

## **THE ROLE OF WRITING STRATEGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aimed to investigate the possible relationship between Iranian EFL learners' writing strategies and their language proficiency. The current study enjoyed a mixed-method design. In the quantitative phase, a sample of 283 English students from three universities majoring in English participated in the study. Pearson correlation, one-way ANOVA, and independent sample t-test were among different measures used in the study. The findings showed that writing strategies were significantly correlated with the participants' English language proficiency. Follow-up interviews were also conducted to collect additional information on the students' use of writing strategies. The qualitative phase of the study yielded several important results contributing to our understanding of writing strategies use. A content analysis of interview results revealed that most students paid less attention to metacognitive strategies while writing. Implications of the study and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Writing Strategies, Proficiency Level

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the past, writing had been the neglected skill in the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. One of the reasons for this negligence, especially in foreign language teaching, was the dominance of audio-lingual method in which writing was largely neglected (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Looking back at the history of language teaching, one can simply see that this skill was traditionally viewed as difficult to acquire. Earlier theories of writing treated writing as a product. It was concerned primarily with formal patterns in language itself. However, modern theoretical accounts of writing emphasize ideas, thoughts, process, strategies which writers utilize in their attaining final product (Raimes, 1983; Zamel, 1983; Cohen & Robins, 1976; Donova & McClelland, 1980 missing in References).

The new perspectives on writing looks at writing as a recursive, dynamic and interactive process which includes such activities as generating ideas, setting goals, planning, evaluating and revising (Mackey, 1984). Of the various skills involved in the learning and teaching of foreign languages, writing is the neglected skill. In the context of Iran, writing skill has received less attention in curriculum and syllabus designs. Writing has a minor role in foreign language textbooks and curriculum. That is not all surprising given the fact that Iran's school system does not even have indoctrination and discipline in teaching composing skills in the mother tongue (L1). In fact, lack of sufficient attention to the writing skill is an evident weakness of Iranian EFL programs.

Although there is a considerable body of research analyzing the way writers compose in second language setting (Zamel 1983, Raimes, 1985, 1987, Silva, 1993, Cumming, 1989, among others), research on EFL writing is quite scarce. Writing strategies from a quantitative perspective have not been studied actively (Yeon, 2002). The fact that writing strategies play an important role in composing and writing efficiently demands the knowledge of dynamic cognitive writing strategies on the part of learners. Indeed, the theory of cognitive processes in writing represents a major departure from the traditional paradigm of stages--a linear sequence or structure to mental process. Cognitive psychologists claim that process writing has a role in a person's mental life. Cognitive theory is studied in the framework of information processing model (McLaughlin, Rossman & Mcleed, 1983).

Many variables affect second/ foreign language writing process. Among these factors, writing strategies seem to be the most important factor because it is believed that language teaching would be more effective if it is based on what learners actually do while learning the language and if we help less successful learners acquire the strategies employed by their successful peers. Successful learners use a number of strategies more often than other students, and use them in combination with other strategies. Gebhardt and Rodrigues (1989) assert that having a variety of writing strategies and skills can help writers complete their writing task successfully and confidently. Various variables affect the use of writing strategies such as age, the length of studying English, culture, proficiency, and etc.

In the present study, the researchers take proficiency into account. A study done by Greece and Oxford (1995), they found that "strategies for active naturalistic use of English" were the strategies that had the strongest relationship to high level of language proficiency. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no in-depth study has been reported on the writing strategies of the Iranian students. Hence, this is where the present study comes into picture. This study is an endeavor to examine the relationship between writing strategies and English language proficiency.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Nunan (2000), writing is considered the most difficult skill for first, foreign and second language learners. In acquiring writing skill, the writer goes through some activities such as control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation and the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the emphasis of both researchers and teachers was on studying and assessing the final written product. Simply, writing was copying words, sentences, dictation, and translation and just putting the pieces of language together. Indeed, in the traditional paradigm, a preoccupation with 'the composition' and 'the essay' at the expense of other types of writing, plus a strong concern for usage over use seemed to be the golden rule. Scholars at the time believed that correct form, grammar, accuracy and good structure were the keys of good writing, and teachers considered only the final products. They believed that students know what they want to say before they start writing (Jones & Tetroe, 1987).

At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, composition instructors probed into the reasons beyond students' writing problems. They came to the understanding that form, grammar, and accuracy alone could not guarantee the coherence and unity of the text (Emig, 1971, Murray, 1980). Perl (1979, 1980) argues that if teachers want to improve the final product of writing, they must pay attention to the process of writing and assess students during composition. Hence, focus on writing process started to emerge. With developments in the fields of psychology, cognitive psychology, social contexts, researchers challenged the product-oriented approach in the 1970s and 1980s. They viewed writing as a recursive activity which consisted of many processes (Britton, 1970; Halliday 1978, 1982). They started looking for models covering the whole process of thinking involved in the act of writing.

Flower and Hayes (1980) developed a model to investigate the writing process. They considered writing as a mental process during which writers go through different stages. Hayes and Flower (1980) define three general phases of writing operation. These phases are: planning, translating, and reviewing. *Planning* includes the sub-operations of generating, organizing, and goal setting. The sub-process of reviewing includes reading and editing. Planning involves retrieving the relevant information from long-term memory and the task environment. This information is used to set establish goals and to develop the text that will satisfy the goals. *Translating* is taking material from long-term memory in accordance with the writer's plans and goals, and formulating sentences with it. Lastly, in the *reviewing* operation, the goal is to improve the quality of the text produced during the translation process.

On the other hand, Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987/2013 ) model postulated that there is a difference in writing ability between skilled and less skilled writers. Accordingly, they developed a two-model theory namely a *knowledge-telling process* and a *knowledge-transforming process* (1987). This model focuses on all kinds of writers and describes why skilled and less skilled write differently? Indeed, it wants to discover why less skilled writers do not use planning while composing. The knowledge-telling process model writers appear to skip the more complicated activity in writing in order to focus on the more pertinent part of writing, i.e., putting the thought into words. Knowledge telling is a think say method of composition; ideas are retrieved from memory in response to topic and discourse cues, translated directly into text. By contrast, in

knowledge transforming, the retrieval ideas for translation is mediated by active problem solving. Recent writing process research has shown marked differences in the ways skilled and unskilled native English writers go about their writing (Bridwell, 1980; Faigley & Witte, 1981, Perl, 1979, Pianko, 1979, Sommers, 1980, Stallard, 1974, Wall & Petrovsky, 1981).

Similarly, studies highlighted differences between skilled and unskilled ESL writers in their composing behaviors and the strategies they employ in the second language writing process (Lay, 1982, Raimes, 1985). First, skilled and unskilled writers differ in pre-writing activities, unskilled writers spend only a short time on planning before beginning to write and tend to adhere to the outline or plan that was originally made, rarely changing that plan in the writing process. Skilled writers, on the other hand, spend more time on planning and revising the original plan flexibly and freely whenever they come up with a new idea in the writing process. That is to say, skilled writers' plans are flexible, whereas unskilled writers' plans are rather fixed. (Pianko, 1979, Raimes, 1985, Sommers, 1980, Stallard, 1974, Zamel, 1983). Some studies have been conducted on the relationship between writing strategies and language proficiency. Indeed, a number of variables, such as proficiency level, motivation and gender have been shown to affect the type and frequency of the language learning strategies used by the second and foreign language learners (O'Malley, et al. 1985; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989, Ehrman and Oxford, 1990, among others).

Furthermore, some studies have been done on the effect of gender on the use of writing strategies. Many empirical studies shown that women are different from men in language learning strategy use, with women generally using more strategies than men, but not in all cases (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Green & Oxford, 1995; Lan & Oxford, 2003; Lee & Oh, 2001; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995). Oxford, Nyikos, & Ehrman (1988) summarized four studies concerning gender differences in language learning, confirming that females use a greater range of language learning strategies.

Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons (1990) discovered that girls use metacognitive strategies, such as goal-setting, planning, keeping records, and monitoring more than boys. According to Green and Oxford (1995), 15 out of 50 strategies on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL; Oxford, 1990) showed differences between women and men in terms of strategy use, with women using them more frequently, while only one strategy was used more often by men than women.

As mentioned before, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between writing strategies and English language proficiency. The present study seeks to investigate the relationship between Iranian adults EFL learners writing strategies and their English language proficiency. In doing so, the researchers used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in collecting and analyzing the data.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1 Participants**

College level EFL learners were the participants of this study. The 282 students who participated in this study were BA English majors. The rationale behind selecting undergraduate English student was that they had already been exposed to writing courses. They were of different levels of proficiency and both males and females were included in the study. The participants came from four universities in Mashhad, Gonbade Kavous, Sabzevar and Neyshaboor. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 31 and the sample comprised of females (224) and males (53). All of them were

from the third semester to eighth semester majoring in three disciplines of English Language Teaching, English Translation and English Language and Literature.

### **3.2 Research Instruments**

This research study used three research instruments namely writing strategies questionnaire and TOEFL test and open-ended interview. The TOEFL test was used to check the participant's level of proficiency. The participants' knowledge and employment of writing strategies were assessed by a writing strategies questionnaire as well as by conducting open-ended interview.

The TOEFL test which was used for checking the English language proficiency of the participants. The test aimed at determining the proficiency level of the participants. It consisted of two parts including a total of 100 items on grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The first part had forty questions in multiple choice formats which all the students were required to answer. The second part had sixty questions with the same format as part one. The participants were given 70 minutes to complete the test. The result of the test led to the exclusion of 12 participants who had very poor score.

The questionnaire that was used in the study was adapted from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990) to investigate the frequency of writing strategies use by the participants. The questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part covers 6 parts namely memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. The SILL uses a 5-point Likert scale for which the learners are guided to respond to a strategy description and the criteria used for evaluating the degree of strategy use frequency are low frequency use, moderate frequency use and high frequency use. The questionnaire was also tested for response validity, whose aims were to check that the participants understood the wording and content of the items, to verify the general division of the questionnaire into parts and to corroborate whether or not the students selected the appropriate response. For that purpose, 15 participants were requested to answer the questionnaire as pilot study. Their responses resulted in some more additional wording changes in the questionnaire. Furthermore, for the internal consistency test, the Cronbach's alpha was run to check the appropriate reliability index.

### **3.3 Procedure**

To achieve the purpose of study, the following procedure was followed. To start, the researchers administered TOEFL test at different universities in Sabzevar, Mashhad, Neishaboor, Gonbad Kavous. The actual time allocated to answer the 100 questions on the TOEFL test was 70 minutes. Then, each group was divided into sub groups high, intermediate and low based on their scores on the TOEFL test. To assure the students of the confidentiality of the results, they were informed that neither their teacher nor any person other than the researchers would have access to their responses.

The data collected through the questionnaires and the oral interviews were typed into the computer. Then the data were run through SPSS 18 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) program for more analyses. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses were performed in this study. Descriptive statistics were obtained to profile the overall pattern of strategy use. The independent variable was reported frequencies of strategy use and the dependent variable was the participants' English proficiency. In order to make the English proficiency variable comparable across grade

levels and schools, the raw English language scores at each grade level were converted into Z scores. Based on the standardized Z scores, the participants were grouped into three proficiency levels, i.e., high, middle, and low.

A number of one-way between-subjects ANOVAs were performed to determine if the three English proficiency groups differed in their reported strategy use. After gathering the data, the participants' performance on the tests were scored and the researchers used t-test, as a proper statistic formula, to check for gender differences in the use of writing strategies. The assumptions underlying t-test were met.

In order to find answers to the proposed questions, the results obtained from TOEFL test and the writing strategy questionnaire were analyzed and the following statistical analyses were run on the data:

1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient: Correlation analysis was used to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables.
2. One independent sample t-test: It was run to investigate if there is any significance difference between males and females in the use of writing strategies.
3. One-way ANOVA: One-way ANOVA was used to find out whether the participants in the three groups differ in their performance on each of the variables.

After collecting the data from each class, the data was exposed to SPSS 18.00 software and the normality test was run. One way ANOVA, t-test, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal- Wallis test were used as appropriate statistical methods to examine null hypotheses.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section reports the results of the analysis of the relationship between Iranian EFL learners' use of writing strategies and their English proficiency. Also, the results concerning any difference between male and female TEFL students in terms of frequency and kinds of writing strategies used are reported. In order to address the research questions posed in the study in the light of the findings, they are stated here as follows:

RQ1: Is there any significant relationship between the use of writing strategies and English language proficiency of Iranian TEFL students?

RQ2: Is there any significant difference between male and female TEFL students in terms of writing strategy use?

RQ3: Is there any significant difference between use of writing strategies and different levels of language proficiency (high, intermediate, and low)?

##### **4.1.1 Results for the First Research Question**

To ascertain if there was any relationship between the use of writing strategies and English proficiency among TEFL students, parametric test of Pearson correlation was run.

**Table 4.1**

The relationship between writing strategies and language proficiency

		SMEAN(Section)	Gen
SMEAN(Section)	Pearson Correlation	1	.173(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N	253	253
Gen	Pearson Correlation	.173(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	253	253

According to the result of the analysis, with a value for  $r$  of .17 and a two-tailed  $p$ -value of .006, it can be concluded that the correlation coefficient was significant beyond the 1 percent level ( $r = .17$ ;  $n = 253$ ;  $p = .006$ ;  $r^2 = .289$ ). With respect to the effect size of the association, the value of  $.289$  represented a medium effect size. It means that  $.289$  variance in each variable can be accounted for in terms of the variance that it shares with the other. Therefore, based on the obtained result, it could be claimed there was a statistically significant relationship between frequency of using writing strategies and English Proficiency of the sample of the study. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that with an increase or decrease in using writing strategies, there will be a concomitant increase or decrease in English proficiency and vice versa.

Next, Pearson and Spearman correlation of individual strategies were calculated separately to see whether there was any significant relationship between individual writing strategies and English language proficiency. Since the distribution of cognitive, general and affective were normal, it was preferred to use a parametric test to investigate the possible relationship of using writing strategies and English language proficiency. For other domains, the normality was not met and nonparametric tests were run (See Table 4.3).

**Table 4.2**

The relationship between writing strategies and language proficiency in regard to the cognitive and affective domains

		SMEAN(Section)	Cognitive	Affective
SMEAN(Section)	Pearson Correlation	1	.106	.133(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.093	.035
	N	253	253	253
Cognitive	Pearson Correlation	.106	1	.460(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.093		.000
	N	253	253	253
Affective	Pearson Correlation	.133(*)	.460(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035	.000	
	N	253	253	253

**Table 4.3**

The relationship between writing strategies and language proficiency in regard to the memory, compensation, metacognitive and social domains

Spearman's rho	SMEAN(Section)	Correlation Coefficient	SMEAN(Section)	Memory	compensation	metacognitive	Social
			1.000	.175(**)	.078	.122	.120
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.005	.215	.053	.056
		N	253	253	253	253	253
	Memory	Correlation Coefficient	.175(**)	1.000	.332(**)	.397(**)	.390(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	253	253	253	253	253
	Compensation	Correlation Coefficient	.078	.332(**)	1.000	.544(**)	.344(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.215	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	253	253	253	253	253
	Metacognitive	Correlation Coefficient	.122	.397(**)	.544(**)	1.000	.377(**)
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.053	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	253	253	253	253	253
	Social	Correlation Coefficient	.120	.390(**)	.344(**)	.377(**)	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.056	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	253	253	253	253	253

The results of subscales' analysis (individual writing strategies) illustrated that memory had a significant relationship with TOEFL test ( $r = .17$ ,  $p = .05$ ). Three subcomponents of writing strategies, i.e., compensation strategies ( $r = .07$ ,  $p = .21$ ), metacognitive strategies ( $p = .05$ ,  $r = .12$ ), and social strategies ( $r = .12$ ,  $p = .056$ ) had stronger relationships with English language proficiency. There was a weak relationship between TOEFL test and all of strategies except memory. Memory strategy had more relationship with TOEFL test than other strategies. The results are given in table 4.3

#### 4.1.2 Results for the Second Research Question

To see if the reported mean difference is significance, an independent sample t-test was run. Table 4.4 reports the results of the independent sample t-test. In order to compare the strategy use mean



scores for male and female TEFL students, independent sample t- test was carried out. The result of the analysis showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female TEFL students in the frequency and type of writing strategies used by the participants ( $t(261) = 1.39$ ;  $p = .16$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. It can be concluded that frequency of using writing strategies is not related to a certain gender. In other words, female TEFL students use as many strategies as male students use.

**Table 4.4**

Independent sample t- test between male and female TEFL students in terms of writing strategy use

t-test for Equality of Means		
T	Df	Sig(two- tailed)
1.39	261	.164

As table 4.5 shows, by comparing the mean values for metacognitive, cognitive, memory, affective and social strategies, it becomes clear that females and males use approximately the same writing strategies.

**Table 4.5**

Group statistic between male and female TEFL students in terms of writing strategy use

SMEAN(Section)	SMEAN(sh3)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Female	206	39.626	14.0041	.9757
	Male	47	36.723	14.5478	2.1220
Gen	Female	206	3.3374	.48225	.03360
	Male	47	3.3134	.39756	.05799
Cognitive	Female	206	3.2425	.67058	.03876
	Male	47	3.1495	.72605	.08147
Affective	Female	206	3.1324	.67058	.04672
	Male	47	3.0017	.72605	.10591

Table 4.6 shows the results of Mann-Whitney test. As it could be seen in the table, there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male and female participants in the frequency of use of writing strategies.

#### 4.1.3 Results for the Third Research Question

The third research questions addressed the existence of any difference between levels of proficiency (high, intermediate, and low) and writing strategy use. According to the results shown in table 4.7, the third hypothesis is rejected since it was found that there is difference between low (group 3) and high level (group 1) in using writing strategies. Participants with high-level proficiency used more

metacognitive ( $p=.014$ ) and social ( $p=.026$ ) and affective ( $p=.042$ ) strategies compared to their low-level proficiency counterparts. ANOVA was run for affective, cognitive and general strategies. It was found that there was a difference between affective strategy and proficiency level in comparison group one to group 3. However, as table 4.7 shows, there is no significant difference between cognitive strategy ( $p= .2$ ), and proficiency level. Next, Kruskal Willis test was run for nonparametric test. The results of the test illustrated that high level proficiency learners used more affective, social and metacognitive strategies than group three. Table 4.7 shows that there is statistically significant different between writing strategies and proficiency level in frequency of writing strategies.

**Table 4.7**

**The ANOVA test on difference between low (group 3) and high level (group 1) in using of writing strategies**

	memory	cognitive	Compensation	metacognitive	Affective	Social	gen
Chi-square	3.232	3.208	.894	8.486	6.341	7.264	8.796
Df	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Asymp. Sig	.199	.201	.639	.014	.042	.026	.012

To run one-way ANOVA, the dependent variable is required to have three levels. Hence, the dependent variable of the present research, namely proficiency level, was divided into three levels: "high", "medium" and "low" according to the subject's scores in TOEFL test. The participants who scored higher than 2/5, were considered as high, those whose scores fell between 1 to 2/4 were regarded as medium and those who got lower than one, were assumed to be low level.

**Table 4.8**

**The result of ANOVA test on difference of using strategies in groups**

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gen	Between Groups	1.822	2	.911	4.286	.015
	Within Groups	53.146	250	.213		
	Total	54.968	252			
affective	Between Groups	2.921	2	1.460	3.198	.043
	Within Groups	114.167	250	.457		
	Total	117.087	252			
cognitive	Between Groups	.958	2	.479	1.552	.214
	Within Groups	77.170	250	.309		
	Total	78.128	252			

## 4.2 Interview Results

In the qualitative phase of the study, data were analyzed through content analysis of the open-ended interviews. The data were transcribed and were taking detailed notes. 30 participants were randomly selected to be interviewed. They were asked 10 different questions. The results are as follow:

With regard to the first question": Do you believe that the content or the language of writing is more important?, most of the interviewees (20 out of 30) thought that what to write is more important than how to write. However, few participants pointed that it depends on the writer's aim. Responding to the second interview question, "How do you begin the writing process?" 19 out of 30 participant writers asserted that they first think about the topic, and then they start to write. Few students pointed that they write everything comes to their mind, outline and or consult with a friend. With respect to the third interview question, "Do you revise your composition? How?", some of the participants (10 out of 30) pointed out that they just revise by substituting words, vocabulary and grammar. Few of them claimed that they revise while writing and then check the punctuation, coherence of the written text.

The forth question" What kinds of problem do you have when you try to write in English? 20 participants mentioned that they have the most difficulty in using *organization* in their writing. That is, they did not know how to organize ideas. Also, they had difficulty in vocabulary choice, and the observation of cohesion and coherence. Responding to the fifth questions" How do you organize your ideas in your composition? Most of the participants answered they never used this strategy and claimed that they even do not know what it means. The interview results for the sixth question "How do you plan your writing/ composition?" illustrated that 7 out of 30 interviewees did not know what planning is. Few of them declared that they considered readers' needs. For the seventh interview question, "What strategies do you use in order to improve your writing skill?", it was found that most of participants said that they did not know writing strategies. Few of students said that they memorize idioms and collocation and use diary writing

With regard to the eighth question" What are the characteristic of good and perfect writing?" some interviewees (10 out of 30) pointed that simple and short writing are one of the characteristics of perfect writing. However, few of them [Give the percentage.] pointed that organization, readers' level and textual attractions are determinants of perfect writing. Answering to the ninth interview question, "What do you do when you see that writing process is not going well?", some participants (10) reported that they put it aside for a while , then they start to write after hours. Few of them pointed that they never continue. For the last question," When you want to say something and do not find language, what do you do?", it was found that 18 participants declared that they explained the word and used Gestures. Few of them [Give the percentage.] reported that they search on the internet or change the syntax. [What is strange with respect to your interview findings is that all the percentages are round (10, 20) and this does not seem probable. Perhaps you have done data fabrication. What is your explanation?]

Qualitative phase of the study yielded several important results that can contribute to our understanding of the employment of writing strategies. The content analysis of interviews revealed that most students pay less attention to metacognitive strategies while writing. They do not know how to plan writing. Furthermore, they often do not make a decision about content, organization of composition before starting to write. Moreover, memory strategies appear to be ignored by student writers. Last, but not least, a number of participants pointed that they continue writing when writing

process is not going well or write dairy writing. The qualitative results demonstrated that the participants employed a wide range of writing strategies namely social, cognitive and compensation. However, each student has a preference of writing strategies and uses them differently. Overall, as it was seen in the semi-structured interview, an interesting finding was that participants preferred the strategy of social, cognitive and compensation. However, they paid less attention to metacognitive, memory and affective strategies

## 5. Conclusion

This study aimed to map out the writing strategies employed by Iranian EFL learners and to examine the relationship between strategy use and language proficiency. The study yielded several important results that can contribute to our understanding of writers' development and use of writing strategies. In terms of implications for teaching, teachers may need to think about the problems that students encountered and then try to figure out ways to help them. The lack of clear global-level planning processing activities among low students denotes a call for instruction to raise novice writers' awareness in writing strategies. The teachers may need to help students how to make their position statement clearly and organize their thoughts more coherently in the teaching of writing activities. In addition, they may also need to think about how to encourage the students to be more productive and to rethink and revise their own texts regularly, which are perhaps also some of the important methods towards the development of metacognitive awareness.

From the theoretical point of view, this study presented one expressive technique of foreign language that highlights the role of attention and consciousness in language learning. From a pedagogical viewpoint, it is plausible to recommend to language teachers to consider different strategies and teach them explicitly. In classroom situation, teachers can lower the learners' stress and anxiety when they feel that the writing process is not going well. This can help them improve their risk taking more and students will be encouraged to participate in class activities. The learners can use the listed strategies to improve their writing. The teacher should help learners to become more familiar with metacognitive strategies and consider it as real.

The study might be useful for teachers in that it can make them aware of some fundamental factors which might be neglected while teaching writing. The findings of the study allude to the fact that teachers should place special emphasis on memory strategies while teaching writing to students. Moreover, teachers may need to think about the problems their students are faced with while trying to write in English and then try to figure out proper ways to help them. Another contribution of this study is that the use of strategies enables a close examination of the processes occurring during writing. In fact, it provides deeper insights into strategy use. The results of this study could confirm the efficacy of this approach in comparison to tradition methods. As it is mentioned before, the new approach is recursive, nonlinear. The results also show that teaching writing is not a final product; it is rather process-oriented. Moreover, strategies can be incorporated into the curriculum and the students can be explicitly taught how to make use of the strategies for meeting their individual language needs. Furthermore, EFL teachers can gain helpful insights from the findings of this study to pay attention to writing strategies, particularly for lower levels of proficiency. It is also hoped that with the help of the empirical evidence, process writing will soon become part of the school syllabus design so that students' interest and success in writing will be enhanced more speedily and effectively than at present.

Further research is needed to explore and examine student writers' writing motivation and attitudes towards writing. Moreover, the current study was conducted with Iranian EFL students.

The culture and contextual characteristics of the sample can restrict the generalizability of the findings. It is highly recommended that future research investigates the issues with different samples from different cultures and in various contexts to consolidate knowledge and awareness of writing strategies. This study could be replicated with different population and in different context.

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