

## Reading and Mechanical Accuracy Writing Skills of Senior Secondary Students of Arabic in Oyo State

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**Abstract:** Reading is the ability of a reader to make meaning out of printed text while mechanical accuracy in writing is the ability of a writer to write without spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes. Both act as synergy with one another. The purpose is to find out if a significant relationship exists between reading generally and mechanical accuracy writing skills among senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo state. The population is all the Arabic students that offer Arabic in Oyo State. The target population was all the senior secondary school students of Arabic while the target population was 119 students who were purposively sampled. Research questions were answered using percentage, mean and standard deviation while the hypothesis was tested using Pearson Correlation Coefficient Moment at 0.005 level of significance. The result shows that there was no significant influence of reading skills on writing skills. It concludes that no significant relationship exists between reading and mechanical accuracy writing skills. It was recommended that practicing teachers should be exposed to seminars and workshops to enable them to have knowledge of teaching and learning of the two skills to teachers and students of Arabic.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension Skills, Mechanical Accuracy Writing Skills, Arabic Language, Students, Oyo State

### Introduction

In Nigeria, Arabic instruction became part of the official educational system. Balogun (1985) points out that an authorised Arabic language curriculum created under the direction of the West African Examination Council (WAEC) went into effect in 1997, and that school candidates were first offered for the West African School Certificate Examination (WASC) in both Arabic and Islamic studies in the 1950s. A syllabus for Arabic studies was created in 1976 for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) and General Certificate of Education (GCE). Exams at the advanced level were created (Balogun, 1985). According

to the National Education Policy of 1977, Arabic is now an elective in junior and senior high schools. Arabic language curricula for junior and senior secondary schools have been published by the Federal Ministry of Education as a result. In order to execute the 6-3-3-4 educational system, this was one of the steps taken (National Curriculum for Junior Secondary School, vol. 4, 1985).

Arabic used to be taught at the junior or senior secondary level under the current administration. Students who completed senior high school with credits in English language, Arabic, Islamic studies, and two more courses one of which need to be an arts subject were qualified to major in Arabic at university. Candidates can major in other pertinent fields of their interest with this combination of subjects, as long as certain entrance conditions are fulfilled (JAMB Brochure, 2011/2012). Since Arabic is now taught in Nigeria's official secondary school system, certain state governments in the country's north have set up Arabic teaching colleges. They include Sokoto State's Arabic Teachers' College, Kano State's Gwale, and Kwara State's Jebba State all have Arabic teachers' colleges. An Arabic Teachers' Grade II Certificate is the end result of the five-year programme offered by the colleges. Drawing from educational psychology as well as educational principles and practices, these colleges offer professional training in Arabic and Islamic studies teaching methods. Successful graduates of these colleges can enroll in postsecondary institutions if they pass the necessary exams at credit level (Oladosu, 2011).

The Arabic language curriculum at the secondary school level supports the teaching of reading and writing abilities since it covers grammar, literature, reading comprehension and writing. Henceforth, the importance of reading and writing in any academic setup cannot be overstressed. One of the two receptive skills is reading, while writing is also one of the two productive skills. Reading and writing are two fundamental skills of learning without which learning will be subjected to a futile exercise.

The ability to interpret what one has read is what reading is all about. The aim is to comprehend written stuff. This complex process involves both mind and perception. Word recognition, one of two related processes, is the ability to identify how written symbols correspond to a single spoken language. The making understanding of sentences, words and written texts is known as comprehension. It is a process that requires thinking, reasoning, and vocabulary in order to extract meaning from related content (Bernhardt, 2000; Kamik, Mosenthal, Pearson, 2000).

Reading is so much important that every individual needs to acquire it for a number of reasons. In order to acquire knowledge and concepts necessary for passing exams, a student must read. A professional needs to update his or her knowledge of facts and ideas to assist him or her develop on the job. Citizens and residents across the world need to keep ahead of news and events if the world. Reading is needed for enlightenment, and

what goes around the globe or you have dangerous materials dumped behind one's background before one knows it (Kaifat, Lee and Fleming, Kai, 1978).

For both children and adults, reading is a crucial educational objective since it provides access to new opportunities, worlds and different kinds of knowledge are gained, literature enjoyed, do things in modern ways of life, such as reading, newspapers, magazines, new books(texts), job categories, instructional manuals, directives, maps, sign post and many others. Reading measures one's level of vocabulary acquisition and widens a reader's scope of horizon , thus the emergence of composing skills and vocabulary acquisition must have been proceeded with a sound reading ability which means knowledge is gained through written materials and ability to write down ideas and information using genres in all form of writing, be it seeking for job application, looking for appointment elsewhere, or writing for fun or creativity must have been laid on foundation of reading and vice-versa.

Comprehension plays a significant role in learning a foreign language and it is clear that Arabic is a foreign language and a subject in the Nigerian educational system. Comprehension is the ability to understand the meaning or importance of the knowledge acquired. The comprehension can be listening or oral comprehension or reading comprehension. The listening or oral comprehension is the way of listening to some passages that will be read to the listeners or foreign students and at the end, some questions will be asked based on the passage. (One) student is expected to give correct answer to show that the learner listened to the passage and understood it. (Ibiloye, Ore Oluwa, Ocheful, Attah & Ifeoma, 2018).

According to Alderson (2000), the reader's prior knowledge influences the understanding they derive from their reading. Many students struggle with understanding when they read in Arabic, and they often blame the language for their difficulties. They can also think that their own incapacity is the issue. Their approach to a text could potentially be the issue. Students will do better at reading comprehension in Arabic if they comprehend the material offered in Arabic texts and are cognisant of the cognitive processes involved.

Despite the importance of reading, learners across all levels of education still have problems on reading comprehension. This is noted by the current researcher as a practicing lecturer and as well as an expert in area of reading comprehension, when students cannot comprehend written text or passages. It means they have problem of reading assimilation which lead to a sudden halt in learning all subjects and in most cases hopelessly uprooted from the root, therefore, students are therefore encouraged to acquire reading comprehension skills which is a tool of meaningful learning for school work and all forms of study in and outside the school environment. There are four or five levels of reading comprehension skills as identified by reading experts. These levels are literal, re-organisation, inferential and evaluative. Literal comprehension focuses mainly on detail recognition, location of facts, names and characters and times or place of the story. This

does not lead to comprehension. Re-organisation deals with featuring (outlining), summarising and synthesising which is quite involving and does not lead to total comprehension also deals with draining conclusions from details, main ideas, sequences, character traits and prediction of outcomes. Full comprehension takes place when the reader is able to critically assess what has been read (Bamisaye, 1987).

Among those researchers who identified reading comprehension on four hierarchical levels such as literal, inferential, evaluative and creative are (Williams, 1990; Lawal, 1990; & Lawal, 2005). The reading comprehension levels are based on the mental complexity of the task involved in reading exercise. Teaching this level of reading will develop the reading skills that students require for effective learning. All these levels must be properly involved in the teaching of reading comprehension as against some studies which reflected only one level which is literal and they highly emphasised it in Arabic textbooks. (Lawal, 2015).

A teacher of Arabic or other languages must take cognisance of how reading comprehension must be properly taught by organising the ideas one after the other, give the idea proper interpretation, evaluate them thoroughly and appreciate beautifully when teaching reading comprehension to them. Teachers could also identify purposes before reading and ask students to look for information to respond to them when reading and guide students to use their reading processes after reading to answer questions on information in the meaning or otherwise.

Functional reading is said to be improved when students are able to do this effectively. This, as a result and understanding, recall and transfer of learning which will eventually facilitate the learning process. Consequently, secondary school students may find the acquisition of functional reading skills a difficult task. Onochie (1991) opines that a sound reading programme, either for improvement or remedial, need to be based on a good understanding of reading process. It is this understanding that will guide teachers in selecting appropriate methods of teaching as it is ought to be taught. Many language teachers understood what the reading process is, some were of the opinion that once they taught students on how to pronounce words in texts correctly and read fluently, students have known how to read. This misconception of the reading process by some teachers could partly explain why teachers fail to effectively involve the four levels of reading comprehension in the teaching of reading.

Conversely, writing ability is the productive component of literacy that allows one to express ideas and thoughts in writing. It is a social act that reflects the writer's communication skills, which are challenging to develop, particularly in contexts where English or Arabic is either a second language or a foreign language (Gubal, 2004; Kipour and Fallahi Zadah, 2007). Clearly communicating what the writer encodes and the reader correctly decodes is the primary goal of writing. By following the rules and playing the games, both parties can accomplish this. With relation to a certain issue, the writer must

adhere to these criteria in order to arrange the structure into a logical whole. It is the "game rules" that provide the writer and the reader with a common language to communicate.

Writing is an aspect of language communication skills which is designed to correct students' inability to write clearly, legibly and effectively. Its purpose is to develop in students the ability to express themselves and communicate genuinely as dictated by the syllabus or curriculum. It is a systematic method which enables students learning to first develop writing into two or more paragraphs as contained in some books. Different types of writing have been graded down to suit various levels of students' ability, including pre-writing (planning), drafting, revising, mechanical accuracy, expressing idea, organisation and contents. It trains students or learners on scientific genres which are organised and formal types of writing or speaking used for academic professional and official communication. This follows clear structure, objective language, accuracy and logical presentation of ideas used to inform, explain, report, persuade formally and record official information. All these aspects of writing skills must be properly taught by language teachers.

According to Ming (2006), where people write, they are expected to take into account a record of their work, which comprises the mode (communication or medium), the tenor (writer-reader interaction), and the field (subject). The entire piece of writing changes as the register does. Proponent of the genre approach is of the opinion that familiarisation with the genre is a precondition for appropriate writing by learners in a particular genre. Richardson (1995) views genre as social given that people of a culture work together to accomplish them; individuals are ambitious considering that have developed to do things, meanings are created in phases, and writers typically need to take multiple steps to accomplish the objectives they set.

Furthermore, writing is one of the skills required in the learning of languages. It is a continuous process. Writing has to be adapted and adjusted to meet modern requirements. In a society like Nigeria, where illiteracy level is still high as 70% and where people hardly print-oriented, the young child comes to school with a bit disadvantaged ability in learning to write. The teacher therefore ensures that he provides a tension-free pleasurable and attractive introduction to teaching through pre-writing activities. Anderson (1971) refers to pre-writing as writing readiness, which can be defined as the mental, psychological and physical, privative which help the child to learn how to write. Readiness for writing can be grouped into five: manipulative experience, language exposure, visual activity and discrimination, cognitive abilities and psychological well-being.

Mechanical accuracy is an aspect of academic writing skills which is part of standard that can be referred to as acceptable writing behaviour with the acceptable writing behaviour

comes the need to reach learners the skills that would enable them to be competent and skills writers. Teachers are complaining about the lack of academic writing skills of students which are considered to be prerequisites for tertiary education. L1 Students according to peer (2006) are considered to have the required language in that they are grammatically fluent and have a productive understanding of the minimal vocabulary needed at the university level, but they lack the essential academic writing abilities. The case of L2 students is more complex because it cannot be assumed that they have either the necessary academic writing skills. Mechanical accuracy is an aspect of essay writing assessment, it measures the use of punctuation marks, spellings, contents arrangement, sequence of tenses, correct use of vocabulary and tenses, correct use of vocabulary and tenses among others.

The term "mechanical accuracy" describes a writer's proficiency with the English language's mechanics, such as proper punctuation, spelling, grammar, and tenses. Inferentially, many Nigerians are overly concerned with the distinction between colon and semi-colon when speaking English. Content and organization are additional components of essay writing assessment. Mechanical accuracy is the ability to write correctly and error-free; it has less to do with the quality of your idea than it does with the correctness of your writing. Correct word spelling (a. book, b. buk) and punctuation (full stop, comma, question mark) are examples of mechanical precision. Any additional capitalisation should be done correctly; for example, names and locations should be capitalised at the start of sentences. When it comes to mechanical accuracy (M.A.), proper grammar and sentences are used. For example, "the teacher is in the class, she is teaching English" is correct, but "the tea her is in the class, she teaches English" is incorrect. The statement "the student write neatly is correct" "while the student write neat is not correct."

#### Importance of Mechanical accuracy (M.A)

- It makes your writing easy to read
- It helps teacher understand your work.
- It helps students score better marks in summary writing without spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes.

Adetugbo (1997) summarises these different contributions by stating that having a variety of vocabulary, employing a variety of sentence structures to develop the issue, punctuating meaningfully, using proper grammar, and developing and arranging the content in a clear and compelling manner are all characteristics of great writers.

According to WAEC/June Chief Examiner's report of 2005, candidate areas of weakness in Arabic generally include inability of students to express themselves in elegant Arabic, making grammatical mistakes and shallow knowledge of modern Arabic at a time

specifically in composition there was the use of second person singular pronoun in a composition of “give an account of your first day in your school” as if they were given the account “account” of their partner’s instead of referring to themselves. Also, students’ responses to questions on description of Walimat ceremony which you have witnessed fell short of expectation. They wrote irrelevant things instead of explaining the Walimat ceremony. They mentioned people for whom it was organized and failed to state the rationale behind the ceremony.

In a related report of English language studies, Awodele (2003) evaluate the English written by senior secondary school (SSIII) students in Ibadan using a sample of 306 (204 males and 102 females). His findings showed that the students were deficient in written English. The usage of mechanical accuracy is also crucial. It describes how well the writer uses English language mechanics, such as punctuation, proper spelling, appropriate tenses, and syntax, both successfully and efficiently. Inferentially, we should speak English correctly. The heel cord of many Nigerian English language users appears to be mechanical accuracy. Many of them, for instance, are overly concerned about the distinction between the semi-colon and the colon.

Among the most frequent errors and mistakes in grammar students commit are incorrect tenses, which can include incorrect agreement between subjects and verbs, using prepositions in an improper way, comparisons of adjectives inaccurately, and misuse or exclusion of articles (a, an, and the). Examples include the use of dangling and misplaced modifiers, such as “That boy is more taller than me” instead of “That boy is taller than me.”, “Her voice sounds more louder today” instead of “Her voice sounds louder today.” “This test is more easier than the last one” instead of “This test is easier than the last one” “The weather is more colder this morning” rather than “The weather is colder this morning.”

Amongst the subjects of his study, Shuaibu (2011) discovered that spelling was the writing talent that was least demonstrated. While there are specific general spelling principles that are worthwhile to learn, there are roughly three hundred common terms that are commonly incorrectly spelt but aren't addressed by any standard English spelling rules. This demonstrates unequivocally that one of the most important mechanical skill areas that requires investigation in order to offer potential remedies is spelling. According to Shuaibu (2015) and Aliyu (2006), many students in higher education have been shown to employ mechanics such word spelling, punctuation, and even verb tenses very poorly.

Written English is indeed a crucial learning ability, but Nigerian learners who are acquiring a second language in English find it extremely difficult. Many students, and even some professors, find it challenging to write effectively and efficiently in English because they frequently make mistakes, particularly in writing mechanics. The act of writing is intricate and challenging, and as a result of this intricacy and the need to write

grammatically, English language authors frequently make mistakes that could be prevented. In order to discover solutions, it is necessary to identify the types of mechanical faults that secondary school students make.

Contrarily, punctuation describes a person's capacity to utilise both internal and final punctuation in written content. Any written speech must have proper punctuation in order for what was meant to be understood and communicated correctly; improper or inadequate punctuation can make the intended meaning seem ridiculous or odd.

According to Shuaibu, (2015), the only goal of punctuation selection and placement should be to make the author's point more apparent. These broad guidelines for punctuation usage imply that, in both professional and informal settings, punctuation is typically associated with communication rather than rules. All punctuation that is not specifically prohibited is used in professional writing, but those that are not absolutely necessary are left out in informal writing. Another crucial mechanical ability in written English is capitalisation. It is the ability of the writer to capitalise words when suitable. Aliyu (2006) states that capitalisation is necessary in three key areas: titles, proper nouns and adjectives, and the beginning of sentences. Students learning Arabic are likewise affected by this.

The use of proper syntax is another crucial component of grammar. Syntax, as defined by Jowitt (1991), is the way grammatical categories and lexical elements are arranged within sentences to realise those categories. It crosses over into the fields of morphology, lexis, and semantics since syntax always looks into the way words are structured, their meanings, and use of words as well as the combinations of their characteristics. In other words, syntax encompasses both the internal organization of words within a sentence and their word order, demonstrating the influence of one thing on another.

The writer must ensure that the statement is grammatically correct after it has been capitalised, punctuated, and spelt. There are several grammatical errors among school dropouts whose next academic level is postsecondary, according to the West African Examination Council (2014). abuse of modal operators (may/might, can/could, etc.), incorrect tenses, Errors in concord, misrelated participles in transitive verbs for the transitive and vice versa, active for the passive and vice versa, improper use of countable/uncountable nouns, improper use of relatives, subordinators, and conjunctions, improper use of articles or their omission, inconsistencies or imprecision in the use of pronouns, and mistakes in comparative constructions were among these mistakes.

Ambiguity is a major issue with mechanical accuracy. A phrase or statement that inadvertently conveys more than one meaning is said to be ambiguous, as in "Children like sweets more than their parents." Does this imply that a children would choose sweets over their parents if they had to choose between sweets and their parents? Or are you saying that "Children prefer sweets over their parents"? This is a significant issue with English

language writing that can make it challenging to communicate effectively. The phenomenon of syntactic variances in noun usage and noun classification in Nigerian English (NE) is the result of this issue. Additionally, Arabic language learners face all of the aforementioned issues.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over time, students' performance has not been promising. Results from the National Examination Council (NECO) and the West African Examination Council (WAEC) support the aforementioned claim (WAEC, 2000/2001, 2005, and 2007 SSCE). Arabic candidates struggled with spelling and grammatical expression when answering questions about contemporary Arabic literature, according to the chief examiner's report on WAEC May/June 2007. Additionally, they had trouble speaking. Lawal (2006) perceived reading comprehension and writing skill among other topics to be very difficult for senior secondary school students of Arabic which necessitate effective teaching of the two basic language skills as to enhance Arabic students' academic performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study purpose is to compare and relate the academic performance of Arabic secondary school students in reading and writing skills in Oyo state, Nigeria. Specifically, the researcher investigated the relationship between reading and mechanical accuracy in writing skills of senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo state.

### **Research Question**

Is there any relationship between reading and mechanical accuracy writing skills of senior secondary schools' students of Arabic in Oyo state?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between reading and mechanical accuracy writing skills of senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo State.

### **Population of the Study**

Both public and private senior secondary school students in Oyo state constituted the sample for the study. The target population was made up of 119 senior secondary school students from thirty-one (31) schools offering Arabic studies in public and private schools located in all the three senatorial districts of Oyo state.

### **Instrumentation**

A researcher designed reading comprehension and essay writing test were used from data collection. Percentage, indices, mean score, standard deviation and the Pearson r correlation in coefficient method were used for data analysis. There were ten questions to assess student's literal, inferential, critical and creative comprehension skills in each of the two passages of reading comprehension (that is, three questions each on literal, inferential and critical and only one on creative). There were four multiple choice answers for each question from which students were asked to choose the only correct one. The correct answers for each of the questions in the two passages of reading comprehension attracted three marks. The total mark for each of the two passages was thirty (30). The overall total for the two passages of reading comprehension was 60 marks.

The second instrument, Arabic Writing Performance Test (AWPT), comprises two essay questions to assess students' competence in mechanical accuracy which is the focus of this research. Organization and content writing skills were also considered. Each of the essay questions attracted 30 marks, The breakdown is as follows: mechanical accuracy attracts (10) marks. The overall total for the two essay was sixty (60) marks. The West African Senior Secondary and National Examination Council essay questions format was used for the essay tests. The themes of the two essay questions: In a related report of English language studies, Awodele (2003) evaluate the written English of senior secondary school (SS III) students in Ibadan using a simple of 306 (204 males and 102 females) The students were deficient in written English. are (1) A congratulatory letter to the principal of students' former school for being made a judge (2) between money and son which is superior? Therefore, a content validity of (go to page 127) under instrumentation of the first paragraph.

### Data Analysis

Is there any relationship between reading and mechanical accuracy in writing skills of senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo state?

Table 16 comparative analysis of the reading and mechanical accuracy in writing skills of SS students of Arabic in Oyo state

Variable	Number of Students	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D)
Reading Skills	119	30.621	5.5265
Expression Skills	119	3.764	2.0323

This table shows that reading skills, with the means 30.621 and standard deviation of 5.5265, has no significant relationship with mechanical accuracy writing skills, which has the mean of 3.764 and standard deviation of 2.0323. This research question led to the formulation of hypothesis 7

**Hypothesis one**

**Ho7:** There is no significant relationship between reading and writing mechanical accuracy skill of SS students of Arabic in Oyo state

**Table 2:** Comparative analysis of the reading and writing mechanical accuracy skills  
From table 2, it can be seen that the calculated PPMC is less than r-value, thus the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant relationship between the reading comprehension and writing mechanical accuracy skills of SS students of Arabic in Oyo state.

Variable	No of students	$\bar{X}$	S.D	Df	Calculated r-value	Critical value	Decision
Reading skill	119	34.705	16.652	118	.109	.178	HO accepted
Writing mechanical accuracy skill	119	5.033					

**Findings**

Reading skills did not significantly influence writing mechanical accuracy skill of senior secondary school student of Arabic in Oyo state.

**Discussions**

Table 1 answers the research question one which stated that: is there any relationship between reading and mechanical accuracy in writing skills of senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo state?

Reading skill has the mean of 30.621 with standard deviation of 5.5265, while mechanical accuracy has the mean 3.764 with standard deviation 2.0323. this led to formulation of hypothesis one. The two means figure show that there is no significant relationship between reading comprehension and mechanical accuracy writing skills.

As for the hypothesis one Table 2 shows that the calculated Pearson product moment coefficient is less than critical r-value.

**Conclusion**

Thus, the null hypothesis 1 which states that there is no significant relationship between reading and mechanical accuracy writing skills of senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo state is accepted. This suggests that there isn't a significant link between

reading and mechanical accuracy writing skills of SSS students of Arabic in Oyo state. This does not mean that reading comprehension skills have no effect on mechanical accuracy in writing skills of students.

Reading and writing skills reciprocate each other. Kies (1995) says that readers and writers find a reciprocal relationship between the act of reading and writing at different levels. Reading skills do not influence mechanical accuracy writing skills of senior secondary school students of Arabic in Oyo state.

### Recommendations

- The Ministry of Education should host workshops and seminars to expose practical teachers to the skills necessary for teaching reading and writing effectively, such as general reading skills, mechanical correctness writing abilities, and other writing-related skills.
- Several textbooks on reading and writing skills be provided to equip language laboratory for effective teaching of Arabic language with reference to reading and writing skills.

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