

Writing errors among primary school students and methods of treating them

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to identify writing errors among sixth-grade primary school students and find methods of treating them. To achieve this goal, the writings of (600) students were analyzed in six governorates: Sohag, Qalyubia, Minya, Cairo, Giza, and Sharkia. The writings of (100) students from each governorate were analyzed. The analysis was done in light of the correct writing skills of sixth-grade primary school students : correct writing of words, consistency of the size of the letters of words, consistency of the spaces between words, use of eloquent words, coherence of sentences, use of punctuation marks, clarity of sentences, consideration of the grammatical position of words, regularity of writing on the line, and no crossing out.

The study analyzed students writing samples twice over a month and found various errors. These included misspelled words, frequent cross-outs, inconsistent letter sizes, irregular line adherence, grammatical errors, incorrect hamza usage, inconsistent spacing between words, and missing punctuation.

The current study recommends implementing treatment programs for writing errors among sixth grade students, and continuous follow-up of students' errors and practicing various writing activities such as journalistic writing by students.

Keywords: Writing errors; Sixth grade students; Methods of treating writing errors.

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Introduction:

Language is a fundamental component of human life, serving as a medium for expressing thoughts, sensations, and feelings. Arabic language education aims to equip learners with the fundamental skills and competencies to master the Arabic language through various educational stages. The ultimate objective is to attain a level of proficiency in using the Arabic language and effective communication with others through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Arabic language education is not merely an isolated study subject; rather, it is a conduit for studying other school subjects, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and information, as well as the scientific, technological, and cultural progress they embody.

The Arabic language, like any other language, has its own linguistic system. It is a set of rules, regulations, and laws that govern it, to which its words and phrases are subject, and to which its people adhere in communicating, understanding, and exchanging information and experiences. The system includes sub-systems of the language, represented by phonetic, grammatical, morphological, semantic, and written systems. (Zaid, 2006: 11)

Writing is one of the most prominent methods and means that people use to convey ideas and meanings that are in mind. People express ideas through the written word, and translate them through symbols and linear images of words and linguistic units that are heard or seen, as a spelling drawing according to certain standards and rules, so that they can convey them to others, to achieve interaction, communication and participation with them. (Khasawneh, 2008 and Zayed, 2006)

Writing is a comprehensive skill that integrates all aspects of the Arabic language—its grammar, rules, and practical use. It stands as one of the most vital outcomes of language education, reflecting a person's intellectual and linguistic capabilities. Through writing, one demonstrates how well they've mastered the language, whether acquired or learned. It goes far beyond simply forming letters and shapes or achieving neat handwriting; it involves constructing clear, meaningful words and expressive sentences that convey personal thoughts. Ultimately, it leads to the advanced levels of composition and creativity, requiring an organized, thoughtful, and multifaceted mental effort. (Zayer and Amin, 2017)

Developing basic writing skills is an important educational requirement for all learners, especially in the early stages of education, because weakness or neglecting them will continue with the learner in the advanced stages of education. The noticeable decline in writing quality among students today may stem from lack of emphasis on teaching fundamental writing skills during early education stages, as well as a general neglect of writing and written expression—both in instruction and in assessment. (Al-Busais, 2011).

The study problem

Writing occupies the highest position in the pyramid of learning linguistic skills and abilities, because it precedes the acquisition of listening, speaking and reading skills. Consequently, the students cannot write correctly or express themselves clearly or answer any question using correct expressions unless they are proficient in the basic linguistic, grammatical, morphological and spelling rules (Zayed, 2006). A lot of studies conducted in this field in the various educational stages suggested the following:

- There are deficiencies in primary education and failure of some curricula in the Arabic language to meet the international standards in Egypt (Taha & Ghanem, 2024).
- The necessity of paying attention to writing skills as a linguistic skill since it has an impact on academic achievement and understanding the process of communicating with others (Al-Shadifat, 2017).
- The importance of caring for the learner of the Arabic language in the first grades and holding students accountable for their spelling errors in various written works (Ahmed, 2010). There are some writing errors due to lack of connection between the phonetic aspect and the spelling of letters, so attention should be paid to the rules of writing and methods of teaching them to treat writing errors, and develop writing skills in the pre-university education stages, and focus on the writing errors that students make and treat them. (Al-Sultan, 2024).
- The prevalence of spelling errors in students' writings and their inability to get rid of them (Awad, 2012). Besides, there are spelling errors common among learners (Selini and Fardi, 2021). A lot of writing problems led to students' weakness in spelling, grammar and morphology. Therefore, errors appeared in their writings; hence, it became a phenomenon whose dimensions should be identified to find suitable solutions (Shibo and Bakhti, 2022).
- The students' linguistic stock was inadequate and needed more elaboration. Linguistic errors were apparent in the students' writings even in the last grades of primary stage. The students used colloquial language phrases during the writing process. The students lack linguistic stock as it was characterized by the use of simple and superficial phrases interspersed with colloquial phrases. They also lacked written expressions of connected and coherent sentences as lacked the appropriate linking elements that make the expression more sequential and clear. The study suggested the need to find appropriate solutions to treat this phenomenon, so that these errors would not worsen and lead to weakness in the students' language which results in difficulties in the process of learning all other academic subjects (Raqqas, Sarah, 2020).
- Manifestations of students' weakness and low level of creative writing skills, students' poverty in expression, and inability to produce correct, traditional sentences with complete structure and components, as well as to produce sentences that are original and creative (Al-Ahwal, 2018) The necessity of paying attention to creative writing by correcting students' expressive writings, and encouraging students to practice creative writing (Al-Jabouri, Al-Asadi, and Al-Najjar, 2019).
- It is clear that there are many problems in the writings of school students. Therefore, the problem of the current research can be defined as the presence of errors in the writings of students in the first grades of education, which requires identifying the writing errors in the sixth grade of primary school, which represents the end of the first cycle of basic education.

Research Aims:

The research questions are:

- What are the writing skills of sixth grade primary school students?
- What are the writing errors of sixth grade primary school students?
- What are the proposed solutions to treat writing errors of sixth grade primary school students?

Aims of the research

This research aims to:

- Identify the writing skills of sixth grade primary school students,
- Identify the writing errors that appear in the writings of sixth grade primary school students
- Provide appropriate solutions to treat writing errors among sixth grade primary school students.

Importance of the study

This study may be useful in:

- Detecting the types of writing errors among sixth grade primary school students
- Providing Arabic language teachers with methods and suggestions for treating writing errors among sixth grade primary school students
- The interest of Arabic language teachers in creative written expression and developing its skills among their students
- Attracting the attention of those in charge of the executive side of the educational process including Arabic language advisors and supervisors to allocate sufficient time in the study plan to develop writing skills and treat writing errors among students in the early stages of education.

Delimitations of study

- Objective boundaries: Identifying writing errors in the writings of sixth-grade primary school students
- Human boundaries: A sample of sixth-grade primary school students.
- Spatial boundaries: Governorates of "Cairo - Giza - Qalyubia - Sharkia - Minya - Sohag"
- Temporal boundaries: The second half of the academic year 2023/2024 AD

Methodology and tools

The study used the descriptive approach to extrapolate research, studies and writings related to the research topic. The study also used the quasi-experimental method in preparing and applying the research tool, which is the written expression test on the research sample and monitoring the results.

Procedure

The research followed the following procedures

- Reviewing previous writings and studies related to the research topic,
- Writing the theoretical framework for the research,
- Identifying a list of writing skills appropriate for sixth grade primary school students,
- Preparing a writing test in the form of writing a topic for creative expression,
- Applying the test to the research sample,
- Correcting and analyzing it statistically.
- Identifying writing errors in the research sample, and
- Providing recommendations and suggestions for treating these errors.

Definition of terms

- Writing errors: They are the most common errors in writing at the semantic, grammatical, spelling, and general formal writing skills levels (Ahmed and Iqbal: 2019, 314, 315). Writing errors are defined procedurally in this research as: errors that appear in the writings of sixth-grade primary school students at the grammatical, spelling, and formal writing skills levels, and their weakness in employing writing skills in written expressions.

Theoretical Framework

Writing: Writing is one of the linguistic arts through which people communicate. It is an art through which people convey their ideas and knowledge to others in a written manner that excites the imagination and stirs emotions (Zayer and Amin, 2017: 372). Writing is a complex process consisting in a set of higher performance and mental skills. Creative writing is the highest level of writing, because it is concerned with expressing ideas and meanings, and formulating them in structures and molds that are interconnected with linguistic tools and links (Al-Shadifat, 2017: 160). Teaching writing is concerned with three main points : writing in a manner that suits the situation and in a manner that is characterized by importance and beauty, writing correctly in spelling, punctuation, hamzas, etc., and writing clearly and correctly (Madkour, 2006: 255).

Writing has characteristics that distinguish it from other linguistic skills. It is a skill that can be acquired through training and practice, because it is not an inherited talent. Writing and thinking represent two aspects of a single mental process. As one grows, the other grows and advances. It is the product of thinking and an aspect of creative thinking, which represents the basis for generating creative products in various forms. Writing has two dimensions, linguistic and cognitive. The linguistic dimension reflects the linguistic skills that the learner should master, and the cognitive dimension is related to the acquisition of ideas, information, facts and experiences (Zayer and Amin 2017: 386).

The act of writing includes several aspects: the mental aspect, which is linked to the various thinking processes which , in turn, produce and express thoughts ; the emotional aspect, which is linked to the motivation and desire to write and express the feelings and emotions ; and the manual aspect, which is linked to drawing and writing letters clearly and correctly. (Al-Busais, 2011: 76).

The nature of writing includes the following skills:

- Drawing letters in a clear, beautiful, and easy-to-read handwriting.
- Drawing letters according to the spelling rules.
- Planning the writing process, by choosing and defining the topic, identifying the main and sub-ideas, and collecting data related to this topic.
- The process of composition or creation, by writing the main and sub-ideas for this topic and organizing these ideas precisely.
- The reviewing process, by reviewing the topic according to the purpose of writing, reviewing ideas, spelling and grammatical errors, style, punctuation marks, and using linking tools. (Abd Al-Bari, 2014: 29).

Writing control skills are:

- A- Punctuation marks: These are conventional signs, agreed upon in their form and places where they are placed, between words in a sentence or at the end of a sentence, to indicate meanings that must be taken into account.
- B- Arabic grammar: The writer can use it to determine the positions of words in a sentence according to the meaning he wishes to convey to the reader, and the case markers (fatha, damma, and kasra) and the sukoon are signs indicating these positions.
- C- Spelling: These are the rules and laws that must be observed for Arabic writing to be correct.
- D- Common mistakes: These are mistakes in using certain words correctly in pronunciation, spelling, or using them out of place. (Jamal and Al-Faisal, 2009: 133, 136, 139, 158)

Written expression: Expression is the ability to control language, which is a means of expression, thinking, and communication. This includes: the correctness of the style in terms of grammar and morphology, the correctness of expression and Arabic writing skills, the correctness of meanings, information, and facts, the integration of meanings, the beauty of structure and meaning, the awareness of the limits of the subject and its type, and distinguishing what is appropriate and what is inappropriate (Madkour, et al., 2015: 158).

Expression is the ultimate purpose of learning a language, as it serves as the tool through which students shape and communicate their thoughts using precise and clear language. It is the actual practice of mental and linguistic abilities together. This practice leads to achieving effective and successful communication with members of society, fulfilling the students' needs and desires, and satisfying their tendencies, feelings, and emotions. They should be able to use expressions adequately through correct syntactic, morphological, and

semantic rules of the language, to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions in an effective way that shows their creative abilities and broad horizons. This could be done by attracting the students' attention to refer to libraries and information sources and research various topics in literature and various sciences. Also, by providing them with the ability to practice critical thinking in presenting ideas (Khasawneh, 2008).

The mind is involved in carrying out several mental processes, which are very complex and difficult in order to express thoughts. These processes, despite their abundance, can be focused on two processes: the analysis process, in which the learner refers to one's linguistic wealth and the vocabulary in dictionary, from which he chooses the words that can be used to convey ideas, and the synthesis process, in which the students compose the phrase from those words. These two processes require effort and time from the young students, due to their limited linguistic background and their poverty of vocabulary that helps the situation, and lack of experience with the methods of organizing speech and composing sentences in the correct order. (Suman, 2009)

Written expression, as a linguistic expression controlled by a set of regulating rules, requires the students to be aware of these regulating rules on both the cognitive and functional levels, so that they employ these rules correctly in spelling, grammar, morphology and rhetoric in his expression. The students should be familiar with the semantics associated with this employment; to give expression depth, richness and breadth in reading and interpretation. The good use of these rules represents an important skill that should be developed in the students, because it is the basis of expressive language, and with the student's mastery of these rules, his expression advances and becomes more clear, precise and beautiful.

Spelling rules are responsible for the integrity of writing and written expression, because they affect the readability of the text and the clarity of its meaning. If the writing loses correct spelling, the meanings of some words become ambiguous and the reader resorts to guessing and interpreting away from the meanings intended by the students. Their attention and focus are diverted from continuing reading due to these spelling errors, which reflected in the readability of the text. Grammatical rules play a major role in the clarity of meaning, as the expressive meaning changes between accusative and nominative. Morphological rules influence focusing on the meaning and providing additional meanings, so the expressive language becomes more beautiful, deep and rich. Rhetorical principles play a vital role in shaping the elegance and depth of writing. By incorporating stylistic and artful rhetorical techniques, language becomes more impactful captivating the reader's attention and guiding them toward deeper understanding and thoughtful appreciation. Formal rules are no less important than the previous rules. The beauty and clarity of the handwriting affects the clarity of the meaning and the ease of capturing it from the text, the form of writing and its organization, the use of punctuation marks, the cleanliness of the paper and margins, and other things that writing needs to be in its most beautiful form. (Al-Busais, 2011).

Objectives of teaching written expression:

The written expression has many and varied objectives, the most important of which are:

- selecting appropriate words for the meanings, structures and expressions they need in their writings
- expressing feelings, emotions and selves in a sophisticated style that includes imagination and creativity

- Accustoming students to think and express quickly, and how to deal with emergency writing situations
- Accustoming students to write in the correct language, which helps in teaching the body of the language and its grammatical rules; as they use words that indicate various meanings while writing
- Developing students' ability to express creatively ideas, feelings, emotions, joy, sadness, describing nature, and writing a story, poetry, article, etc

Written expression skills:

Among the skills used to judge the quality of writing and the extent to which students avoid writing errors is the ability of the student to:

- Ensure order and cleanliness of the page while writing correctly
- Express their ideas in writing
- Coordinate writing using punctuation marks correctly
- Write taking into account the margins, the beginning of the paragraph, and the spaces between paragraphs
- Follow grammar and morphology correctly.
- Write using correct writing spelling.
- Choose ideas and arrange them correctly and write them clearly and sequentially in paragraphs, taking into account the rules of writing the paragraph correctly and accurately
- Use linguistic rules and employ them in writing (Madkour et al., 2015: 158,193-199).

The concept of error:

- A- The concept of error: It is the opposite of what is intended, and it may be found in speech and action, which is that the students intend something and mean something different. Confucius said *"If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant. If what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done, remains undone"*.
- B- There is a difference between error and mistake, as error is putting something in the wrong place, and it may be correct in itself, and mistake is not correct in any way, because error is what the correct is otherwise (Al-Askari, 1980: 45, 46).
- C- Spelling error: A deficiency in the total or partial matching between the mental and written images of letters and words, and matching spelling with their written images, according to the rules of spelling and the known and specified rules of spelling.
- D- Grammatical error: A deficiency in controlling words and writing them according to the rules of Arabic grammar and paying attention to the type of word without parsing it in a sentence.
- E- Grammatical errors: changing the structure of the original word due to a morphological reason and not knowing the changes that may occur in the word based on its position in the sentence. (Zaid, 2006: 71).

From the above, the writing skills of sixth grade primary school students can be identified as: "Writing words incorrectly, frequent crossing out, different sizes of letters, irregular writing on the line, frequent grammatical errors, writing hamza incorrectly, different spaces between words, not using punctuation marks, the presence of simple and superficial phrases, using colloquial words, lack of coherence of sentences, lack of consistency between sentences, lack of sequence of sentences, and not writing the basic elements of the topic of expression (introduction-text-conclusion). "

From the above, the first question in the research has been answered:

Field application procedures

The study aimed to identify writing errors among sixth-grade primary school students. Therefore, a test was prepared in written expression, and sixth-grade primary school students were assigned to write on a topic about "The Importance of Science in Our Lives" to measure the writing skills that were previously identified for the research sample shown in the following table:

Table (1) Sample from governorates

Governorates	Admin	Schools	Students	Percentage of total number
Cairo	Esat Nasr City	Saad Ibn Abi Wakas	33	33%
		Mohamed Nagib	33	33%
		Gamal Abd Naser	34	34%
			100	100%
Giza	6th October	Ahmed Orabi	32	32%
		Dar El Arkam	34	34%
		Al Fath	34	34%
			100	100%
Sharkia	Sharq	Abd Ellatif Hasanin	32	32%
		Abdel Aziz Darwish	35	35%
		Al Henawy	33	33%
			100	100%

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Qliopia	Shebin ElAnater	Moasasa 1	32	32%
		Moasasa 2	34	34%
		Kafr Taha	34	34%
			100	100%
Minya	Minya	Othman Ibn Affan	32	32%
		Al Naseriya	35	35%
		Al Fath	33	33%
			100	100%
Sohag		Al Neel	32	32%
		Awlad El Sheikh	34	34%
		Ali Ibn AbiTaleb	34	34%
			100	100%
Total			600	

Data Collection and measures

Data were collected from the writings of the research sample, who were assigned to write an essay on “The Importance of Science in Our Lives.”

Data analysis

The student's writing was analyzed by an interpretive team at the same time, in light of the writing criteria, which are: writing words correctly, coordinating letter sizes, organizing writing on the line, observing instructions regularly, writing hamza correctly, observing spacing between words, using punctuation marks, using expressive sentences, new eloquent words, connecting sentences, and sentence sequence, according to a ratio of 100%, which is a high speaking rate, which clarifies the clarity of this need, and a calculation was made that causes problems among students due to the statistical extension in repetitions and ratios.

Findings

The research found that sixth grade primary school students made the following writing errors:

Table (2) Writing errors of six grade students

N	Writing Errors	Percentage
1	Writing words incorrectly.	86%
2	Frequent deletions.	83%
3	Different sizes of letters.	80%
4	Irregular writing on the line.	79%
5	Frequent grammatical errors.	82%
6	Writing hamza incorrectly.	87%
7	Different spaces between words.	83%
8	Not using punctuation marks.	88%
9	The presence of simple and superficial phrases.	90%
10	Using colloquial words.	92%
11	Lack of coherence in sentences.	94%
12	Lack of sequence in sentences.	95%
13	Sentences not in continuity.	91%
14	Not writing the basic elements of the essay topic (introduction-body-conclusion)	93%

Discussion

The study results indicate the prevalence of writing errors among sixth-grade students. The lowest percentage was due to letter size discrepancies, at 80%, while the highest percentage was inconsistency between sentences, at 95%. Students' writing errors are attributed to: the accumulation of errors among students and the teacher's failure to promptly correct them; poor training of students in writing; the failure to use engaging teaching strategies; and the failure to train students on objective questions, including multiple-choice and true-false questions; the failure to rely on essay questions, which reveal the level of students' writing skills; the failure to monitor students' progress; and the failure to keep samples of students' written work and measure their level of improvement. The results of the current research are consistent with the studies of Hamel (2023), who used the "speak and write" approach through the integration of reading and writing to treat learning difficulties. Among the most important findings of the study by Halipah and Muhamad (2020), was that tense was the most common error made by students, followed by punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling. Furthermore, students' errors resulted from both interlingual and intralingual transfer. The study by Siti, Mega, Willis, and Fauziyatul (2024) identified writing errors made by primary school students in English language subjects. The assessment results showed errors

affecting meaning, including verb and phrase order errors, spelling errors, essay errors, incorrect use of prepositions, pronoun agreements, comma construction, and simple spelling errors.

The study recommends treatment methods and suggestions for writing errors among sixth grade primary school students, which are:

- Preparing a treatment program for writing weakness among sixth primary students using the writing errors found in the current study.
- The teacher should take into account the individual differences of his students in the class and treat any weakness or deficiency in writing skills.
- Employing various teaching methods and strategies to treat writing, spelling, grammatical and morphological errors among students.
- Integration and comprehensiveness when teaching Arabic language arts to enable the student to express himself in correct, sound, clear, beautiful writing free of writing errors.
- Teachers should benefit from employing artificial intelligence applications in treating writing errors among students.
- Including educational platforms on the Ministry of Education website with treatment programs to treat deficiencies and weaknesses in common linguistic, grammatical and morphological errors among students, and enrichment activities to develop writing skills among students in different educational stages, especially in the early stages of education.
- Professional development for Arabic language teachers in the causes of learners' writing errors, whether spelling, grammar, morphology or formal, and how to treat these errors through innovation and creativity and employing modern methods, strategies and approaches in the classroom.
- Employing digital learning tools and using multimedia methods such as e-books and audio and visual software to treat spelling errors (Awad, 2012).
- The necessity of paying attention to teaching spelling skills in general education stages and intensifying application and practice on correct writing, and allocating spelling with its own evaluation grades so that the student cannot pass the subject except by mastering spelling skills, and giving the correctness of writing and its freedom from errors as part of the evaluation grade in all curricula (Al-Daafas, 2022: 213).

Conclusions

Writing is a productive skill, as it is the result of what students have acquired: skills, linguistic wealth, and grammatical rules. Writing is based on practical practice, and the more hours of training, the more the skill is mastered, and its level improves. There are many writing errors among primary school students, the percentage of which exceeds 80% among students, and these errors require the preparation of a training program and its practical implementation and monitoring the level of performance and progress of students.

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