

Enhancing The English Language Writing Skills of the Middle School Students

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Abstract

Mastering English writing is not just about fulfilling the basic learning of language, but it will enable the middle school students to learn the other subjects with better understanding. Moreover, it is also crucial for academic progress and future education prospects. However, numerous students encounter significant challenges in writing English which manifest in various forms, ranging from grammatical errors, using proper punctuation marks and paragraph framing in English. The purpose of this study aims to fill a crucial gap by examining the particular writing obstacles encountered in paragraph and punctuation marks writing in English by middle school students and how these impact their academic success and interest towards writing and reading the English language. The present study employs an experimental design. Approximately fifty students from the sixth-grade pupils were selected for the study from a government institution in the state of Kerala. Of the fifty pupils, twenty-five were designated as the control group, while the remaining twenty-five constituted the experimental group. Results of the study is the treatment given by the researcher has been effective, which prove that experimental group students have performed well in punctuation, paragraph writing and overall writing skill in English which reflect the post-test and gain score.

Keywords: Punctuation, Paragraph, writing skills, Middle school students

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to academic and professional settings, having strong writing abilities is absolutely necessary. These skills are the foundation for successful communication and critical thinking. There are four macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is one of the macro language abilities. According to Cole and Feng (2015), writing has always been considered an essential ability in the process of learning English. This is due to the fact that writing helps students to become more proficient in the vocabulary and grammatical structures that teachers seek to teach them. As a result of mastering English writing, kids in middle school will not only be able to complete the fundamental requirements of language acquisition, but they will also be able to acquire other subjects with a deeper level of comprehension.

Furthermore, it is essential for the advancement of academics and the chances of further education in the future. Despite this, a large number of students struggle with substantial difficulties while writing in English. These difficulties present themselves in a variety of ways, including grammatical errors, the incorrect use of punctuation marks, and the improper structuring of paragraphs in English. According to

Jabali (2018), if writing were to be regarded a mode of communication because it is used so extensively through the internet, then the written form of communication would be utilized more frequently than the spoken form of communication. Individuals are able to communicate their thoughts and ideas through the medium of writing, which allows them to accomplish a purpose and convey a message.

Understanding the specific nature and prevalence of these challenges is essential for English language teachers who are looking to shape their instructional approaches and support their students in writing English without errors, using the appropriate punctuation marks, and effectively building paragraphs, all of which will enable them to improve their writing skills. When it comes to writing, punctuation is one of the most fundamental mechanics. In its most basic form, punctuation is the application of conventional symbols and signs in written communication for the purpose of separating words into sentences, clauses, and phrases in order to make the meaning more discernible. Hard and colleagues (1941) make the observation that "Punctuation marks are useful tools without which no writer could hope to convey his meaning to his reader with immediacy and accuracy." In both British and American English, there are fourteen different punctuation marks that are regularly employed. A full stop, a question mark, an exclamation point, a comma, a semicolon, a colon, a dash, a hyphen, dashes, brackets, braces, an apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipses are the punctuation marks that are included in this category.

Putting together a paragraph is the first step in the publishing process. The paragraph is an essential component of writing competence. An organization's fundamental building block is the paragraph. According to Owl, which is mentioned in Wirantaka (2016), a paragraph is a collection of sentences that are connected to one another and contain only one primary concept or opinion. Furthermore, according to Oshima and Hogue, who are quoted in Setiani 2021, the paragraph is the fundamental unit of organizing in written work. Therefore, in order for a student to be able to compose a decent paragraph, they need to be able to organize their thoughts, arrange their sentence structures, utilize punctuation marks, use capital letters, and have a strong vocabulary and spelling.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Roma et al.'s (2026) descriptive quantitative study examined high school pupils' punctuation skills. Thirty-four seventh-graders from Baltazar Nicor Valenzuela National High School participated in the study. In order to enhance students' writing abilities using punctuation, the study implemented an intervention known as Explicit Instruction. To evaluate the efficacy of the intervention, the study used a quantitative, pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. This strategy involves measuring a single group before and after an intervention to determine changes, according to Thyer (2012). The mean score on the pre-test was 21.5 (SD = 3.45), whereas the mean score on the post-test was 41.2 (SD = 4.88), indicating a substantial difference between the two tests. Punctuation usage significantly improved after the explicit instruction intervention, according to the statistical analysis ($t(39) = 19.2, p < .001$). These results imply that the intervention successfully enhanced pupils' use of punctuation. Ten chosen people were interviewed by the researchers in order to gain a thorough knowledge of the students' insights both during and after the intervention. Five themes emerged from the responses regarding how the suggested intervention and the use of explicit instruction improve students' writing skills in punctuation usage: (1) increased student participation; (2) use of a step-by-step approach in explicit instruction; (3) improved clarity and organization of student written outputs; (4) improved lesson comprehension; and (5) improved memory retention. Students' insights also revealed five themes: (1) holistic and inclusive development of writing skills across subjects and grade levels; (2) stakeholder support in literacy interventions; (3) development

of writing awareness and habits through the intervention; (4) Improving School Support with Teaching Materials and Tools; and (5) Clearer Writing Confidence.

Writing skills development is a major focus of the Philippine K–12 Basic Education Curriculum, especially in Key Stage 2. The goal of Aubrey Rachel Dagpin, Kathleen Villarubia, and Genelyn Baluyos (2025) is to give sixth-grade students the tools they need to effectively communicate in a variety of styles, including descriptive paragraphs. Despite these efforts, recent evaluations, particularly the First Quarter Regional Unified Quarterly Assessment (RUQA) for Grade Six at a large public elementary school in Ozamiz City (SY 2024-2025), have shown a significant deficiency in students' comprehension of visual media and their ability to translate these interpretations into written text. This action study looks at how well a Padlet-integrated intervention may improve sixth-grade students' descriptive writing abilities, especially when it comes to comprehending visual material. All participants were categorized under the "Did Not Meet the Expectation" group in pre-intervention assessments, highlighting challenges in converting visual inputs into logical textual explanations. With an emphasis on learners' engagement and ability to interpret visual media, the study sought to evaluate how Padlet-based activities affected learners' capacity to improve descriptive writing skills. The pre-test and post-test designs were single-group. Students participated in organized descriptive writing assignments and other Padlet-driven activities. Prior to and following the intervention, their performance was assessed, and a paired-samples t-test was used for quantitative analysis. The majority of participants received a "Satisfactory" rating on the post-test, indicating significant progress. The intervention was successful in improving learners' descriptive writing abilities, as evidenced by the overall writing performance's notable improvement. Padlet was essential in helping students improve their writing skills and raise their level of involvement. Its importance as an inclusive teaching tool for developing reading skills is highlighted by its adaptability to a wide range of learners. In order to facilitate multimodal learning approaches, the study recommends using Padlet and related digital platforms into writing training. Curriculum alignment and ongoing teacher training are advised to guarantee long-term efficacy since they support the adoption of technology-enhanced literacy development techniques.

In the 2024 study, Andrew Burrell and Roger Beard investigated the use of playful punctuation in narrative writing by elementary school students. The use of ludic (playful) punctuation in the creation of an imaginative tale was examined using the writing of three achievement groups of children aged 9 to 11, framed within the domains of applied linguistics and language play. The scripts came from a more extensive repeat-design research of writing development that covered a variety of linguistic aspects. The scripts were then methodically examined once it became clear that they had a variety of language play elements, such as the usage of ludic punctuation. The children's use of fun punctuation in this writing assignment was identified and categorized through an analysis of 71 stories. There was a variety of ludic punctuation, particularly in the usage of question, exclamation, and quote marks. On the other hand, the dash, brackets, underline, interrobang, and asterisk were used less frequently. The range and content of these uses varied significantly between the attainment groups. The results show that, despite not being asked to do so, children aged 10 to 11 believe that narrative writing provides a variety of chances for imaginative and entertaining punctuation usage. The results also imply that these applications, like language play in general, call for more research.

The Process Writing Approach places more of an emphasis on the writing process itself as opposed to the final output. The research was carried out by Tagreed Abed (2024) at Birzeit University in Palestine with the purpose of investigating the efficacy of the Process Writing Approach in the development of the

paragraph writing skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Following an examination of the prior study that had been conducted on the subject, the researcher made the decision to implement this strategy in the intermediate English (1201) course during the first semester of 2021/2022. An experimental group and a control group were composed of participants who were assigned to them at random. Investigator used a quasi-experimental strategy that included a pre-test and a post-test. For a period of eight weeks, experimental procedures for teaching paragraphs were carried out, and the evaluation of paragraphs was carried out both at the beginning and the end of the study. The data that was gathered from the pre- and post-writing exams were subjected to descriptive analysis through the utilization of a t-test in order to determine the disparities that existed between the mean scores of the two groups. According to the results of the post-test, there were differences that were statistically significant in favor of the experimental group. As a result, the utilization of the Process Writing Approach proved to be of great assistance in the development of paragraph writing skills among students of English as a Foreign Language. Based on the findings of the study, it was suggested that the same method be utilized in the instruction of essays and other types of writing as well as in the development of writing skills among students at the intermediate level. The ability to write is one of the most essential language abilities that must be mastered during the process of learning a language, particularly English. Putting together a paragraph is the first step in the publishing process. The paragraph is an essential component of writing competence.

During the second semester of English education at Muhammadiyah Kotabumi University, the objective of the research conducted by Rulik Setiani, Dewi Sartipa, and Sinta Novia (2024) is to identify the most prevalent problem in writing paragraphs among students and to determine the problems that students have when writing paragraphs. To conduct the study, descriptive qualitative research was utilized, and eight students who were enrolled in the English Education Study Program during the second semester were analyzed. Descriptive qualitative research was the methodology that was utilized for the study. The paper of students' writing assignments and the interview guideline were the instruments that were utilized in the data collection process. The interview that was conducted was a semi-structured interview to be more specific. On the basis of Bryne's views, writing challenges can be broken down into three distinct groups. Problems with language are the first issue. Grammar, vocabulary, language use, and sentence choice are all examples of linguistic features that fall under the category of writing. A second area of study is physiology, namely content. The third is cognitive, which includes things like capitalization, punctuation, and spelling, as well as paragraphs. According to the findings, the results demonstrated that the students' difficulties in composing paragraphs indicate that students experienced difficulties in two categories, which consisted of linguistic and cognitive difficulties. The number of linguistic issues is 49, the number of vocabulary problems is seven, and the number of sentence choices is two. On the other hand, the number of cognitive problems is one, the number of punctuation problems is twenty-six, the number of capitalization problems is 28, and the number of paragraphing problems is three. In addition, it was discovered that the most common issue that arises when writing paragraphs is linguistic issues, which include grammar. This is because students continue to struggle with comprehending the fundamental aspects of grammar, specifically issues concerning the appropriate placement of the verb "to be" and the correct pattern of verbs. On the other hand, with regard to the Physiology problem, specifically content, the findings of the study of eight students' writing documents during the second semester of English instruction at Muhammadiyah Kotabumi University did not reveal any issues.

The skill of writing is the ability to express one's thoughts, ideas, sentiments, and other emotions through

written form. One must develop mastery over the language as well as the art of writing in order to become a competent writer who is also successful. If, on the other hand, the language being spoken is not the mother tongue, then additional effort and concentration are required. In addition, the practice and the effort are both necessary and obligatory. In the year 2021, Asmita Ghosh, Prasanta Gayen, and Subir Sen discuss the challenges that secondary school pupils in India experience when attempting to acquire the ability to write in English, which is a second language. Not only does it offer all of these, but it also offers some potential remedies to situations of this nature. A number of study articles and books written by other authors have been examined by the researchers, and they have identified the fundamental challenges that students in secondary schools in India experience when attempting to acquire the ability to write in a second language they are learning. Additionally, they have categorized the issues and provided potential remedies to the difficulties that have been identified. Also mentioned is the current situation of the status of second languages in India, particularly in the state of West Bengal. The outcome demonstrates that the current state of the second language education system in India is extremely deplorable and does not meet the expectations of the country. For the English language to emerge from its current precarious state, the government ought to take the necessary steps to improve its situation.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Writing is an essential ability that learners must acquire, since it enables the expression of ideas in written form, encompassing the construction of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. In written expression, the author employs symbols to facilitate comprehension by the reader. Nunan states, "Writing is the process of conceptualizing, determining how to articulate ideas effectively, and organizing those ideas into coherent statements and paragraphs that are comprehensible to the reader." It stipulates that writing will enable students to articulate an idea. Furthermore, it serves to convey students' emotions to the reader via written communication. Consequently, writing plays a significant role in enabling pupils to articulate their views. Mehr (2017) characterized writing as a cognitive process that entails the generation of ideas, their composition into sentences and paragraphs, and ultimately the revision of the constructed ideas and paragraphs. Effective writing necessitates an understanding of grammatical principles, lexical strategies, and logical connections.

In the digital age, excellent writing abilities are crucial for kids, beginning at the primary level. At the middle school level, it is essential for pupils to possess proficient writing skills in English, utilizing appropriate punctuation marks such as commas, colons, semicolons, question marks, and periods. Moreover, students should be capable of composing paragraphs, which will facilitate the expression of their thoughts and comprehension of the material studied in disciplines such as English, Science, and Social Science. Proficiency in English writing will enhance the problem-solving abilities of middle school students in mathematics. Consequently, writing proficiency aids middle school kids in advancing across all courses. Effective communication skills, especially in English writing, are essential for students' academic success and future preparedness in learning English.

English as a foreign language encompasses reinforcement, language growth, learning styles, and, most critically, writing as an independent talent. Researchers concur that writing augments cognitive abilities; the advanced functions of analysis and synthesis appear to flourish most effectively with the aid of written language. Writing serves to communicate thoughts, ideas, and facts in clear and accessible language. Students must acquire the skill of proficient writing, which is crucial for success in both academic and professional realms. Proficient writing skills are crucial for all students to meet their educational and

professional demands, enhance communication abilities, foster creativity, facilitate discovery, and promote self-awareness.

In the contemporary digital landscape, particularly in emerging nations such as India, there is an increasing demand for writing courses due to the proliferation of information driven by advancements in technology, notably artificial intelligence. As digital platforms proliferate and written communication gains prominence in academic and professional settings, the necessity for proficient writing skills has become paramount. Consequently, researchers have developed a program for training middle school pupils in writing English with correct punctuation and constructing paragraphs in English. This, in turn, will enable instructors and institutions to modify writing education more effectively, providing to the different needs of middle school students. The findings of this study have broad significance for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers responsible for the design and implementation of writing programs.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

By investigating the specific writing challenges middle school kids have while writing paragraphs and punctuation marks in English and how these affect their academic performance and interest in writing and reading the English language, the study seeks to close a critical gap. Teachers and institutions can create focused interventions and support systems to better help students by looking into these issues and their underlying causes. Furthermore, improving writing skills not only increases academic performance but also equips students with essential communication skills for their overall growth in educational endeavours. Furthermore, improving students' writing skills has an impact on a wider range of communication skills that are crucial for navigating future readiness and enthusiasm in studying English, going beyond simple academic advantages. The study aims to cover the path for both academic success and the development of essential abilities necessary for thriving in the middle school student's writing arena through this thorough understanding and focused intervention.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This research makes use of an experimental methodology. Approximately fifty children from the sixth-grade students at a government institution in the state of Kerala were chosen to participate in the research project. Twenty-five of the fifty students were assigned to the control group, while the remaining twenty-five students were assigned to the experimental group. The experimental group was given instruction on punctuation marks and paragraph writing, which will improve the students' overall writing abilities in English. This was accomplished by working through worksheets that were related to punctuation and paragraph writing for a period of twenty days. During the course of the twenty-day treatment, the use of punctuation marks in sentences and, finally, in the composition of paragraphs were both clarified and widely practiced. The therapy addresses the use of punctuation marks. Both the pre-test and the post-test were presented, and SPSS was applied in order to conduct the analysis of the scores. Following twenty days of therapy, students from both the experimental and control groups were administered a post-test in punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Is there is any significant mean difference between the Control and Experimental group in the pre-test score in the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English of the sixth standard students?

2. Is there is any significant mean difference between the Control and Experimental group in the post-test score in the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English of the sixth standard students?
3. Is there is any significant mean difference between the Control and Experimental group in the gain score in the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English of the sixth standard students?
4. Is there is any relationship among the punctuation marks, paragraph and writing skill in English of the sixth standard students?

FINDINGS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Answer – Question 1

Is there is any significant mean difference between the Control and Experimental group in the pre-test score in the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English of the Sixth standard students?

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	‘t value’	Level of Significance
Punctuation	Control Group	22.04	3.239	0.186	0.853 P>0.005 NS
	Experimental Group	21.92	3.212		
Paragraph	Control Group	15.50	2.053	0.145	0.885 P>0.005 NS
	Experimental Group	15.44	2.091		
Writing skill in English	Control Group	37.54	4.358	0.210	0.834 P>0.005 NS
	Experimental Group	37.36	4.217		

According to the data presented in the table above, there is no statistically significant difference in the pre-test mean scores of the experimental group and the control group with regard to the punctuation, paragraphs, and writing skills in English. As a result, it is clear that the control group and the experimental group are determined to be identical in the specified factors, such as punctuation, paragraph, and writing ability in English in the pre-test score.

Answer – Question 2

Is there is any significant mean difference between the Control and Experimental group in the post-test score in the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English of the Sixth standard students?

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	‘t value’	Level of Significance
Punctuation	Control Group	22.90	3.370	49.804	0.000 P<0.001 S
	Experimental Group	53.70	2.787		
Paragraph	Control Group	16.18	2.087	40.656	0.000 P<0.001 S
	Experimental Group	35.30	2.589		
	Control Group	39.08	4.193	59.004	0.000

Writing skill in English	Experimental Group	89.00	4.267		P<0.001 S
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It is clear that there is a significant mean difference between the control group and the experimental group in terms of the variables that include punctuation, paragraphs, and the ability to write in English. In addition, it has been discovered that students in the experimental group have a higher level of proficiency in writing English sentences that have the appropriate punctuation marks, as well as in building paragraphs. Therefore, it can be concluded that their total writing ability in English is superior to that of the students in the control group. The fact that the students were able to write in English with the appropriate punctuation marks and become proficient in writing a paragraph in English is demonstrated by the fact that the practice that was provided for the experimental group included the use of some additional worksheets and other supplemental material. In addition, it may be deduced that it is significant at the 1% statistical level.

Answer – Question 3

Is there is any significant mean difference between the Control and Experimental group in the gain score in the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in English of the Sixth standard students?

Variable	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	‘t value’	Level of Significance
Punctuation	Control Group	0.86	1.229	54.778	0.000 P<0.001 S
	Experimental Group	31.78	3.797		
Paragraph	Control Group	0.68	1.301	40.302	0.000 P<0.001 S
	Experimental Group	19.86	3.104		
Writing skill in English	Control Group	1.54	1.555	66.420	0.000 P<0.005 S

As can be seen from the table that is located above, there is a large mean difference in the gain score of punctuation, paragraph, and writing competence in English. On the other hand, it has been discovered that students in the experimental group have a higher level of proficiency in writing the English language, including the use of appropriate punctuation marks, composing a paragraph, and general writing competence, which is determined to be superior to that of the students in the control group. In addition, it was deduced that it is important at the 1% level for punctuation and paragraph writing, whereas it is significant at the 5% level for total writing abilities in the English language.

Answer – Question 4

Is there is any relationship among the punctuation marks, paragraph and writing skill in English of the sixth standard students?

Variable	Punctuation	Paragraph	Writing skill in English
Punctuation	1	0.994**	0.955**
Paragraph	X	1	0.939**

Writing skill in English	X	X	1
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It is found that there is strong relationship among the punctuation, paragraph and writing skill in the English. Moreover, it is reported that among the variables and themselves there is positive and significant relationship and it is significant at 1% level.

CONCLUSION

Since writing is an essential and significant skill required in all fields of study, it should be emphasized in language classrooms. Based on the data analysis of the current research, the pre-test scores confirm that middle school students had problems with paragraph development; they were unable to compose well-structured paragraphs, using punctuation marks appropriately and overall they find difficulty in writing skill of English. However, after applying the treatment by using module with practising in the worksheets, students' writing improved; they were able to produce paragraphs with good, coherent structure, and paying attention to writing mechanics and punctuation marks. Therefore, it is recommended that the English language teachers can utilize the module for its relevancy in helping students construct good paragraphs with proper punctuation marks.

So, in conclusion it can be said that writing skill is a complex cognitive skill to be learnt and mastered by the students to shine in their career and everyday life and the students of middle school schools need a special care, Besides all these, the government should take necessary steps to solve the problem of English language learning among the secondary school students.

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