Research Article

ANALYZING THE ERRORS COMMITTED BY THE FIFTH-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS IN WRITING CLINICAL HISTORY AT FACULTY OF MEDICINE AT MISURATA UNIVERSITY
By

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Abstract

This research explores the challenges encountered by English as Foreign Language medical students in writing clinical histories at the faculty of Medicine, Misurata University. The study aims to identify common errors, understand their causes, and propose potential solutions. Through a mixed-methods approach, data were collected via analysis of clinical history writing, questionnaires, and focus group with faculty members and students. Findings revealed prevalent issues such as lack of organization, abbreviation misuse, formatting errors, repetition of symptoms, incomplete sentences, and spelling errors. Faculty members cited weak English teaching, limited writing experience, and inadequate curriculum as contributing factors. Proposed solutions include curriculum enhancements, teacher training, and English proficiency testing. Quantitative analysis of questionnaire responses highlighted challenges in sentence construction, verb conjugation, punctuation, and vocabulary usage. Recommendations for future research include continuous investigation and adoption of explanatory approaches with pre and post-tests. The study underscores the need for systemic reforms in English language education to better prepare medical students for their future careers, ultimately benefiting students, teachers, and researchers.

Key Words: Errors, Analysis, Mistakes, Clinical History

INTRODUCTION

Writing clinical history is one of the challenges that face university students of medical college, English as a foreign language (EFL). Writing is generally a huge concern for them; however, it has not been given enough attention by educational planners in medical education. Thus, this research aims to investigate and analyze the errors committed by EFL medical students at faculty of Medicine at Misurata University. As a global language, English is essential for the advancement of science and technology. Students are encouraged to utilize English effectively, as it plays a significant part in their education.

However, Teaching English in the Arab world is challenging. Although many students can understand the language, a great deal of them struggle successfully communicate their opinions. The issue is both: insufficient English vocabulary and a lack of creativity in writing. It is clear that for many learners, writing represents the greatest difficulty. English consists of main four skills, among these language skills writing is considered the most challenging and difficult skill for most foreign language learners [1]. Writing requires thinking, and thinking is always complicated and hard. Writing is the toughest skill to master since it takes careful thought as well as the simultaneous production of words, sentences, and paragraphs [2].

Writing, therefore, requires the highest level of thought. Teaching writing to non-native speakers of the language poses a variety of special difficulties that can be challenging for both beginners as well as professional teachers. However, with a little creativity and imagination, teaching writing to English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Foreign Language (EFL) students may be entertaining and meaningful. Writing in English has always been highlighted in educational programs, but educational planners in the field of medicine have not given it the attention it deserves. As a result, medical students frequently make the same errors and ask their instructors to correct their reports or translate them into English for them. Tan and Manochphinyo, stated that, in the educational contexts of some countries such as Thailand, the writing skill is regarded as a compulsory course to prepare students for writing their assignments and passing their exams [3]. Therefore, medical students always commit the same errors in writing. The researcher realized that is important to improve students' skills in writing standard paragraphs because it is an important tool in their profession and for further education. Thus, this study aims to investigate the difficulties and analyze the errors of writing skills of medical students while writing a clinical history in English. The patient's clinical history provides clinicians with valuable details about their past health and family histories, lifestyle habits, past medical conditions, and present symptoms [4]. In order to develop guidelines for correction and improvement of their writing skill, error analysis was adopted by this research, to analyze the common errors and investigate the difficulties while writing clinical history. Error Analysis is

regarded as one of the most essential issues in second language learning, and it is commonly applied in fields like second language acquisition, linguistics, and education to enhance language learning and teaching strategies.

Review of Previous Studies:

Previous studies have proven the value of writing skills for medical students writing is considered a way to make medical students and all learners who study in medical specialty more professional. Marzoughi and Ghanbari conducted a study to analyze the essay writing errors made by Iranian EFL learners at the undergraduate level in Bushehr. The research aimed to determine if there was a notable difference in the types of errors committed and to assess the significance of these errors. The study involved 80 undergraduate students from a medical science university in Bushehr, who were administered three questionnaires during the fall semester of 2014. The first questionnaire assessed general English proficiency to ensure participant homogeneity, while the second collected demographic information such as age, gender, and education level. The third questionnaire consisted of an essay writing test to evaluate the participants' ability to structure and compose essays. The findings revealed a significant variation in the types of errors made by Iranian EFL learners at the undergraduate level, with most errors attributed to a lack of knowledge. The study suggests implementing specialized drills and practice sessions to address and mitigate these errors [5].

Secondly, Tazik investigated the effects of direct focused written feedback followed by amendments and group discussions on improving students' English writing in different fields of

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Medical Sciences. The method employed a quasi-experimental design. The participants were 168 Iranian undergraduate students from seven entire classes (taught by the main researcher), studying at Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences from 2019-2020. The writing tasks were the topics suggested at the end of each unit of the Inside Reading ("Intro" and "One") series. The length required for each topic was a paragraph with a hundred words at most. After writing each essay, the researcher spotted grammatical errors, recorded their types and frequencies, and gave direct feedback. The students received the corrected essays, and through group discussions and based on extra explanations provided by the researcher, the students became informed of their errors and were asked to apply this knowledge to their succeeding works. The findings showed wrong tenses (30.47%), incorrect articles (23.48%), word order (17.48%), singular/plural nouns (11.59%), prepositions (10.90%), and subject-verb agreement (6.08%) were found to be the most common errors, respectively [6].

In the third study, (Liang & Li) used Hutchinson and Water's needs analysis theory to investigate the English writing needs of sophomore medical students from one Chinese Medical University. This research aimed to understand the needs of medical students for English writing and provide some recommendations for future English writing instruction. Therefore, attempted to answer the following questions:(1) What is the current state of medical students' English writing? (2) What are the current needs of English writing for medical students? The study found that current English writing courses for medical students are inadequate. Although most students agree that English writing is important, they are not satisfied with their English writing. They devote limited time each week to studying English, and they still have difficulty doing simple written communication and expressions in English, let alone writing related to their major.

While teachers can offer valuable guid ance, their attention, and guidance are not always suitable [7].

Lastly, Banafi,s study focused on understanding the knowledge and attitude toward medical writing skills in the English Language among undergraduate nursing students in Saudi Arabia. This study adopted an exploratory study design. It included all nursing students enrolled in the first year of the undergraduate nursing program in Abha (n=80) and Muhayil (n=80) female campuses of King Khalid University (KKU), Saudi Arabia. Those students were administered a self-structured online questionnaire measuring the nursing students' knowledge and attitude toward English medical writing skills. Out of the total students (N=160), 137 responded to the questionnaire. Most nursing students were able to write medical questions (88.3%), abbreviations (92.7%), patient information (91.2%), reports (85.4%), and prescriptions (88.3%) in English. They felt that English medical writing creates a good impression on themselves (95.6%) and makes them professional (97.1%). Most of them liked English medical writing (91.3%) and felt that knowledge of it offers advantages in their future career (99.2%). They can read the medical report in English though it is in Arabic (78.9%). Nursing students of KKU presented a good knowledge and positive attitude towards English

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medical writing skills. Their knowledge is significantly associated with their attitude toward English medical writing skills. Saudi nursing schools should continue their strategies to improve students' English medical writing skills to improve the quality of the nursing profession and their ability to compete with the global labor market [8]. Despite various studies from different countries examining the writing skills of medical students, it is noteworthy that research on this topic is notably absent in Libya. While investigations in other nations, such as Arab countries, have explored similar issues, they often focus on different academic years or specific aspects of medical education. Interestingly, the context of fifth-year medical students at the faculty of Medicine, Misurata, Libya, has remained largely unexplored. Our study aims to bridge this gap by specifically delving into the unique challenges faced by fifth-year students in Libya, contributing insights that go beyond the existing body of research in both international and Arab academic settings.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to investigate medical students' errors in writing clinical histories. A conducting focus group with the teacher and student participants to find out the difficulties that medical students often face. In addition, the study attempts to answer the following questions:
- Q1/What, are the common errors committed in writing clinical history by fifth-year medical students at faculty of medicine at Misurata University?
- Q2/What are the causes of these errors and what are the potential solutions to overcome these errors?

METHODOLOGY

This research, were concentrated on fifth-year medical students.

i- 40 students took part in the clinical history writing phase. The participants were tasked with composing a clinical history on a random topic provided by the researchers. The histories were collected and analyzed. Each identified type of error was highlighted, categorized, and marked accordingly. The data were analyzed qualitatively, employing relevant resources and theories to identify common errors.

ii- 70 students were involved to complete the questionnaire.
- I have difficulty in sentence construction
- I have difficulty in verb conjugation
- I have difficulty in punctuation
- I find it difficult to employ appropriate vocabulary

iii- Focus group discussions, including the dean, the head of the quality department and various department heads and other faculty members. They provided insights, during focus group discussions that enhanced the study.

A permission were obtained from the Dean of the College of Languages and Translation and the Head of the English Department.

Permission were also attained from the Dean of the faculty of Medicine at the University of Misurata to conduct this study with the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of students' clinical history writing

After analyzing the clinical histories, several issues were identified that needed attention, including unclear organization, excessive use of abbreviations, improper formatting, spelling errors, repetition, and incomplete sentences.

Common Errors Identified

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-Unclear Organization: Almost all participants exhibited organizational issues, with 38 documents lacking a clear structure.

-Abbreviations: All 40 clinical histories analyzed contained unexplained and inconsistent abbreviations.

-Formatting: Incorrect formatting was observed in approximately 38 documents.

-Repetition: Repetition of certain symptoms was found in approximately six clinical histories.

-Incomplete sentences: Incomplete sentences were identified in approximately nine documents.

-Spelling errors: Spelling and grammatical errors were found in approximately eleven clinical histories.

The result of students' questionnaire:

Out of 127 students, 70 participated in the study. Analysis of the sample's opinions on assessing the challenges of medical writing for students:

1. Sentence Construction: 34.3% of students occasionally face difficulties, while 21.4% always face them. Weighted average: 3.47.

2. Verb Conjugation: Similar distribution of difficulties as sentence construction. Weighted average: 3.47.

3. Punctuation: Challenges are faced at various times. Weighted average: 3.66.

4. Employing Appropriate Vocabulary: Challenges are evident among students. Weighted average: 3.57.

5. Organizing Thoughts Sequentially: Many students find this challenging. Weighted average: 3.80.

Overall Average: The total average for the sample is 3.60, indicating moderate to high challenges in medical writing skills (Table 1).

Table 1: The weighted average of the sample's opinions regarding the axis of assessing the challenges of medical writing for students

	Statements	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Weighted Average	Standard Deviation
1	I have difficulty in sentence construction	21.4%	24.3%	34.3%	20%	-	3.47	0.48330
2	I have difficulty in verb conjugation	22.9%	25.7%	27.1%	24.3%	-	3.47	0.63300
3	I have difficulty in punctuation	25.7%	34.3%	20%	20%	-	3.66	0.83640
4	I find it difficult to employ appropriate vocabulary	24.3%	27.1%	30%	18.6%	-	3.57	0.82970
5	Organizing thoughts sequentially is difficult	40%	18.6%	22.9%	18.6%	-	3.80	0.3493
Overall average : 3.60								

Analysis of the sample's opinions regarding assessing the impact of challenges on the quality of writing:

1. How frequently do you engage in writing tasks as a medical student?

Participation in Writing Tasks: 47.1% of students rarely participate in writing tasks (weighted average: 4.205).

2. Which aspect of writing in a medical context do you struggle with the most?

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Struggle with Writing Aspects: 50% of the sample struggles with structure and organization, highlighting a significant challenge (weighted average: 4.114).

3. How confident do you feel in your ability to convey medical information in writing? Confidence in Conveying Medical Information: Students have varying levels of confidence in their ability to convey medical information in writing. Weighted average: 3.614.

4. What resources or support systems do you believe would help improve your medical writing skills? Resources to Improve Writing Skills: 67.1% believe writing workshops permanently improve their writing skills, while a smaller percentage believes guidebooks are effective.

5. What resources or support systems do you believe would help improve your medical writing skills? Guidance and Feedback from Teachers: 64.3% rarely receive guidance from teachers on writing tasks, indicating a lack of sufficient guidance and feedback.

Overall Average: The total average of 3.88 indicates that the sample considers challenges related to the quality of writing in the medical context to be important and in need of attention and improvement (table 2).

Ques tion	Statment				Weighted Average	Standard Deviation	Overall average
1	Rarely (47.1%)	Monthly (18.6%)	Weekly (18.6%)	Daily (15.7%)	(4.205)	(0.4833)	3.88
2	Grammar and language mechanics (0.4833)	Clarity of expiration (18.6%)	Structure and organization (27.1%)	Terminology (4.3%)	(4.114)	(0.6330)	
3	Not confident (7.1%)	Neutral (34.3%)	Little confident (40%)	Very confident (18.6%)	(3.614)	(0.8364)	
4	Online resources (18.6%)	One-on-one tutoring (11.4%)	Writing guides (2.9%)	Writing workshops (67.1%)	(3.716)	(0.9287)	
5	Rarely (64.3%)	Some-Times (21.4%)	Mostly (14.3%)	Always (0%)	(3.77)	0.7891	

Table 2: the weighted average of the sample's opinions regarding assessing the extent of challenges' impact on the quality of writing

Analysis of the sample's opinions regarding proposing solutions and recommendations for improvement:

1. Which technology tools, if any, do you use to assist you in medical writing?. 70% of students do not use technological tools for medical writing, highlighting a potential gap in utilizing technology. Weighted average: 4.205.

2. In your opinion, what are the main challenges faced by medical students in writing clinical history specifically? Main Challenges in Medical Writing: 48.6% identify uncertainty about sentence structure as a major challenge. Weighted average: 4.114.

3. Which specific aspects of English language proficiency do you find most challenging in medical writing? Mastering English in Medical Writing:

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44.3% find sentence structure challenging, emphasizing the need to improve this skill. Weighted average: 3.614.

4. How much do you think your English skills affect your difficulty in medical writing? Impact of English Language Skills: 44.3% believe their English skills significantly affect medical writing difficulty. Weighted average: 3.716.

5. Have you gotten help to improve your English for medical writing during your studies? Assistance in Improving English: 50% do not receive sufficient help, indicating a need for more support in English language skills. Weighted average: 3.77.

6. How comfortable do you feel asking for help when you struggle with English in medical writing? Comfort in Asking for Help: 48.6% feel uncomfortable asking for help, suggesting the need for a more supportive environment. Weighted average: 3.77.

7. your English language classes help enough with language challenges in medical writing for students who speak English as a second language? Effectiveness of English Classes: 27.1% feel classes help adequately, while 30% feel they are inadequate, indicating a need for improvement. Weighted average: 3.47.

8. These challenges result from inadequate time dedicated to learning English. Another contributing factor to students' subpar writing is a misalignment between the provided curriculum and their fundamental language needs or deficiencies. Curriculum Compatibility: 41.4% believe the curriculum does not meet their basic language needs, highlighting the importance of curriculum review and redesign. Weighted average: 4.09.

Overall Average: The total average of 3.94 indicates a perceived need for improvement in various aspects of supporting medical writing skills.
(Table 3).

Table 3: The weighted average of the sample's opinions regarding proposing solutions and recommendations for improvement.

Que.	Statement				Weighted Average	Standard Deviation
1	-	None (70%)	Writing Apps (18.6%)	Grammar Checking Tools (8.6%)	Reference Management Software (2.9%)	4.205	0.4833
2		-	Uncertainty about Structure (48.6%)	Complex Medical Terminology (8.6%)	Lack of time (42.9%)	4.114	0.6330
3		Academic Style (30%)	Sentence Structure (44.3%)	Grammar (21.4%)	Vocabulary (4.3%)	3.614	0.8364
4	-	Rarely (11.4%)	Sometimes (21.4%)	Mostly (44.3%)	Always (22.9%)	3.716	0.8297
5	-	Rarely (50%)	Sometimes (30%)	Mostly (15.7%)	Always (4.3%)	3.77	0.7891

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6	-	Not comfortable (17.1%)	Neutral (48.6%)	Somewhat comfortable (18.6%)	Very comfortable (15.7%)	3.77	0.7891
7	Strongly disagree (30%)	Disagree (27.1%)	Neutral (15.7%)	Agree (14.3%)	Strongly agree (12.9%)	3.47	0.7710
8	Strongly disagree (4.3%)	Disagree (1.4%)	Neutral (14.3%)	Agree (41.4%)	Strongly agree (38.6%)	4.09	0.6894

Reliability and Stability of the Questionnaire:

The researcher tested the questionnaire's reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient CAC, which indicates the consistency of the results obtained when the questionnaire is redistributed to the same population under the same conditions. The test results are shown in Table (4) for both the axes and the scale as a whole.

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the questionnaire axes and scale

Axes	Number of items	CAC
Assessing challenges	5	0.821
Assessing impact on writing quality	5	0.841
Quality proposing solutions and recommendations	8	0.801
Overall Scale	18	0.878

Through Table (4) we notice that the alpha coefficient for the axes is at a level indicating questionnaire stability. In the axis of assessing medical writing challenges for students (0.821), it indicates good stability, reflecting the consistency of responses in this area. Assessing the impact of challenges on writing quality (0.841) also shows a high level of stability, indicating stability in assessments of the impact of challenges on writing quality. Offering solutions and improvement guidelines (0.801) also demonstrates good stability, indicating stability in opinions regarding suggestions and guidelines provided to improve writing. The overall scale (0.878) indicates high stability for the entire scale, suggesting that the questionnaire as a whole is reliable.

Overall, the alpha coefficient level for all axes and the overall scale indicates that the questionnaire is based on a strong foundation and can be relied upon to consistently and reliably assess the opinions of the sample.

The results of the student questionnaire showed various challenges faced by medical students in writing clinical histories. These challenges included difficulties in constructing sentences, accurately conjugating verbs, using punctuation correctly, employing appropriate vocabulary, and organizing thoughts sequentially. The results also indicated varying levels of confidence among students in their ability to convey medical information in writing, as well as concerns about receiving sufficient guidance and support from teachers. These findings highlight the need to better understand these

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challenges to help improve students' writing skills and ensure they can communicate effectively in the medical field.

The result of teachers' focus group discussions

Following focus group discussions, insights were gathered about the challenges they face, the reasons behind these challenges, and possible solutions. faculty members were asked three primary questions during these sessions; *what are the challenges faced by students, what are the reasons behind these difficulties and errors from your perspective? and What are the solutions from your perspective?*

Their responses were analyzed and summarized as follows:

i-What are the challenges faced by students?

Challenges in sentence structure
Many students tend to write sentences that are incomplete and inconsistent.

Spelling and Punctuation Errors
Students make significant spelling errors.

Organization of Thoughts and Expression
Students were not able to express their thoughts effectively in writing.

Grammar and Sentence Construction
There are so many errors in grammar that we often cannot understand students' writings at all.

Handwriting and Letter Formation
Students often write poorly and have disorganized handwriting. This can affect their ability to communicate, as readers might struggle to understand what is written. In addition, having an incorrect letter formation can lead to misinterpretations or misunderstandings.

ii- What are the reasons behind these difficulties and errors from your perspective?

Insufficient emphasis on teaching English]
Poor English teaching programs for medical students. Insufficient emphasis on language skills in the curriculum and ineffective teaching methods.

Limited writing experience
Students lack the necessary practice to be successful in their studies.

Restructuring the general English subject
The general *English* curriculum doesn't cater adequately to the needs of medical students.

Lack of guidance and support from teachers
Insufficient feedback from educators can have a negative impact on the development of students' writing skills.

Time pressure and external demands
Students tend to feel pressure because of their study schedules.

iii-What are the solutions from your perspective?

Integration of medical English courses
Teachers unanimously recommend the incorporation of mandatory medical English courses at all levels of education. This ensures that students receive specialized language instruction relevant to their future careers in medicine.

Conducting writing workshops
Organizing writing workshops emerges as a crucial strategy advocated by all interviewed educators. These workshops offer students supportive environments to practice and refine their writing skills.

Changing exams format
Teachers suggest doing entirely subjective exams that includes essay questions, which will make a significant

shift in assessment methods to prioritize writing skills development.

English Proficiency Test Requirement
They believe that medical schools should also require all students to demonstrate their English proficiency in order to gain admission.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to highlight the significant challenges faced by medical students in writing, particularly within the context of the Arab world. Through a comprehensive analysis of clinical history writing errors by fifth-year medical students at the faculty of Medicine, Misurata University, a mixed-method approach was adopted. This included identifying common errors in clinical history writing, utilizing questionnaires for students, and conducting focus group discussions with teachers to uncover the difficulties most students face. The findings emphasize the need to address these insufficiencies to ensure effective communication in the medical field. Additionally, through student questionnaires and teacher focus groups, the research identifies the causes of these errors and proposes potential solutions. Overall, the study provides valuable insights for improving English language education and writing skills development, better preparing future medical professionals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of document analysis, focus group discussions, and student questionnaires, the following recommendations are proposed to improve medical writing skills among students:

1. Enhance Sentence Structure Education:
- Offer workshops focused on building sentences and improving the flow of ideas.

2. Grammar and Spelling Training:
- Provide regular training sessions to improve grammatical accuracy and reduce spelling errors.

3. Use of Technology:
- Encourage students to use grammar and spelling check software and digital tools to enhance writing through training workshops.

4. Regular Writing Performance Evaluation:
- Conduct regular assessments of students' writing performance to identify progress and areas needing improvement.

5. Provide Multi-Media Educational Resources:
- Develop educational resources including instructional videos and illustrative models to enhance writing skills.

6. Promote Collaborative Writing:
- Encourage group work and collaborative writing among students to exchange ideas and improve skills.

7. Redesign Curriculum:
- Review and update curricula to include more medical content related to writing and ensure it meets students' needs.

8. Increase Practical Writing Opportunities:
- Provide more opportunities for students to practice writing through case studies and practical exercises.

9. Provide Constructive Feedback:
- Enhance the role of instructors in providing constructive and accurate feedback to improve students' writing skills regularly.

10. Offer Psychological Support:
- Provide psychological support and counseling to help students manage time pressures and academic demands.

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11. Develop Comprehensive Educational Programs:
- Create educational programs that cover all aspects of medical writing from basic to advanced levels.

12. Motivate Student Participation:
- Create an encouraging environment to motivate students to participate actively in writing and learning activities.

13. Involve Students in Curriculum Evaluation:
- Involve students in the process of evaluating and improving curricula to ensure it meets their actual needs.

14. Increase Collaboration between Students and Instructors:
- Encourage continuous communication between students and instructors to provide necessary support in improving writing skills.

15. Provide Online Educational Platforms:
- Develop online educational platforms with study materials and interactive tools to help students improve their writing skills.

16. Organize Medical Writing Workshops:
- Host interactive workshops to create a supportive environment and boost students' confidence in their writing abilities.

17. Improve Writing Assessment Methods:
- Redesign writing assessments to include essay and analytical questions that encourage critical thinking and writing improvement.

18. Future Research Directions:
- Future research should use experimental methods to evaluate the impact of interventions on writing skills.
- Explore other factors affecting writing ability and test the proposed solutions.

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