**Results**

As was previously mentioned, the dictation was carried out with 10th grade students in an Arab school in the north of Israel. The students were not informed in advance that they would be asked to complete a dictation task, as I wanted to gather accurate data of their spelling errors. The two lists were dictated on the same day across two different lessons in order to give students enough time to complete the task. The class was divided into two groups, and each student sat individually to prevent incidents of copying off other classmates. Each word was repeated three times, and students were given enough time after each word to record their answers. The English teacher dictated and repeated the words to ensure accurate pronunciation. She also dictated the words in a random fashion in order to prevent students from detecting the morphological patterns and to further prevent inaccurate results.

Table 1: Students’ Results in Writing Verbs ending in (s)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Wrong answers | Correct answers | Verbs |
|  | 34 | Notices |
|  | 34 | Watches |
| 9 fixez | 25 | Fixes |
| 5 splashez | 29 | Splashes |
| 6 kissez | 28 | Kisses |
|  | 34 | Cooks |
|  | 34 | Laughs |
|  | 34 | Accepts |
|  | 34 | Admits |
|  | 34 | Finds |
|  | 34 | Hunts |
|  | 34 | Writes |
|  | 34 | Runs |
| Knowz 1 | 33 | Knows |
| 4 cryz | 30 | Cries |
|  | 34 common verb | Plays |
|  | 34 common verb | Fails |
| 4 flyz | 30 | Flies |
|  | 34 | Express |
|  | 34 | Guess |
|  | 34 | Impress |
|  | 34 | Pass |
|  | 34 | Press |

Table 1 Analysis

The table above presents different verbs ending in (s). The verbs include different orthographical realizations of (s), (e.g., [s], [z], [iz]), and the aim of the dictation was to check the students’ spelling of the inflectional (s) in the third person form. We can notice that students did not exhibit any errors when spelling verbs that end in an (s) which is orthographically realized as [s],(e.g., *press*, *pass*, *impress*, *express*, *guess*, *cooks*, *laughs*, *accepts*, *admits*, *finds*, *hunts,* and *writes*). Since the spelling was obvious (i.e., (s)) students did not exhibit any spelling errors. Additionally, students also did not demonstrate any difficulty in correctly spelling verbs that ended in (s) as an original part of it .

It appears that the (s) in both spelling forms [z] and [iz] presented difficulties for the students (many of them spelled items containing this morphological pattern incorrectly). It would further seem that some students spelled certain words phonologically. Therefore, for words like *fixes*, *splashes*, and *kisses*, students wrote (z) as opposed to (s). This could, perhaps, be due to the degree to which students were familiar with each verb. As far as the verbs *flies* and *cries* are concerned, students also rendered the final (s) as a [z] (but it was also clear that these few students did not seem to be aware of the rule of replacing the final (y) with (ies)).

Table 2: Students’ Results in Writing Nouns Ending in (s)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Wrong answers | Correct answers | Nouns |
|  | 34 | Dishes |
|  | 34 | Babies |
| 1 boxez | 33 | Boxes |
| 4 churchez | 31 | Churches |
| 12 quizzez | 22 | Quizzes |
|  | 34 | Boats |
|  | 34 | Skates |
|  | 34 | Answers |
|  | 34 | Plants |
|  | 34 | Notebooks |
|  | 34 | Sharks |
|  | 34 | Trays |
|  | 34 | Rivers |
|  | 34 | Cards |
| 3 seasonz | 31 | Seasons |
|  | 34 | Computers |
|  | 34 | James |
|  | 34 | Amos |
|  | 34 | Carlos |
|  | 34 | Elias |

Table 2 Analysis

The dictation list in Table 2 aimed to assess the students’ ability to accurately realize the plural (s) inflection orthographically. The list included nouns ending in (s) (spelled [s]), such as *boats*, *skates*, *answers*, *plants*, *notebooks*, *sharks*, and a few names of people for variation. The majority of students spelled the (s) correctly, as the pronunciation and orthography correlated. While in words in which the final (s) is spelled [z] or [iz], some students demonstrated spelling mistakes. In words like *churches*, *quizzes*, and *seasons*, it was easy to see why some students opted for (z) instead of (s). Again, we can hypothesize that students committed such spelling errors, because they were unfamiliar with the word; if they were familiar with a word, we would expect them to be able to spell it correctly. These words are infrequently used by students, and this could be a reason they spelled it inaccurately. Words like*: trays*, *cards*, and *rivers* were spelled correctly by students, because they are frequent and commonly-used words.

Presenting Graphs to Compare the Results of the Two Lists

Graph 1

The graph below describes the results of the dictation; the numbers on the right indicate the number of students who spelled the verb correctly.

Graph 2

The graph below describes of the results of the dictation; the numbers on the right show the number of students who spelled the nouns correctly.

The students’ results were presented in graphs to show the similarity of the percentages of both correct and incorrect spellings. Both tables display very similar statistical results. As was mentioned in the literature review, according to Bryant (2015), even though the (s) rules are considered one of the simplest rules in English, some of the students demonstrate a lack of correlation between the phonology and orthography for many words in English. This was readily apparent from the students’ mistakes in writing [z] phonologically. They present that these group of Arab students can spell the (s) easily when it is spelled like (s), but add that some students get confused when it is spelled [z] or [iz]; this is likely because the students spell the word phonologically (as opposed to drawing upon morpho-phonological spelling rules). This relates to the phonological process for students in learning how to differentiate between different forms of spelling like in the inflectional (s) which can be used in both plural and third person singular forms.

**Discussion**

This paper aimed to shed light on the errors Arab students make when spelling the inflectional (s) in both the third person and plural forms by analyzing data from two different dictations. Each dictation was comprised of different categories of words and verbs ending in the inflectional (s) in three different spellings [z], [s], and [es]. This paper further aimed to show that the system of English spelling is generally difficult to grasp for native Arabic speakers and that there are many inconsistencies between phonology and spelling (Bryant, Mitchell & Kemp 2015). Students displayed readily apparent spelling errors, as was outlined in the graphs. Drawing upon the findings of the present work, the teachers of these students can strengthen their awareness of the types of spelling errors native Arabic speakers have a tendency to make and consequently address these issues.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the knowledge of morphological processing can aid English learners in overcoming a variety of spelling errors. Teachers play an instrumental role in helping to raise student awareness of spelling variations. By focusing on addressing these errors, teachers can help students overcome these spelling mistakes and help them to succeed in learning the target language correctly. Moreover, teachers of English as a second or foreign language should closely monitor student progress in order to better understand the students’ strengths and weaknesses and modify their lessons accordingly.

Writing this paper and collecting the relevant data helped to raise my awareness (as an EFL teacher) of the difficulties that arise for native speakers when orthographically realizing the inflectional [s]. I have consequently began to focus more on explaining to students the different morpho-phonological rules associated with spelling the inflectional [s] in order to help them differentiate between the different forms and to avoid spelling errors.