



# First Language Attrition and Orthography: A Study of Yoruba-English Bilinguals

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**Abstract:** *Language attrition, a subfield of Linguistics, has not received significant scholarly attention in Nigeria, especially when compared to other areas of bilingualism and second language acquisition. While limited research has been conducted, these studies have predominantly focused on the erosion of lexical items, neglecting other critical language domains such as orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. This paper aims to address this gap by investigating the level of orthographic attrition among Yoruba L1 speakers who regularly use English as a second language. The study employs a cross-sectional experimental method for data collection. Loss of orthography competencies were evaluated using Sentence Repetition Tasks (SRTs) in Yoruba, which contained two phrases (Bí ó tilè jẹ́ pé and Kò ní í wá) that belonged to the rule of word division in orthography. They were used to test the respondents' adherence to spelling conventions to 1974 standard orthography. Quantitative analysis technique like independent t-test was used to identify difference in the level of attrition between linguistics and non-linguistics students. The findings show that Eng\_L1 & Eng\_L2\_1\_6 both show trend-level significance with  $p = 0.077$  and  $0.089$ , respectively. Also, Yor\_L1 (Yoruba as L1) shows trend-level significance ( $p = 0.079$ ). Similarly, Eng\_Frds\_Schools was significance ( $p = 0.041$ ). Among the experimented students who spelt the two phrases correctly and wrongly. In the same vein, Eng\_Sibs\_Parents was not significant, though  $p = 0.104$  is approaching significance. However, in the second t-test row,  $p = 0.004$  indicates a highly significant difference, confirming that orthographic performance is better in those who spell correctly. Also, for the Eng\_Frds\_Schools, results showed that statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.037$  and  $0.026$ ) was observed, and this showed that students who spoke English with friends at school and spelled correctly had significantly lower attrition. The findings conclude that consistent use of English, particularly among peer-school mates for interactions, contributes significantly to orthographic retention, while early exposure L1 backgrounds also play important but more passive roles.*

**Keywords:** language attrition, standard orthography, quantitative analysis, t-test, sentence Repetition task, a cross-sectional experimental method, bilingualism.

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## 1. Introduction

Language attrition refers to the gradual decline in a speaker's linguistic competence, typically resulting from prolonged contact with a second language (L2). Scholars have consistently observed that native speakers who acquire an L2, whether in a first language (L1) or L2-dominant environment, often experience measurable reductions in their proficiency in the L1. This decline manifests across various linguistic domains, including morphology, phonetics, phonology, syntax, and semantics.

According to Lambert (1982), the factors influencing language attrition can be categorized as *criterion variables* and *predictor variables*. Bardovi-Harlig and Stringer (2010) reconceptualize these as *linguistic* and *extralinguistic* factors. Linguistic variables include lexical and morphosyntactic influence from the dominant language, frequency and quality of input, loss of morphological complexity, and reduction in stylistic and registeral variation. Extralinguistic variables encompass age, duration of language disuse, and motivation for L1 maintenance.



Importantly, the rate and nature of attrition vary across linguistic domains. For instance, scholars argue that lexical items are more susceptible to attrition than any other linguistic domains. Similarly, Ecke (2004:334) contends that productive language skills, such as speaking and writing, are more vulnerable than receptive skills like listening and reading. Furthermore, Prince (1997) and Toribio (2001) cited in Ecke (2004) assumes that lexical and morphological structures tend to be more prone to erosion than syntactic structures. Age-related differences also emerge in attrition patterns: while children acquire second languages more easily than adults, adults often retain their native language skills more robustly over time.

In response to these observations, various hypotheses have been proposed to explain the mechanisms of language loss in native speakers. These include the *regression hypothesis*, the *interference hypothesis*, and the *critical threshold hypothesis*. These theoretical models have guided numerous empirical investigations, particularly in European and North American contexts, with findings that both corroborate and challenge existing claims. However, research on language attrition remains sparse in African contexts, particularly with respect to indigenous languages. Notably, studies focusing on Nigerian languages are exceedingly limited, underscoring a significant gap in the literature and forming a central motivation for the present study.

Given the above state of affair, the current research explores the nature of orthographic attrition among young Yoruba-English bilinguals living in an L1-dominant environment. While existing studies on Yoruba L1 attrition have primarily addressed lexical erosion, research on orthographic attrition, especially in bilingual contexts, remains limited. This study seeks to address this gap by focusing on university undergraduates who are native Yoruba speakers and are simultaneously immersed in English academic settings.

Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there significant difference in the level of attrition between linguistic and non-linguistic undergraduates?
2. How valid is the claim that productive language skills are more vulnerable to attrition than receptive skills, particularly in the domain of orthography?
3. What impact does the study of language at the undergraduate level have on the attrition of Yoruba orthographic conventions?
4. How does the linguistic environment influence the attrition of L1 orthographic norms among Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a review of relevant literature, Section 3 outlines the methodological framework, Section 4 presents the data analysis and findings, and Section 5 concludes the paper.

## 2. Review of Relevant Literature

Orthography forms the foundation of a language's written system. No language can be effectively documented or preserved in written form without a standardized orthography. As such, the erosion of orthographic knowledge among younger generations poses a serious threat to the sustainability and transmission of a language. In the case of Yoruba, while there have been considerable scholarly

efforts focused on proposing and reviewing orthographic systems, very few studies have explored the level of orthographic attrition, especially among younger speakers. This gap in the literature forms the core motivation for the present study.

### 2.1 Studies on Yoruba Orthography

Several studies have focused on the development, review, and evaluation of Yoruba orthography. For example, Adeniyi et al. (2011) proposed a unified orthography for the various dialects of Yoruba spoken across Nigeria, the Republic of Benin, and Togo. Similarly, Awobuluyi and Oyèláràn (2017) advanced a comprehensive orthographic system intended for adoption across the broader Yoruba-speaking regions. Both proposals aimed at resolving inconsistencies in existing orthographic practices and promoting standardization.

Ajiboye (2023) critically reviewed these orthographic proposals, highlighting both their contributions and limitations. He noted that the efforts of Adeniyi et al. (2011) were weakened by limited geographical representation in their consultative process, poor structural organization, and a lack of reference to the foundational 1974 Yoruba orthography. While commending the comprehensiveness of Awobuluyi and Oyèláràn's work, Ajiboye criticized their failure to adequately represent specific grammatical structures, particularly genitive and infinitive markers, a flaw he also identified in the 1974 standard orthography.

In a more empirical approach, Adeniyi (2018) examined the rationale behind specific conventions in the 1974 orthography, such as the use of *'oun'* (3rd person singular pronoun) without an 'h', in contrast to *'ohun'* ('thing') with an 'h'. Based on perceptual data, Adeniyi argued that the inclusion of 'h' in *'ohun'* lacks phonetic justification, since the /h/ sound is more perceptible in *'oun'* than in *'ohun'*.

Olumuyiwa (2013) assessed the extent of conformity to the 1974 orthography across three public domains: journalism, education, and religion. His findings revealed significant deviations from standard spelling conventions in these domains, particularly in print media and advertising. However, the study did not investigate the underlying causes of these deviations, nor did it address level of orthographic decline among younger Yoruba speakers.

Taken together, these studies have primarily focused on the creation, evaluation, and domain-specific usage of Yoruba orthography. However, they have largely neglected the question of orthographic attrition, especially among the youth—a critical oversight that this study seeks to address.

### 2.2 Studies on Language Attrition in Nigerian Languages

While orthographic attrition remains underexplored, several studies have investigated other aspects of language attrition in Nigerian and African languages. For instance, Sands et al. (2007) examined lexical attrition in *Nuu*, a Khoisan language that experienced abrupt language shift. Their findings indicated that sudden language shifts often result in more rapid lexical erosion than gradual ones, linking language shift directly to mass lexical attrition.

Etim et al. (2018) studied lexical attrition among bilingual children in the Abak metropolis of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Using theories of language contact and accessibility, they found that factors such as infrequent use of the L1 at home and in school,

early exposure to the L2, and negative attitudes toward the L1 contributed significantly to lexical attrition.

In the domain of phonological attrition, Shittu and Tessier (2022) investigated tonal perception among Yoruba-speaking children and their parents living in Canada. The study found a noticeable decline in the perception of Yoruba tones, especially among children. Notably, low tones were found to be more susceptible to loss than high tones, suggesting a hierarchy of vulnerability in tonal perception.

Adeniyi and Olaogun (2020) explored the patterns and implications of the declining use of Yoruba lexical items. Employing both qualitative and statistical methods, they provided insights into how lexical erosion is unfolding in urban contexts and its implications for intergenerational language transmission.

These studies collectively contribute to our understanding of lexical and tonal attrition in Nigerian languages. However, none have examined orthographic attrition, particularly among L1 Yoruba-speaking university students, a demographic likely to be caught between the demands of formal English-language education and informal use of their L1.

The reviewed literature clearly demonstrates a lack of research attention to orthographic attrition within the Yoruba language. While there is a growing body of work on lexical and tonal loss, no comprehensive studies have yet addressed how orthographic conventions are being lost or transformed among younger L1 Yoruba speakers, especially in formal educational contexts. The current study thus seeks to fill this critical gap by investigating the nature and extent of orthographic attrition among Yoruba-English bilingual university undergraduates in an L1-dominant environment.

### 3. Materials and Method

This study employed a quantitative comparative design using independent samples *t*-tests to examine differences in orthographic attrition between students who correctly and incorrectly spelt two Yoruba phrases: *Kò ní ì wá* (will not come) and *Bí ó tilè jé pé* (even though) using students of Linguistics as the control and non-linguistic students for experiment. The aim was to assess how spelling performance varied across different categories of language exposure and communicative contexts.

The sample consisted of 70 university students, comprising 35 linguistics students and 35 non-linguistics students, selected purposively to reflect varying degrees of Yoruba and English language exposure. The students were categorized based on their language background (e.g., Yoruba L1, English L2 at different developmental stages), social interaction contexts (e.g., family use, peer communication at school and home), and other media of exposure types (e.g., digital and informal Yoruba/English usage). Each student was assessed on their ability to accurately spell the two Yoruba phrases using appropriate orthographic rules as prescribed by the 1974 Yoruba orthography standard.

The primary data were collected through a controlled orthographic test where participants were asked to write the Yoruba phrases under analysis. Their responses were evaluated for accuracy in character composition (orthographic spelling). Each phrase was scored to quantify orthographic performance, generating a numerical attrition index for each participant. Each correctly spelt phrase was scored 1 point and wrongly spelt was scored zero (0).

For example, in English L1, 2 out of 35 students of linguistics correctly spelt '*bí ó tilè jé pé*', and while none of the students correctly spelt '*Kò ní ì wá*'.

Spelling performance was statistically analyzed using independent samples *t*-tests, comparing the orthographic scores of students who spelt the phrases correctly versus those who did not. Differences in group means were used to deduce levels of orthographic attrition. Welch's correction was applied in cases of unequal group variances, and statistical significance was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ . Higher mean values indicated greater retention of orthographic knowledge, while lower means indicated higher attrition.

#### 3.1 Data/ Sentence Repetition Task (SRT)

The 1974 Standard Yoruba Orthography is employed in this study, as it remains the only officially recognized and authoritative orthographic system for Yoruba, despite subsequent proposals and revisions by scholars such as Bamgbose (1982), Adeniyi et al. (2011), and more recently Awobuluyi and Oyèláràn (2017). To elicit data on participants' proficiency in the 1974 Standard Yoruba Orthography, the researcher utilized a Sentence Repetition Task (SRT). In this procedure, the researcher orally presented structured sentences in Yoruba, and participants were instructed to transcribe them using the conventions of the 1974 orthography.

The SRT was selected based on its demonstrated effectiveness in assessing lexical and sublexical levels of language ability, as supported by prior studies (e.g., Klein et al., 2015; Polišenská, 2015). The task included two phrases (*Kò ní ì wá* and *Bí ó tilè jé pé*) designed to evaluate participants' adherence to key orthographic convention of the rule of word division. The tested phrases and other similar words that followed the same orthographic rules were embedded in sentences so that the respondents would not recognize which phrases were being tested. The sentences are given in the table below.

**Table 1: Sentence Repetition task.**

S/N	Words Tested and others	Sentences	Gloss
1	Wí pé Not Wipe 'say that'	Mo gbà wí pé Olórún wà.	I agree that there is God
2	kò ní í wá Not kò ni iwa 'will not come'	Olú kò ní í wá.	Olu will not come
3	Nígba tí Not nigbati 'when'	Nígba tí o bá dé, mää lọ.	When you arrive, I will go
4	Bí ó tilè jé pé Not Biotilejepe 'Even though'	Bí ó tilè jé pé ì lú le, a ó là á já.	Even though the country is hard, we will survive
5	Kí ni Not kini 'what'	Kí ni orúkọ re?	What is your name?
6	Kì í sunkún Not Kì í sunkún 'will not cry'	Ọmọ nàá kì í sunkún	The child does not cry.

The orthography rule that guide the tested words states that the verbal particle 'í' in 'kò ní í wá' and 'kí í sunkún' should be written as an independent item and not together with the following verb. Since written it together with the verb will give the impression that the Yoruba language has words with high tone vowels at the initial position and the words such as 'wí pé, nígbà tí, bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ̀ pé and 'kí ní' should not be written as single words.

### 3.2 Scoring Technique

The scoring procedure focused specifically on the orthographic accuracy of target word spellings within each sentence, irrespective of other unrelated errors. Errors not pertaining to the target lexical items were disregarded during evaluation. A participant's response was considered correct if the target word or phrase conformed to the conventions of the 1974 Standard Yoruba Orthography. For instance, the correct orthographic form of the adverbial linker 'Biotilejepe' is *Bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ̀ pé*, which should be written as five separate words. In cases where participants wrote *je pe* instead without tones, the response was still marked as correct due to adherence to the orthographic rule of word separation, despite the phonological inaccuracy in the last component. Thus, scoring prioritized structural conformity to orthographic norms over phonetic or tonal accuracy.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Difference in the orthographic attrition (spelling decline) between students who correctly and wrongly spelt Yoruba phrases (Kò ní í wá and Bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ̀ pé)

Evidence in Table 2 presents results from an independent samples t-test that measures the difference in orthographic attrition (spelling decline) between students who correctly and wrongly spelt a Yoruba phrase across various communication contexts and language exposure categories. With a sample of 35 students who are students of Linguistics, findings show that there was no significant difference ( $p = 0.234$ ). Students who correctly or wrongly spelt the phrase did not differ significantly in their attrition scores. This implies that English L1 (Eng\_L1 - English as first language) status did not impact orthographic accuracy for this Yoruba word. For those who are Eng\_L2\_1\_6 (English L2, aged 1-6), Significant difference ( $p = 0.023$ ) was observed where those who wrongly spelt the phrase had much lower mean score (1.93) than those who got it right (12.55). This means that early English bilinguals who got the Yoruba spelling wrong had weaker Yoruba orthography retention. In addition, for the Eng\_L2\_7\_13 & Eng\_L2\_Others there was no significant difference observed in either group ( $p > 0.05$ ), this implies that late English bilinguals and other L2 users did not show a clear pattern in orthographic attrition of the word studied.

For the Yoruba language exposure, and for Yor\_L1 (Yoruba as first language), there was no significant difference, but approaching significance ( $p = 0.092$ ), with a mean difference of -5.23 and the wrongly spelt students had slightly higher attrition.

This implies that native Yoruba speakers who misspelled the word may still show signs of erosion in orthographic knowledge. For the Yor\_L2\_1\_6, there was no significant difference ( $p = 0.236$ ), despite a mild trend toward better performance in the correct group. This means that early exposure to Yoruba is not a strong predictor of orthographic performance in this case, and for those in Yor\_L2\_7\_13 & Yor\_L2\_Others, there was no significant difference ( $p = 0.902$  and  $p = 0.078$  respectively). However, the Yor\_L2\_Others category approached significance, suggesting that those who wrongly spelt the word ( $M = 4.80$ ) had higher attrition than correct ones ( $M = 3.25$ ).

Further analysis was conducted to further examine the level of attrition and communication with family and friends (Eng\_Sibs\_Parents), it was observed there was no significant difference, though  $p = 0.104$  is approaching significance. But in the second t-test row,  $p = 0.004$  indicates a highly significant difference, confirming that orthographic performance is better in those who spell correctly. For the Eng\_Frds\_Home, there was a significant difference in one row ( $p = 0.015$ ), but not the other ( $p = 0.153$ ). This means that language use among friends at home may be linked to spelling retention. Also, for the Eng\_Frds\_Schools, results show that statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.037$  and  $0.026$ ) was observed, and this shows that students who used English with friends at school and spelled correctly had significantly lower attrition. More so, for the Eng\_Others, there was no significant difference ( $p = 0.314$  and  $0.327$ ), and this implies that English used outside close social circles may not affect Yoruba orthography.

On the other hands, in the use of Yoruba in family and social settings like Yor\_Sibs\_Parents, there was no significant difference ( $p = 0.451$  and  $0.461$ ), and this suggests that family use of Yoruba didn't differentiate spelling performance. Furthermore, Yor\_Frds\_Home, there was a close to significance ( $p = 0.089$  and  $0.106$ ) value and this implies that those who misspelt the phrase had higher mean attrition ( $M = 11.33$ ) than those who got it right ( $M = 8.08$ ), while for those speak Yor\_Frds\_Schools, there was no significant difference ( $p = 0.112$  and  $0.124$ , but the mean difference is quite large (-4.13). this suggests a strong trend in the use of Yoruba with friends in school may help retain orthographic knowledge. Lastly, for those who speak Yor\_others was not significant but approaching significance ( $p = 0.078$  and  $0.077$ ). this means that the wrongly spelling group had higher attrition scores, showing potential negative influence from general Yoruba usage contexts.

The results of these findings suggest that orthographic attrition for the Yoruba phrase " Kò ní í wá " is partly influenced by early bilingual exposure and social language contexts, especially where English is the dominant medium. Though Yoruba L1 status does not guarantee spelling accuracy, language socialization (friends, family) in English appears to correlate with reduced orthographic performance

**Table 2: Results of independent t-test showing significant difference in the orthographic attrition between the wrongly and correctly spelt among students of linguistics for a Yoruba phrases (Bí ó tilè jẹ̀ pé) across selected media of communication**

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Df	Sig	Mean Diff
Eng_L1	correctly spelt	35	17.75	10.42	-1.22	25.00	0.234	-4.85
	wrongly spelt	35	22.60	10.15	-1.22	23.43	0.236	-4.85
Eng_L2_1_6	correctly spelt	35	12.55	0.95	-2.41	25.00	0.023	-0.93
	wrongly spelt	35	1.93	1.03	-2.44	24.43	0.023	-0.93
Eng_L2_7_13	correctly spelt	35	2.77	0.84	-0.89	25.00	0.381	-0.13
	wrongly spelt	35	0.13	0.52	-1.52	14.00	0.334	-0.13
Eng_L2_Others	correctly spelt	35	1.67	1.87	0.22	25.00	0.827	0.13
	wrongly spelt	35	1.53	1.25	0.21	18.35	0.835	0.13
Yor_L1	correctly spelt	35	13.83	8.72	-1.75	25.00	0.092	-5.23
	wrongly spelt	35	19.07	6.83	-1.70	20.56	0.104	-5.23
Yor_L2_1_6	correctly spelt	35	3.67	2.50	-1.22	25.00	0.236	-1.13
	wrongly spelt	35	4.80	2.34	-1.21	22.95	0.240	-1.13
Yor_L2_7_13	correctly spelt	35	0.17	0.58	-0.12	25.00	0.902	-0.03
	wrongly spelt	35	0.20	0.77	-0.13	24.91	0.899	-0.03
Yor_L2_Others	correctly spelt	35	3.25	2.53	-1.84	25.00	0.078	-1.55
	wrongly spelt	35	4.80	1.86	-1.78	19.69	0.091	-1.55
Eng_Sibs_Parents	correctly spelt	35	12.08	7.15	-1.69	25.00	0.104	-4.05
	wrongly spelt	35	16.13	5.34	-3.63	19.90	0.004	-4.05
Eng_Frds_Home	correctly spelt	35	4.83	3.16	-2.49	25.00	0.015	-1.77
	wrongly spelt	35	6.60	3.00	-1.48	23.12	0.153	-1.77
Eng_Frds_Schools	correctly spelt	35	3.92	3.20	-3.99	25.00	0.037	-2.55
	wrongly spelt	35	6.47	3.38	-3.01	24.22	0.026	-2.55
Eng_Others	correctly spelt	35	8.58	5.26	-1.03	25.00	0.314	-1.88
	wrongly spelt	35	10.47	4.27	-1.00	21.06	0.327	-1.88
Yor_Sibs_Parents	correctly spelt	35	8.08	5.35	-0.77	25.00	0.451	-1.45
	wrongly spelt	35	9.53	4.49	-0.75	21.51	0.461	-1.45
Yor_Frds_Home	correctly spelt	35	8.08	5.63	-1.77	25.00	0.089	-3.25
	wrongly spelt	35	11.33	3.90	-1.70	18.89	0.106	-3.25
Yor_Frds_Schools	correctly spelt	35	10.44	2.47	-1.65	25.00	0.112	-4.13
	wrongly spelt	35	18.33	1.44	-1.60	20.57	0.124	-4.13
Yor_others	correctly spelt	35	10.44	7.31	2.17	25.00	0.078	-6.18
	wrongly spelt	35	16.13	5.73	2.18	20.77	0.077	-6.18

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

### Experimented students

Table 3 presents result from independent samples *t*-tests measuring differences in orthographic attrition, which is defined as the decline in spelling. This was done between non-linguistic students who correctly and wrongly spelt the Yoruba phrase *Kò ní ì wá* (will not come).

It was observed from the findings that for the Eng\_L1 & Eng\_L2\_1\_6 both show trend-level significance with  $p = 0.077$  and  $0.089$ , respectively. This suggests that English-first or early-English users may struggle to retain Yoruba orthography. This supports findings from Schmid (2021) that early bilinguals can exhibit interference effects in L1 orthography if L2 (here English)

dominates daily use. Also, for Eng\_L2\_Others shows clear significance ( $p = 0.003$ ), and this shows that the non-linguistic students who spelt the word correctly had much higher retention. This implies that informal digital English users may consciously apply correct spelling or unknowingly.

Furthermore, the Yor\_L1 (Yoruba as L1) shows trend-level significance ( $p = 0.079$ ). This implies that native speakers still showed minor erosion. This may possibly be due to lack of writing practice or tone simplification in texting based on the findings of Ajala (2013). In addition, Yor\_L2\_1\_6 shows a clear significant difference ( $p = 0.014$ ), and it means that formal early instruction in Yoruba appears to protect against spelling decay, while Yor\_L2\_Others was also significant ( $p = 0.042$ ).

On the social usage pattern, findings show that Eng\_Frds\_Schools was significance ( $p = 0.041$ ). This implies that peer interactions in formal academic contexts promote better spelling habits, while for the Eng\_Sibs\_Parents, Yor\_Sibs\_Parents, Yor\_Frds\_Home were not significant, though all show a consistent pattern—those who misspelled the word had lower mean retention. This aligns with Fishman's (1972) domain theory that emphasizes intimate domains tolerate nonstandard language use. Lastly, Yor\_others slightly misses significance ( $p = 0.077$ ), but the large mean difference ( $\Delta = 4.438$ ) suggests informal Yoruba domains (e.g., markets, churches, clubs and association membership) might contribute to attrition.

In general, the findings from Table 2 show that orthographic attrition in Yoruba is strongly influenced by early exposure, social context, and language of communication. Correct spelling correlates with formal schooling, school peer interaction, and some digital literacy in informal English spaces. In contrast, casual Yoruba use outside the classroom increases spelling decline. These findings reinforce the urgent need to embed orthographic awareness in both curriculum and technology design, ensuring that learners can retain and use accurate Yoruba spelling in a digitized, multilingual world.

**Table 3: Results of independent t-test showing significant difference in the orthographic attrition between the wrongly and correctly spelt experimented Yoruba word 'Kò ní í wá' across selected media of communication**

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Df	Sig	Mean Diff
Eng_L1	wrongly spelt	35	4.778	4.236	-1.888	16.000	0.077	-5.152
	correctly spelt	35	9.778	6.723	-1.888	13.488	0.081	-5.152
Eng_L2_1_6	wrongly spelt	35	3.556	3.206	-1.812	16.000	0.089	-3.556
	correctly spelt	35	7.111	4.936	-1.812	13.730	0.092	-3.556
Eng_L2_7_13	wrongly spelt	35	1.556	2.068	-1.618	16.000	0.125	-2.222
	correctly spelt	35	3.778	3.563	-1.618	12.842	0.130	-2.222
Eng_L2_Others	wrongly spelt	35	2.111	1.764	-4.517	16.000	0.003	-4.222
	correctly spelt	35	6.333	2.828	-4.517	13.405	0.005	-4.222
Yor_L1	wrongly spelt	35	0.889	0.782	-1.874	16.000	0.079	-0.667
	correctly spelt	35	1.556	0.726	-1.874	15.915	0.079	-0.667
Yor_L2_1_6	wrongly spelt	35	3.111	2.977	-3.950	16.000	0.014	-3.667
	correctly spelt	35	6.778	5.790	-3.950	13.377	0.032	-3.667
Yor_L2_7_13	wrongly spelt	35	0.111	0.333	-1.109	16.000	0.284	-0.222
	correctly spelt	35	0.333	0.552	-1.109	13.938	0.286	-0.222
Yor_L2_Others	wrongly spelt	35	3.662	1.299	-2.205	16.000	0.042	-2.778
	correctly spelt	35	2.719	1.424	-2.205	14.953	0.043	-2.778
Eng_Sibs_Parents	wrongly spelt	35	2.667	2.291	-1.629	16.000	0.123	-3.889
	correctly spelt	35	5.444	3.005	-1.629	14.649	0.125	-3.889
Eng_Frds_Home	wrongly spelt	35	3.889	4.226	-1.411	16.000	0.178	-1.556
	correctly spelt	35	7.778	5.783	-1.411	13.186	0.182	-1.556
Eng_Frds_Schools	wrongly spelt	35	1.778	1.716	-2.225	16.000	0.041	-4.333
	correctly spelt	35	3.333	2.828	-2.225	12.039	0.046	-4.333
Eng_Others	wrongly spelt	35	2.537	4.551	-1.552	16.000	0.140	-2.222
	correctly spelt	35	2.661	2.711	-1.552	14.669	0.142	-2.222
Yor_Sibs_Parents	wrongly spelt	35	2.556	2.698	-1.618	16.000	0.125	-1.778
	correctly spelt	35	6.889	5.183	-1.618	12.603	0.130	-1.778
Yor_Frds_Home	wrongly spelt	35	2.778	2.539	-1.635	16.000	0.122	-3.667
	correctly spelt	35	5.152	3.464	-1.635	13.548	0.125	-3.667
Yor_Frds_Schools	wrongly spelt	35	1.889	1.616	5.619	-0.890	-1.851	2.461
	correctly spelt	35	3.667	2.872	5.900	-0.847	-1.762	1.462
Yor_others	wrongly spelt	35	3.333	3.606	6.723	-0.744	-1.715	1.372
	correctly spelt	35	7.771	5.679	4.162	-0.854	-1.812	1.621

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

## 5. Conclusion

This study examined orthographic attrition among Yoruba-English bilingual undergraduates—both linguistics and non-linguistics students—at Adekunle Ajasin University through a quantitative analysis of spelling performance using students of Linguistics and Languages as the control while non-linguistic students for the experiment. The findings show a complex interplay between language exposure, social interaction, and orthographic retention. Specifically, early exposure to English, either as a first language or through early bilingual development, was associated with greater attrition in Yoruba spelling, consistent with cross-linguistic interference hypothesis. In contrast, formal Yoruba instruction and peer interaction within academic settings (friends in schools) were linked to better orthographic performance. Although early exposure to Yoruba offered some advantages, it does not uniformly prevent orthographic decline—likely due to limited writing practice and the influence of informal digital communication. Apparently, students with informal or unschooled Yoruba exposure demonstrated the highest levels of attrition. The findings therefore conclude that consistent use of English, particularly among peer-school mates for interactions, contributes significantly to orthographic retention, while early exposure L1 backgrounds also play important but more passive roles.

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