

Error Analysis of Paragraph Writing Among Third-Semester Students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation

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Received: 19.09.2024

Published: 22.10.2024

Abstract:

Writing in English is a complex skill that involves not only grammatical proficiency but also a comprehensive understanding of organizational structure, coherence, and cohesive texts. For third-semester students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, mastering this skill is particularly crucial as they progress in their academic journey. At this stage, students are expected to produce more sophisticated texts that reflect their growing knowledge of the language and their ability to engage critically with various topics. This study investigates errors in English paragraph writing among third-semester students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation. 29 students participated, and their written content was analyzed to identify mistakes. A quantitative design was used to categorize the errors found in their paragraphs. All errors made by the students were identified and categorized into various types. The findings reveal that students made multiple types of errors, including spelling mistakes, word order issues, and verb tense mistakenness, with inappropriate use of English articles being the most frequent error. Based on these findings, several recommendations and pedagogical implications are provided to assist EFL teachers in addressing the writing challenges faced by learners.

Keywords: writing, paragraph, error analysis, coherence, third-semester.

تحليل الأخطاء في كتابة الفقرات بين طلاب السنة الثالثة في كلية اللغات والترجمة

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تاريخ النشر 2024.10.22

تاريخ الاستلام 2024.09.19

الملخص:

الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية هي معقدة لا تشمل فقط الكفاءة النحوية ولكن أيضًا فهم شامل للهيكل التنظيمي والترابط والنصوص المتناسكة. بالنسبة لطلاب الفصل الدراسي الثالث في كلية اللغات والترجمة، يعد إتقان هذه المهارة أمرًا بالغ الأهمية بشكل خاص أثناء تقدمهم في رحلتهم الأكاديمية. في هذه المرحلة، يتوقع من الطلاب إنتاج نصوص أكثر تعقيدًا تعكس معرفتهم المتزايدة باللغة وقدرتهم على التعامل بشكل نقدي مع مواضيع مختلفة. تبحث هذه الدراسة في الأخطاء في كتابة الفقرات باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب الفصل الدراسي الثالث في كلية اللغات والترجمة شارك فيها 29 طالبًا، وتم تحليل محتوهم المكتوب لتحديد الأخطاء. تم استخدام تصميم كمي لتصنيف الأخطاء الموجودة في فقراتهم. تم تحديد جميع الأخطاء التي ارتكبتها الطلاب وتصنيفها إلى أنواع مختلفة. تكشف النتائج أن الطلاب ارتكبوا أنواعًا متعددة من الأخطاء، بما في ذلك الأخطاء الإملائية، ومشكلات ترتيب الكلمات، وأخطاء ترتيب الكلمات، مع الاستخدام غير السليم للمقالات الإنجليزية وهو الخطأ الأكثر شيوعًا. بناءً على هذه النتائج، يتم تقديم العديد من التوصيات والآثار التربوية لمساعدة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في معالجة تحديات الكتابة التي يواجهها المتعلمون.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة، الفقرة، تحليل الأخطاء، التماسك، الفصل الدراسي الثالث.

1. Introduction.

English is the most widely used language globally, playing a crucial role across various fields, including industry, politics, science, tourism, the arts, and economics. Proficiency in English is particularly essential in education, as it facilitates understanding of global developments (Zawahreh, 2012).

According to Brown (2000), language includes four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Writing is a key skill in learning English and is vital in both educational and professional contexts. Ramadai (2013) describes writing as a graphical representation of spoken language, while Harris (1994) emphasizes that it is a complex process requiring constant navigation between ideas and the written text. Nunan (1999) asserts that coherent writing involves developing ideas, linking vocabulary and sentences, and ensuring correct spelling and grammar.

Despite its significance, many learners encounter difficulties in writing effective English paragraphs. These challenges often arise from limited vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and syntactic competence. Mastering writing is complex due to the active interaction between a writer's ideas and the text (Harris & Cunningham, 1994). Murcia and Olshtain (2000) argue that writing demands a high level of language control and problem-solving skills. As a result, writing remains challenging for many first and second language learners (Ingels, 2006). Understanding these challenges is crucial for enhancing the quality of second and foreign language writing (Hammad, 2012).

To gain insight into learners' difficulties in writing, Error Analysis (EA) serves as a valuable tool. EA focuses on analyzing learners' errors in relation to target language rules (Zawahreh, 2012). This study employs a quantitative experimental design, utilizing a writing task in which participants produce short paragraphs on specific topics to identify and categorize error types. The participants include 29 third-semester students from the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Misurata University.

Previous research has highlighted that students often struggle with writing sentences and paragraphs in English, attributed to various internal and external factors such as insufficient knowledge of English and a lack of writing practice (e.g., Al-Ghabra & Najim, 2019; Nuruzzaman et al., 2018; Latifah & Hani, 2017).

2. Gap of Knowledge.

This study is distinct from previous research in several key aspects, including its geographical location, timing, methodology, participant characteristics, and procedural approach. It represents the first investigation of its kind at the University of Misurata, specifically within the Faculty of Languages and Translation. By addressing these unique factors, this research aims to provide new insights into the challenges faced by Libyan EFL learners in writing English paragraphs.

2.1. Statement of the Problem.

This study aims to analyze the errors in paragraph writing among third-semester students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation. It seeks to

identify the specific types of errors frequently made by these students, understand the underlying causes, and assess the impact of these errors on overall writing proficiency. By examining these errors, the study aims to provide insights that can enhance instructional strategies and improve writing skills among learners.

2.2. Research Questions.

This study addresses the following questions:

1. What types of writing errors do third-semester students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Misurata University, make when writing English paragraphs?
2. How frequently do these errors occur in the paragraph writing of these students?

3. Significance of the Study.

The results of this study have significant implications for both students and teachers:

3.1. Benefits for Students: The study will help students identify and understand the types of errors they commonly make, enabling them to take targeted steps to improve their writing proficiency and academic performance.

3.2. Benefits for Teachers: The findings will provide teachers with insights into the specific errors frequently made by students, allowing instructors to plan their instructional strategies and materials effectively.

3.3. References for Future Research: The study will serve as a reference for future researchers interested in exploring writing errors and improving language education.

4. Research Objectives.

The study aims to examine the writing errors made by third-semester students in English paragraphs, focusing on three main objectives: identifying the types of errors, assessing their frequency, and exploring the underlying causes of these errors, as they are set below:

1. To identify the types of writing errors made by third-semester students at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Misurata University, when composing English paragraphs.
2. To assess the frequency of these errors in their paragraph writing.
3. To explore the underlying causes of these errors.

5. Literature review.

Several studies conducted across Jordan and Turkey have focused on error analysis in English writing among students, revealing common challenges and offering pedagogical recommendations. Huwari (2018) identified various

writing errors in advanced students, including grammatical mistakes, spelling issues, and inappropriate pronoun usage. Similarly, Maher (2014) stated prevalent errors in spelling, word order, and subject-verb agreement, with a particular emphasis on the misuse of articles. Both studies emphasize the need for targeted pedagogical strategies to improve writing skills, yet they differ in the specific errors highlighted and their educational contexts.

Moreover, Ozkayran (2018) evaluated errors in students' English writing at Barton University, uncovering grammatical mistakes and verb tense issues. Al-Tarhouni (2019) and Elhaj (2020) explored the Libyan context, highlighting the need for enhanced instruction in grammar and vocabulary due to recurring errors. In addition, the previous studies, Hajji (2018) emphasized the necessity of targeted writing instruction for Libyan high school students, suggesting a cohesive approach to improving writing competencies.

6. Methodology.

This step outlines the research design, participants, instruments, and procedures employed in the study. The chosen methodology aligns with the research objective: to identify the types of errors that affect students when writing paragraphs.

6.1. Research Design.

This study aims to investigate the types and frequency of writing errors made by third-semester students in the English Department. A quantitative research design was adopted to achieve the study's objectives. According to Nunan (2001), quantitative research involves techniques that collect a substantial amount of measurable data.

6.2. Setting and Participants.

The sample comprised 29 Libyan students from the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Misurata University, all currently enrolled in the third semester during the 2024 academic year.

6.3. Research Instrument.

The primary instrument for this study was a writing assessment, where participants were tasked with composing a short paragraph on a specific topic. This method was selected to effectively identify the types of errors students would likely commit.

6.4. Procedure.

6.4.1. Data Collection: Each of the 29 participants completed a writing task during a scheduled lecture. They were instructed to write a paragraph on the prompt "Summer is the best time to travel in my country," within a time frame of 20 minutes and a minimum word count of 50. The corpus for this study was derived from the written paragraphs of 29 students enrolled in an English compulsory course.

6.4.2. Data Analysis: Following data collection, the next step involved analyzing the gathered data. In this quantitative research, numerical data were examined. The analysis relied on inferential statistics to interpret the results, which subsequently informed the conclusions drawn from the study.

7. Results and Discussion.

This section discusses the results of the study, guided by the research questions posed at the outset.

7.1. Types of Errors Committed by Students in Writing English Paragraphs.

This subsection addresses the first research question: What types of writing errors do third-semester students at Misurata University's Faculty of Languages and Translation make when writing English paragraphs? The findings indicate that students showed a variety of writing errors in their English paragraphs.

Table (1): Writing Errors Committed by Students when Writing English Paragraphs

	Types of Writing Errors
1	Articles Wrong Use
2	Preposition Wrong Use
3	Word Order
4	Spelling
5	Proposition Wrong Use
6	Pronouns
7	Verb tens
8	Vocabulary use
9	Singular and Plural

7.2. Frequency of Writing Errors Committed by the Student.

This section presents the results which aim to give answers to the second research question: How frequent do writing errors occur in the students' written paragraphs? The results obtained from this study revealed that the students committed writing errors in a frequent way (see table 2).

Table (2): Frequency of Writing Errors Committed by the Students

	Type of Error	Frequency	Percentage
1	Article Errors	22	18.3%
2	Prepositional Errors	9	7.5%
3	Word Order Issues	5	4.2%
4	Spilling Errors	30	25.2%
5	Pronouns Errors	10	8.4%
6	Verb tens Mistakes	20	16.8%
7	Vocabulary Errors	11	9.2%
8	Singular/Plural Errors	7	5.9%
	Total	124	100%

As shown table 2, the students committed several errors when writing English paragraphs. The most frequent error was "spelling, while the least frequent performed error was "Wrong Use Articles "then "verb tens". Table 3 shows the frequency of each error committed by the students along with the identification and correction of the error.

Table (3): Most Frequent Errors and Examples of Errors

Error Classification and Definition	Error Identification	Error Correction
1. Use of Article: An article specifies whether the noun is definite or indefinite.	- He bought car yesterday. - She is reading book in the library. - I want to go to a beach.	- He bought a car yesterday. - She is reading a book in the library. - I want to go to the beach.
2. Use of Preposition: A preposition shows the relationship between a noun or pronoun and other elements in the sentence.	- She is good in playing piano. - We arrived to the station late. - The book is on the table of the living room.	- She is good at playing the piano. - We arrived at the station late. - The book is on the table in the living room.
3. Word order refers to the arrangement of words in a sentence to convey meaning.	- Always she takes a walk in the morning. - The restaurant for dinner we went to was amazing. - In winter we prefer to stay indoors.	- She always takes a walk in the morning. - The restaurant we went to for dinner was amazing. - We prefer to stay indoors in winter.

4. Spelling: Spelling refers to the correct arrangement of letters in words.	- The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. - She recieved the letter yesterday. - The child was very excited about the trip.	- The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. - She received the letter yesterday. - The child was very excited about the trip.
5. Pronouns: Pronouns replace nouns in a sentence and should agree in number and gender.	- Everyone should bring their own lunch. - Each student must hand in their paper. - Somebody lost their keys.	- Everyone should bring his or her own lunch. - Each student must hand in his or her paper. - Somebody lost his or her keys.
6. Verb tenses: Verb tense indicates the time of action or state of being.	- She go to the store every day. - They was happy with the results. - I have saw that movie last week.	- She goes to the store every day. - They were happy with the results. - I saw that movie last week.
7. Vocabulary use: Vocabulary use refers to the accurate application of words according to their meanings.	- The meeting was very boring and repetitive. - He tried to convince her but she remained adamant. - The solution was both practical and efficient.	- The meeting was very tedious and repetitive. - He tried to persuade her, but she remained adamant. - The solution was both practical and effective.
8. Singular and Plural: Singular and plural errors involve the correct use of singular or plural forms of nouns.	- The child loves to play with his toy. - They have two dog and a cat. - There are several book on the shelf	- The child loves to play with his toys. - They have two dogs and a cat. - There are several books on the shelf.

7.3. Discussion of the Results.

The present study aimed to investigate the writing errors made by students in the Faculty of Languages and Translation while composing English paragraphs. The findings revealed that students frequently encountered errors in several key areas: article usage, letter usage, verb tense, word order, spelling, vocabulary, and singular/plural forms. These results agree with those reported in previous research (Simbwa, 1987; Salebi, 2004; Zawahreh, 2012), indicating a consistent pattern of difficulties among EFL learners.

The analysis of students' written papers revealed several common errors across various categories. Firstly, errors in the **use of articles** were prevalent, with students often omitting them, as seen in sentences like "He bought car yesterday." Similarly, **preposition** errors were noted, such as "She is good in

playing piano," which should correctly use "at." **Word order** issues also appeared frequently, with phrases like "Always she takes a walk" needing rearrangement for clarity.

Spelling mistakes, exemplified by "recieved" instead of "received," highlighted a lack of attention to detail. Additionally, **pronoun** errors indicated a misunderstanding of agreement, with sentences like "Everyone should bring their own lunch" needing clarification. **Verb tense** inaccuracies were common, as shown in "They was happy," which should be "They were happy."

Furthermore, improper **vocabulary use** was observed, with phrases like "The meeting was very boring" being less effective than "The meeting was very tedious." Lastly, errors in **singular and plural forms** were noted, as seen in "They have two dog," which should be "They have two dogs." These findings underscore the need for targeted instruction to address these writing challenges effectively.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations.

This study investigated the types and frequency of writing errors made by students when composing English paragraphs. The results indicated that grammatical errors were the most common, while insufficient vocabulary knowledge often led to unclear or incomprehensible sentences. These findings suggest that students face significant challenges in mastering essential English language rules.

The study underscores the importance of Error Analysis (EA) in identifying and understanding writing errors. EA enables learners to recognize their mistakes, fostering greater awareness that can enhance their writing skills. It is recommended that educators view errors as integral to the learning process, with prompt correction being crucial for minimizing recurrence. Additionally, allowing students adequate time to think and write effectively is essential for their development. Teachers should remain aware of common errors and adapt their curricula accordingly to address these challenges more effectively.

9. Limitations of the Study.

This study was conducted exclusively with third-semester students from the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Misurata University, specifically within the English Department, during the 2024 academic year. The focus was on the errors these students make when composing English paragraphs. The study acknowledges certain limitations, including time constraints that may have affected the scope and depth of the research. Future studies could expand the participant pool or explore additional contexts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of writing errors among EFL learners.

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