



**JOURNAL OF ADVANCED
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

ISSN: 0976-9595

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IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS THROUGH WRITING WORKSHOP

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Abstract: The present study aims at finding out how writing workshop improves the students' writing, particularly their grammatical and mechanical writing skills. An observation checklist, test, field notes, and questionnaire were administered to collect the data in this collaborative action research. The findings of the study revealed that the implementation of the writing workshop was successful in reaching the objective after the revision and the modification were made to conduct cycle two.

Keywords: writing skills, writing activity, punctuation, written language,

Writing, along with listening, speaking, and reading, is one of the abilities students have to master when learning a language. It is a productive skill in the written form that requires not only the graphic depiction of speech but also the development and presentation of ideas in a systematic manner, making it more complicated than it seems at first.

Besides giving students a chance to be adventurous with the language reinforce learning, writing activity makes students very involved with the new language to later reflect on ideas and reevaluate them. (Klimova, 2013; Raimes, 1983) A rich literature (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018; Calkins & Ehrenworth, 2016; Kellogg, 2001; Wirantaka, 2016) asserts certain characteristics, such as good content, organization, language use, grammatical use, and mechanical consideration, are unquestionably required for successful writing.

The material must include substantive development of the core idea, adequate and relevant supporting detail, and demonstration of topic knowledge. The arrangement comprises fluent expression of not choppy or abrupt concepts, logical sequencing, and cohesiveness; essential points and supporting facts are clearly and succinctly conveyed. The ideas are not confusing and unconnected. The advanced range is encircled by the effective use of words and idioms in the lexicon.

Grammatical errors must not confuse the grammatical use. Furthermore, mechanic components govern knowledge of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization rules.

Writing is distinct from speaking. When speaking, facial and body gestures help the listener understand what the speaker says. The speaker's voice tone and stress can impact the meaning of uttered words. In writing, however, this is not the case. The writer cannot expect the reader to understand what he has or believes in his mind based solely on the words. Experts (Aguirre-Munoz et al., 2015; Crossley et al., 2014; Cutler & Graham, 2008; Shaw, 1986) confirm that correct grammar and mechanics are important elements of writing instruction writing quality to help the reader to understand.

The importance of grammar and mechanics cannot be overstated because they directly impact the success or failure of communicating ideas from writer to reader. Without them, written language is unable to identify or replicate some distinct and distinct characteristics of speech. They are unquestionably necessary for a language because they contribute to making the language a tool of communication capable of revealing what it means by bringing the right kind of expression into writing for which intonation, volume, tone, and pauses are used while speaking. Grammar and the mechanical characteristics of writing have been one of several researchers' primary focuses while doing the study. Xavier conducted an action research study in 2020 to investigate teachers' comments on combining grammar and writing in the Diah Royani Meisani writing class. After receiving training to improve their grasp of grammar as a meaning-making resource, the instructors were asked to report on their experience participating in the project.

The results suggest that the action research approach increased instructors' grammatical subject knowledge, comprehension of students' writing gaps, and teaching strategies in the writing class. Another study was conducted by Calanoga (2019) to determine predominant writing errors, specifically mechanics and grammar. It revealed that students' most troublesome uses of mechanics and grammar serve as baseline data to design incidental lesson focus along with the aspects of mechanics

and grammar that need to be dealt with by teachers. Due to students' limited competence in applying mechanics and grammar, incidental lessons were given to improve the language proficiency of the students.

Crossley et al. (2014) investigated the links between expert human judgments of text quality and grammar, as well as mechanical faults in student writing. They gathered a corpus of W-Pal essays produced by high school students to code for grammatical and mechanical problems. After scoring, they discovered modest relationships between grammatical mistakes and holistic essay scores and greater relationships between mechanics and holistic essay scores.

In 2013, Salem analyzed the effects of using a program based on the writing workshop approach on developing functional writing skills of pre-service teachers of English in the Hurgada faculty of Education. A teaching program based on the writing workshop approach and other supporting instruments was constructed and validated. The study involving forty prospective English teachers found that the writing workshop-based program had significant effects on improving the subjects' functional writing skills.

The previous studies mentioned above indicate that grammatical and mechanical skills are still issues in student writing. Among the strategies implemented to improve students' writing, the writing workshop has been proved to write performance better as it offers a larger number of process-writing strategies and more time to practice writing (Brookhart, 2007; Heitin, 2016). In 2006, Calkins introduced the framework of the writer's workshop that opens with a minilesson, followed by independent writing, and closes with sharing time. Lain (2017) supports this by summarizing the benefits of implementing a writing workshop in four categories: time, ownership, feedback, and community.

As student writing improves with practice, the workshop is believed to be able to hone the writing skills or any aspects of writing as it offers plenty of time for students to write. During the workshop, the students are given a chance to explore genres and topics and experiment with organization, voice, and sentence choices

which are also claimed to attract their engagement in their learning, leading to improved performance (Poll, 2014). The workshop also involves feedback from teachers or peers. It may improve students' work and maybe the whole school. The workshop has the potential of improving a sense of community in a classroom that offers opportunities for students to bond through their shared writing.

With the subject of finding a lack of studies that offer practical implications for the writing workshop, particularly its influence on the aspects for improving students' grammatical and mechanical writing skills as well as their engagement in the learning process, the present research was designed to fill in the gaps in the literature by administering action research. The students of the Writing II Course were chosen to be the participants of the study. Based on the preliminary study, the students' problems in writing that deal with grammar and mechanics also occurred. Hence, it is worth conducting research dealing with the problems so that the students get the benefits of mastering grammatical and mechanical writing skills to assist themselves on the higher level of writing subject in the following semesters, especially in writing a thesis. Furthermore, through the use of action research that allows for repeated cycles of planning, observing, and reflecting, the teacher has the opportunity to understand and improve the quality of actions in English writing instruction resulting in higher student accomplishment and more effective learning communities. a week for eight weeks, with 31 fifth-grade children participating. To assess writing improvement, an opinion essay was given as a pre-test and a post-test.

The study's findings revealed improved students' writing-related outcomes across all writing ability categories. Salem evaluated the benefits of adopting the writing workshop technique on building functional writing abilities of pre-service English teachers in Hurgada, Faculty of Education, in 2013. A training program was developed and verified based on the writing workshop technique, a checklist of functional writing abilities skills and subskills, and a pre-posttest of functional writing skills. After taking a functional writing abilities pretest, forty prospective

English instructors were randomly allocated to an experimental group and taught writing utilizing the writing workshop technique.

The study's findings demonstrated that the writing workshop-based program enhanced participants' functional writing skills. In addition, Christopher et al. (2000) carried out research to investigate how a writer's workshop improved inadequate writers in fourth and fifth grade. After conducting a mini-lesson, the teacher provided 30 to 40 minutes of writing time, allowing students the flexibility to work in the writing process. They self-edited for mechanics and organization, then peer-editing using a student checklist. After that, they had a conference with the teacher to evaluate progress before revising and publishing their writing. This study stated that post interventions data indicated an increase in mechanical and organizational writing skills by the targeted students. In addition, through the post-self-writing reflection, students also demonstrated an internalized satisfaction with their writing.

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