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Introducing the MORPHEUS ('MORPHological corpus of the English of University Students'): Features, Aims, Results and Applications

Abstract

This paper delves into the connections between orthography and both inflectional and derivational morphology in ELT by resorting to error analysis. Therefore, the first part of the session is devoted to the description of the features and aims of the MORPHEUS, a corpus of spelling and morphological errors with is currently being gathered at the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB). The analysis of the corpus compiled so far resulted in a provisional typological classification which is put forward in the paper. The conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis are the following: firstly, an important number of spelling errors can actually be accounted for by considering the influence of the morphological component of the L1, for example, in the choice of wrong affixes (*desappear), wrong allomorphs (*inmature) or wrong rules due to incompatibility (*accessibles); secondly, spelling errors are also very often due to inadequacies in the acquisition of the morphological component of the L2: they occur, for instance, because adaptation rules of spelling must be applied together with morphological rules (*studing, *listenning), or because there is no awareness of the morphological structure of the lexical item (*finaly, *dissappeared). The results obtained point at the need to encourage the teaching of the morphological component at all levels, since increasing the awareness of rules and structures is in fact an effective strategy to prevent spelling and morphological errors. The applicability of the corpus is illustrated in the final part of the session, since the data provided by the MORPHEUS also allowed the preparation of a manual on English spelling for Spanish students which intends to foster the acquisition of the morphological component of the L2.

Key words

error, morphology, spelling, typology