



Content Analysis of the Outcomes of Expressive Writing Studies among Iranian University Students in Arabic Language Departments

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- Arabic Learners

Abstract

The purpose of current study is to examine the content of the findings of expressive writing studies conducted among Arabic language departments students at Iranian universities. In order to achieve this, the researchers examined a number of Iranian studies and researches that dealt with expressive writing among Iranian undergraduate students in Arabic language departments between 2008 to 2022, using the descriptive analytical research approach. The areas of agreement between the studies were found and verified by creating a cognitive map in order to determine the most prevalent and recurring causes for the phenomena of students' weakness in expressive writing skills. What the article concluded is that not taking into account the linguistic, grammatical, morphological and semantic aspects of words, errors in expressing masculine and feminine in writing, errors in writing the Hamza and identifying its types, and frequent errors when writing words that end with a long or connected T letter(taa") are the most common and recurring reasons for the Iranian students' weakness in Arabic language departments at the undergraduate level in expressive writing skills. The most crucial expressive writing abilities that students should develop in order to overcome their weaknesses are dividing the subject into an engaging introduction that accurately and clearly presents the topic's main ideas, considering the logical order and sequence in presenting ideas from general to specific, taking into account the linguistic aspect with its grammatical, morphological and semantic aspects of terms, taking into account certain spelling rules for Arabic letters, and employing vocabulary and structures correctly, and the necessity of mastering punctuation marks, masculinity and femininity, definition and indefiniteness.

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1. Introduction

Writing abilities have a significant and crucial position in teaching Arabic to non-native speakers. Without these abilities the language cannot function as intended and they must be mastered by learners because they have become essential means of learning and communicating with others. The problem of the current study is highlighted in the decline and great deficiency of expressive writing skills experiences by Arabic language learners among Iranian students in educational institutions in general and undergraduate university students in Arabic language departments in particular. The researcher realized of the scope of this problem by reviewing numerous studies that indicated the reality of teaching Arabic in Iranian universities. Arabic language learners in Iranian universities face many problems in writing skills, which are considered one of the most difficult skills to learn in the field of language education, and many of them make linguistic errors when trying to write a specific text in Arabic, despite the fact that they have spent years learning Arabic and mastering the language skills.

1.2. Research Question(s)

What are the most prevalent and recurring causes of the phenomenon of the weakness among Iranian undergraduate students in the Arabic language departments in expressive writing skills, which were mentioned in a number of Iranian studies and articles?

- What are the most important expressive writing skills that students should develop to overcome their weakness in them?

2. Literature Review

Some may wrongly perceive expressive writing as merely a simple skill that focuses on correct formation of letters and words as agreed upon. However, its concept is broader and more comprehensive than this, as it includes various activities and skills required of the writer, beginning with the motor skills needed for drawing language symbols, followed by practical writing tasks such as: writing a short dialogue or an essay. The next stage of the writing activity is the effective use of linguistic richness and the full range of language structures, leading to the second writing skill which is: the mental or intellectual skill. This illustrates that expressive writing skill is both a motor and intellectual activity which together constitute the complete writing skill, divided into two skills: the first is motor and the other is written.

3. Methodology

The significance of this study is highlighted by the fact that it attempts to uncover the underlying causes of an persistent problem that students experience, by analyzing the content of the findings from several Iranian studies and research focusing expressive writing, as the researchers employ the descriptive analytical approach, which the researchers have benefited from in presenting and analyzing Iranian studies in order to identify the weakness of Iranian students in expressive writing skills. The current study requires adopting a checklist of manifestations related to expressive writing skills among undergraduate students of Arabic language departments in Iranian universities. for the purpose of adopting the list in the analysis process, the researchers worked to prepare it according to what was stated in the theoretical frameworks, the findings of Iranian studies, and the problems of Iranian students in expressive writing skills that were reviewed in the current study and searched for reference to problems of expressive writing skills explicitly or implicitly. Based on what was done, a preliminary list was prepared which included manifestations of weakness in ten (10) skills. The study sample consists of the results of a

number of Iranian studies and articles written in Arabic and published in Iranian journals and conferences relevant to the variables of the study spanning from 2008 to 2023.

4. Results & Discussion

It was found that the first four manifestations of weakness, represented by (not taking into account the linguistic, grammatical, morphological and semantic aspects of words, errors in expressing the masculine and feminine forms in writing, errors in using hamza and recognizing its variations, and frequent errors in writing words that end with the long or connected T (taa”) were associated with a relative importance of (57%). This suggest that these weaknesses are some of the most noticeable issues in students’ expressive writing. This means that they constitute the most difficult aspect for them, possibly due to the linguistic overlap between the Arabic and Persian languages or due to the lack of adequate training in the curricula or courses designed for teaching the Arabic language to master the mentioned skills. It was also demonstrated that the four areas of weakness, consisting of (the lack or absence of persuasive and logical reasoning in writing, the weakness in effectively gradation of writing from the introduction and presentation and ending with the conclusion, the weakness in writing introductions, presentations and conclusions, and difficulties in organizing ideas from general to specific and from the main to the subordinate) each received a relative significance of (42.8%). This indicates that these aspects hold moderate significance compared to the previously mentioned aspects in expressive writing, which means that they are one of the important causes of the decline in students’ expressive writing abilities. It was also shown that the aspects of weakness, which include: (the inability to break down the written topic into paragraphs, the lack of aesthetic styles and expressions in writing, the lack of comprehensiveness of the topic during writing as completely as possible, the unfamiliarity with punctuation marks, failure in citing verses from the Holy Quran, the Noble Hadith and the literary heritage, and the lack of logical order of phrases and sentences in many writing tasks) each carried a relative importance of (28.5%).

5. Conclusion

The majority of previous Iranian studies concurred that it is an irrefutable fact that non-native Arabic language learners, particularly Iranian students, lack proficiency in language skills in general and writing skills in particular. Therefore, in order to reduce the impact of this problem and limit its impact on students, it is necessary to look for modern strategies, programs, methods and approaches in teaching and implement them. Previous studies contributed to providing researchers with a clear vision to initially define expressive writing skills, as well as their significance in relation to other language skills, define their types and the foundations on which they are based. They also helped to explain the most prevalent errors made by Iranian students in expressive writing in order to lessen reduce the weakness among students in them.

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