some of the targeted words included in the activity are son, sun, bear, beer, pear, ice, eyes, here, hear, there, and their.

b) Word puzzle

It is an English word spelling game where students find words out of a given definition. There should be certain definitions of words written on the activity sheet. Students should look for the correct word from the definition and fill in the box accordingly. The words contained in that

sheet would be homophones and they need to write the correct spelling of each word in the box. As I implemented the intervention strategy, I created certain definitions of homophones and prepared a sheet where students could write the correct spelling of a word identified. During the activity, I let students read a definition at a time and identify the correct word. I then made them fill the empty boxes with the correct spelling. For example; the round yellow thing in the sky. They should identify it as a sun and fill the empty box with the correct spelling.

c) Prisoners Base Game

It is a game in which students should play in teams. From each group, a member will come in front and write a spelling of a word pronounced by a teacher. Students who misspell the word become prisoners. If the remaining members write the word correctly, that team's prisoners are released. A team is retired if all of its members become prisoners. At the end of the game, the team with the fewer prisoners is the winner. So, for the students to learn spelling better, I prepared a list of homophones, divided them into 2 teams, and let them play the game. For example, the teacher pronounced the word 'Beer' and defined a clue. Students from both teams were required to write the correct spelling of the word.

Post- Intervention Data Gathering

The post-intervention data include notebooks and papers of the students that were analyzed during the baseline data collection. The documents were analyzed based on the spelling errors they made after the intervention.

Post-Intervention Data Analysis

1. Weak Phonological Awareness

Learners' weak phonological awareness of letters causes them to mispronounce words leading to spelling errors in their writing. The number of pronunciation and spelling errors has been shown in the table below after the intervention

Table 5. Number of pronunciation and spelling errors

No. of pronunciation errors	143
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2. Mixing letter sequences in words

Learners tend to misplace a letter or two in a word. The table shows the data on the transposition errors in spelling committed by each learner after the intervention.

Table 6. Data on the transposition errors in spelling committed by each learner after the intervention

No. of Transposition error	33
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3. Mixing up homophones

The table below shows the data on Homophones and Confusable errors made by each student after identified strategies were implemented to address the problem of mixing up homophones.

Table 7. Data on Homophones and Confusable errors made by each student after identified strategies were implemented to address the problem of mixing up homophones

Number of Homophone and confusable error	38
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Findings from the post-intervention data

The post-intervention data indicated that good use of strategies to address spelling problems results in spelling improvement among the students. I observed that problems mixing letter sequences in words and mixing up homophones can be accounted for and improved through the strategies implemented such as games like word scramble and prisoner's base. Students developed a sense of how each word is constructed and have improved their spelling ability.

However, regarding the weak phonological problem that caused pronunciation errors of spellings, we were disappointed to conclude that strategies such as sound it out, word boxes, and word sort couldn't solve this problem in students. I analyzed the factors that contributed to the failure to address this problem and found out that word boxes were complicated for learners, they forgot the sounds of the letters such as di-graphs and tri-graphs as soon as the intervention stage was over and their native language accent overshadowed the pronunciation of words. Moreover, I observed that students prepared and were comfortable to communicate either in Dzongkha or Lhotsham kha resulting in inconsistent use of English words and language. These major factors resulted in mispronunciation of words and even letter sounds

and blended sounds of letters. Hence through this post-intervention data, I could observe that the use of effective strategies can work in improving spelling abilities, however, some strategies remain ineffective due to other factors contributing to the problem and posing a challenge in addressing the spelling abilities issues.

Comparative Analysis of Baseline Data and Post-Intervention Data

By the sixth week, post-intervention data were gathered to compare with baseline data to measure the effectiveness of strategies implemented to address spelling problems of the learners. Overall, I could conclude that we can improve the spelling of students by addressing their transposition errors and homophones, and confusable errors with the adoption of the strategies we implemented. The error percentage of these two was reduced when compared to the baseline data (Transposition error: 17.7% to 15.4% and Homophones and confusable errors: 28.1% to 17.8%). However, we conclude that we could not address the pronunciation error by intervening as the number of data as well as the percentage has increased when comparing with the baseline data (54.1% to 66.8 %).

1. Weak phonological awareness

The table below shows the data on the number of pronunciation errors made by learners before and after the intervention.

Table 8. Data on the number of pronunciation errors made by learners before and after intervention

Before Intervention	Post Intervention
131	143

Among the three types of spelling errors committed by the students, the pronunciation error which was a result of weak phonological awareness of the students was the highest (131). This indicated that the problem was severe in this case. It consisted of 54.1% which was nearly more than a half. The majority of the students had this spelling problem as they intended to spell the words according to how each letter is pronounced or how they have heard from the adults rather than how they sound. Kat or cat as they are directly using the pronunciation of the word K rather than using the letter sound of c.

I implemented strategies such as teaching sounds of letter-to-word boxes to mend this problem. However, through the post-intervention data, I could conclude that those strategies didn't work to improve the spelling ability of the students as the total number of pronunciation errors from the table shows that the number has increased from 131 to 143. This means that rather than helping children to overcome this spelling problem, we have turned this problem into a worse case. Students were confused as most of the time letter-sound correspondence is not related to spelling. Even the word boxes strategy was complicated for the learners and they even tended to forget the letter sounds after a while. Accordingly, I determined the three intervention strategies were a failure for this spelling error due to the pronunciation of the words.

2. Mixing letter sequences in words

The table below represents several transposition errors committed before and after the intervention strategies.

Table 9. Number of transposition errors committed before and after the intervention strategies

Before Intervention	Post Intervention
43	33

Before the intervention stage, transposition error was the least spelling error among the students consisting of only 17%. The data gathered after the intervention of strategies showed that using the strategies for the identified problem we succeeded in addressing the problem as there was a reduction in the number of transposition errors committed. Through these data, I drew the inference that the strategies I implemented were successful in improving students' spelling by reducing the transposition error.

3. Mixing up homophones

The table below shows the baseline data and post-intervention data on homophones and confusable errors.

Table 10. Baseline data and post-intervention data on homophones and confusable errors

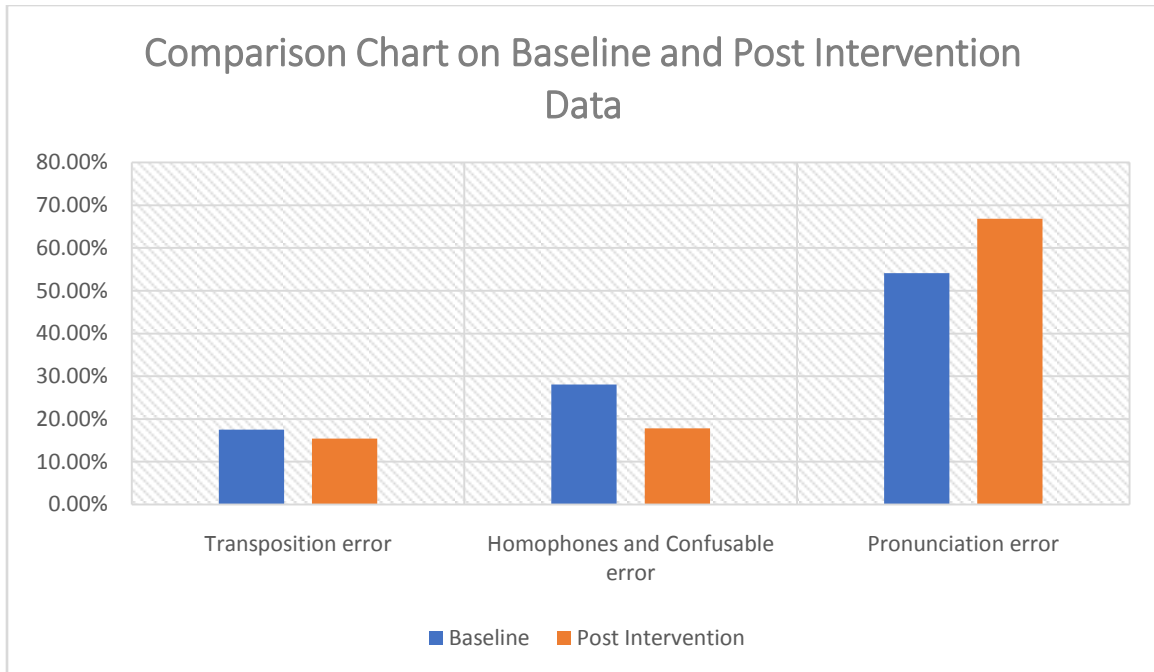
Before Intervention	Post Intervention

68	38
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During the baseline data analysis, we found that mixing up homophones was a problem with each individual but was not a big concern as it only consisted of 28%. However, this problem hindered the spelling ability of the learners as they conveyed the wrong message in a sentence by using the spelling of another word that had the same pronunciation as the particular word.

The data in the table gives us the message that I could improve the spelling of the students by addressing the problem of mixing up homophones. Strategies such as illustrated word walls, word puzzles, and prisoner games to teach them homophones of their grade level. The data indicated that these strategies were effective as I received a positive outcome when gathering the data after interventions.

Fig 3. The following graph represents the summary of each type of spelling error during the baseline data collection and post-intervention data collection.



Reflection

This action research experience underscored the significance of the need for ongoing assessment and the importance of tailoring interventions to meet the unique needs of each student. It also highlighted the positive impact of creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, fostering a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm for language acquisition.

In the process of carrying out this action research, I was able to address the issues relating to education and could select the topic for the research based on the learning capabilities of the students. Meantime, I underwent a lot of practice. I developed the skills on how to browse authentic and reliable information from the internet and even worked towards producing a better quality of academic writing to enhance our formal writing in the research article.

Conclusion

The action research on improving English spelling proficiency in Class IV was a transformative experience. The journey involved a blend of research, implementation, and reflection, leading to positive outcomes for both students and educators. The issues regarding the spelling abilities of class IV students were studied and resolved by implementing various research-based teaching-learning strategies. An impact was seen on the participants and their spelling abilities during the post-intervention, indicating a successful intervention. Moving forward, this reflective process will inform future instructional practices, contributing to the continuous enhancement of spelling instruction strategies in the primary school setting.

Practical Implication

Valizhonovna (2023) mentioned that spelling is difficult to master without some theoretical understanding of grammar, phonetics, and word formation because grammatical theory is the key to spelling. Teachers should look at the strategies used in the intervention strategies such as sounding out a strategy to enhance students' knowledge of phonetics. Educators should adopt fun-based activities such as hangman to teach spellings to students as rote learning through memorizing can impact their interest in learning and building their vocabularies. Rather than simply explaining the words, the teacher can use visualization strategies of teaching the words through pictures along with their spellings. Teachers can have picture word walls and charts upon teaching words to learners irrespective of their grades. Overall to improve spelling abilities, teachers, educators, and even parents can implement various strategies used in this present

research work in the classroom and at home, leaving behind the memorization method because learners need to learn spelling through grammar and phonics.

Future Recommendation

The current study was successful in addressing the spelling issues of class IV students but at a certain point, it failed to address their poor spelling abilities due to pronunciation errors. Future studies could further examine other strategies to address this specific issue.

The study also collected the data without the English Language proficiency level of the learners as well as their age and gender. Future research can determine the spelling abilities of students through consideration of these factors.

Ethical Approval and Consent:

Throughout the research project, a proper code of ethics is recommended as it allows the research to flow and function smoothly. Creswell (2007) concluded that as a researcher we need to respect the participants and the sites of research. As a researcher, I have not put the participants at risk, but have respected and honored them. Before engaging the participants in the research process, I sought their due permission from the school, concerned teachers, and each participant, therefore none of the individuals was forced into participation but, participated voluntarily in full will and spirit. During the data collection, I considered all the ethical points, and each point given by participants was duly respected and taken into consideration. While collecting data, the names of all the participants were kept confidential to respect the code of

research ethics. After the completion of this action research, all the participants were acknowledged for their valuable contribution.

I informed the school and briefed the teachers and staff about my research and its purpose. I requested the concerned class teachers and staff to permit me to study the participants. After that, I gathered all the participants and talked to them regarding my study and their cooperation as participants. Then I printed consent forms and sent them to every parent and guardian to seek their permission. Once I got all the approvals, I started my baseline data collection.

Considering and understanding that I cannot disturb the lesson sessions for literacy, while planning to teach I considered that I should either take a separate time to intervene or I can simply use the strategies as I teach. Therefore, to have the usual English session as well as my intervention, I used the strategies as activities and used separate times apart from academic sessions. I even planned the duration of the intervention to make their learning and our data gathering on intervention strategies effective.

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