

# DOES THE USE OF WRITING STRATEGIES CORRELATE TO STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL? A STUDY ON NON-ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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**Abstract :** This study aimed to reveal whether there was a relationship between the use of writing strategies and the skills of non-English students and to find out how non-English students use writing strategies in writing. The design of this study used an explanatory sequential mixed method. This study was attended by 30 non-English majoring in Indonesian language and literature education program at 6<sup>th</sup> semester students in a private university in Malang, Indonesia. The data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire was adapted from Mu (2005) which contains 20 statements, this uses a five-point Likert scale model that was sent online using Google Forms. The interview sessions used semi-structured model were 5 questions and conducted with 10 students, 5 students who got the highest score and 5 students who got the lowest score. The collected data from the questionnaires were analyzed using Spearman correlation and descriptive statistical analysis with SPSS and reported in tabular form. The collected data from the interview were analyzed using content analysis and reported descriptively. The findings from statistical data show that writing strategies has a significant correlation with writing skills. From the results of the interviews it was concluded that students who got higher scores in writing class used all stages in writing and vice versa, for students who got low scores did not use the writing stage as a whole. Of the five strategies analyzed, it was revealed that the strategy most used by non-English students was the metacognitive strategy for writing. From the results of the interviews, those who scored high adhered to all writing methods, planned subjects for writing, and pushed themselves to successfully convey concepts through writing. Students who score low rarely use the entire writing process, limiting their ability to fully express themselves. It is hoped that this research can contribute to L2 students or teachers by providing insights about teaching or using good writing strategies. Future researchers are advised to research in a longer term with the same participation and in different and wider places to better contextualize the use of writing strategies and especially learning tasks by considering the different features of writing assignments.

**Key words:** *Writing strategy, writing skill, non-English students.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a great interest in research on writing instruction and writing skills of English as a Foreign Language students. Much research on this area has been conducted . For example, using multiple regression analysis, Teng and Zhang (2016), it was discovered that seven tactics, including word processing, planning, monitoring, assessment, feedback processing, emotion management, and motivation, enhanced the writing skills of EFL students. In another work, Teng, Qin, and Wang (2021) examined metacognitive strategies in academic writing. Findings debugging methodologies were found to have predictive impacts on declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge, planning, monitoring, evaluation, information management, and EFL academic writing. Despite the fact that L2 learners have possessed L1 writing abilities from childhood, they discover new writing processes in L2. Writing instruction helps students have a better knowledge and awareness of the new language they are learning. The writing process provides opportunities for students to enhance their writing skills via methodical self-editing (Mars, 2022).

Teaching writing entails more than just introducing students to grammar, spelling, and letter construction. While many Chinese students face obstacles and obstacles when writing in English ( Sun, 2014; Zhang, 2015). Writing remains a challenging aspect of EFL teaching and learning in Chinese due to time constraints, low motivation, and poor English proficiency (Reynolds & Teng, 2021). Many private institutions in Bangladesh provide a range of English programs to teach writing as a talent, with the goal of polishing students' language abilities for academic, professional, or personal purposes (Afrin, 2016). In Africa, English students at the University of Constantine, Algeria employed a constructive planning strategy when writing, which revealed that outlining techniques, particularly cognitive and metacognitive ones, have an impact on both the logical organization of ideas in writing and the overall quality of the writing (Boudaoud, 2013) .

Writing skills include all the knowledge and abilities related to expressing ideas through the written word. Hyland (2019) states L2 writing generally refers to learning to write context, how we can understand and teach writing as an

additional language. The difficulty level of writing skills is significantly higher when a foreign language is involved. Differences in language structure, modes of expression, writing styles, and a variety of other cultural influences all have a significant impact on the writing of foreign language learners (Ahmed, 2016). Furthermore, to produce outstanding writing, authors must deal with a variety of writing components such as grammatical structures, vocabulary, and punctuation (Aminatun, 2018).

In addition, previous research was mostly conducted on high school students (Mistar, Zuhairi & Parlindungan, 2014; Aryanika, 2016; Fransisca & Subekti 2022; and English department students (Kao & Reynolds, 2017; Yulianti, 2018; Bailey, 2019; Sun & Wang, 2020), while on non-English department students receive little attention (Zhou, 2015). Furthermore, many previous studies have used experiments (Indrilla & Ciptaningrum, 2018; Zhou, 2015), ex post facto (Mistar, Zuhairi & Parlindungan, 2014), classroom action research (Lestari, 2017; Ahn, 2012), other descriptive quantitative methods. This method requires a long time for data collection. This takes quite a long time and requires adequate learning equipment and facilities (Syakuro, 2015). Therefore, this study uses questionnaires and interviews to collect data. By using questionnaires and interviews, research is more flexible in data collection. Specifically, this study investigates the use of writing strategies by non-English students and their relationship to their writing skills.

The role of English is also very much needed as a provision in giving us profitable opportunities in the world of work and as an introductory medium in seeking knowledge globally (Filzah, 2022). Writing helps make a good professional impression on others at work. Many employers get their first impression of potential employees through the writing skills they display on resumes, cover letters, and email communications. Colleagues use professional writing skills to share accurate information, delegate tasks, and collaborate on projects (Colmar, 2022). Writing gives access to some of the best literature in the world, enjoy various works of the world's most famous authors with interpretations, and will also sharpen your understanding of the language (Aisyah, 2021).

To fill in the gaps, this study was conducted to uncover whether there is a relationship between the use of writing strategies and writing skills of non-English students. The second is to find out how non-English students use writing strategies in writing. This study involving quantitative and qualitative methods certainly produces a comprehensive picture of the use of writing strategies in the writing skills of non-English students and makes a significant contribution to the development of the theory and practice of writing strategies in writing.

## **METHOD**

The design of this study uses an explanatory sequential mixed method. It is a mixed methods design that caters to those with a strong quantitative background or who are new to qualitative techniques. It is a two-part study in which the researcher gathers quantitative data in the first phase, evaluates the results, and then plans (or builds on) the second, qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014). This design is used to obtain better and more accurate research results than using only one approach (Creswell & Clark, 2007).

In this data collection process, 30 students in 6<sup>th</sup> semester filled out the questionnaire which took 3 weeks. After that, the researcher asked the writing score to the lecturer in charge of the course to find out the value of his writing skill. After knowing this, the researcher grouped 5 students who got the highest score and 5 students who got the lowest score in that class. After that, the researcher conducted interviews with the 10 students through face to face and through WA. Interview duration is 5 to 10 minutes. The interview takes 1 week with a different time.

The collected data from the questionnaires were analyzed using correlation and descriptive statistical analysis with SPSS. The results of statistical data analysis are reported in tabular form. Interview data were analyzed using content analysis following the steps proposed by Renz et al. (2018). The steps in conducting content analysis include: (a) transcribing interview results to prepare data, (b) reading transcripts, (c) recording transcripts that include various information, (d) defining the unit analysis process using themes that represent the expression of ideas or relevant issues, (e) development of coding schemes to

organize data comprehensively, (f) coding of all texts, (g) summarizing the encoded data, and (h) describing and interpreting findings. The results of the interview data are reported descriptively.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Question 1. Is there any significant correlation between the writing strategies used by non-English department students with their writing skills?*

In the basis of decisions in the bivariate Pearson correlation analysis, there are three ways that we can use as a guideline or basis for decision making in the bivariate person correlation analysis (see table 2). First by looking at the significance value of Sig. (2-tailed). The second is to compare the calculated r values (pearson correlations) with the r table values. Third, by looking at the asterisk (\*) contained in the output of the SPSS program. One asterisk (\*) indicates a correlation at 1% or 0.01 significance, while two asterisks (\*\*) indicate a correlation at 5% or 0.05 significance.

Table 2. Basis of decision in bivariate pearson correlation analysis.

1. Based on the significance value of Sig. (2-tailed) :
- If the value of Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, then there is a correlation between the linked variables.
- If the value of Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05, then there is no correlation.
2. Based on the calculated r value (Pearson Correlations):
- If the value of r count > r table, then there is a correlation between variables
- If the value of r count < r table, then there is no correlation between variables.
3. Based on the asterisk (*) provided by SPSS:
- If there is an asterisk (*) or (**) on the Pearson correlation value, then there is a correlation between the variables being analyzed
- If there is no asterisk on the Pearson correlation value, then there is no correlation between the variables analyzed.

(Source: Spearman, 1904)

In determining the level of relationship between variables, we can be guided by the value of the correlation coefficient which is the result of the SPSS output, provided that (see table 3).

Table 3. Criteria for the level of correlation strength

1. Pearson Correlation value 0.00 – 0.20 = no correlation
2. Pearson Correlation value 0.21 – 0.40 = weak correlation
3. Pearson Correlation value 0.41 – 0.60 = moderate correlation
4. Pearson Correlation value 0.61 – 0.80 = strong correlation
5. Pearson Correlation value 0.81 – 1.00 = perfect correlation

(Source: Spearman, 1904)

The results of the comparison in order to determine the importance of the difference between writing strategies and writing skills are presented in Table 4. As seen in the table shows that the personal correlation in writing strategy to writing skills is .025 with a significance of .409. And conversely, the Pearson correlation in writing skills to writing strategy is .409 with a significance of .025. It can be concluded from the statistical results, it can be concluded that the writing strategy has a significant moderate correlation with writing skills.

Table 4. The correlation between writing strategies and writing skills (N=30)

Correlations			
		writing_strategies	writing_skills
writing_strategies	Pearson Correlation	1	.409 <sup>*</sup>
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.025
	N	30	30
writing_skills	Pearson Correlation	.409 <sup>*</sup>	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025	
	N	30	30

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the results of my statistical data, supported by interview data (see Appendix 5 for transcript interviews). Interviews were conducted with five students who got the highest score and five students who got the lowest score. My first interviews were conducted with students who scored high in their writing class with the question; Have you gone through the stages of planning, compiling, revising and editing in writing? Student A reported that:

*I go through all stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing my writing to make it easier and improve my writing skills. In the planning stage I will create a basic concept before writing. After that I make a*

*framework or outline. Next, I revised my writing. The last stage, I will edit my writing to make it worth reading (SA, February 25, 2023)*

Similar to that, Student B also commented on something similar. That is illustrated in his comment :

*I go through all stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing my writing. At the planning stage I made the basic concept. After that I make a framework or outline. I revise my writing, add or delete and rearrange the ideas in my writing last stage, I will edit my writing to make it readable (SB, February 25, 2023).*

The second interview I conducted with the students who got the lowest scores in their writing class, Student Z reported that:

*I sometimes don't all go through the stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing my writing. At the planning stage I will create a basic concept. After that I don't draft, I usually write right from my planning stage. Next, I will revise my writing. The final stage is editing. I will edit or correct the spelling of my writing (SZ, February 26, 2023).*

The same thing with Student Z, Student AA also commented on that:

*I sometimes don't all go through the stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing my writing. At the planning stage I will create a basic concept. After that I don't draft, I usually write right from my planning stage. Next, I don't revise my writing and go straight to the final stage, which is editing my writing (SAA, February 26, 2023).*

Therefore, from the results of the interviews it was concluded that students who got higher scores in writing class used all stages in writing and vice versa, for students who got low scores did not use the writing stage as a whole.

***Question 2 : How did the non-English department students use writing strategies in writing?***

From the results of the descriptive statistical analysis, it was found that the average strategy used by 30 non-English education students (see table 5).

Table 5. The categorizations of writing strategies

No.	Writing Strategies	Mean (M)	Rank
1.	Metacognitive strategies	4.54	1
2.	Social/affective strategies	4.33	2
3.	Communicative strategies	3.93	3
4.	Cognitive strategies	3.65	4
5.	Rhetorical strategies	3.04	5

The strategy that ranks first is the metacognitive strategy which produces a Mean of 4.54. These items deal with organizing ideas before writing, revising the writing to make sure it includes everything you want to cover in the writing, checking the writing to make sure it is grammatically correct, and going through the planning, drafting, revising, and editing stages. This strategy is used by the writer to consciously direct the writing process.

The second strategy is a social/affective strategy which produces a Mean of 4.33. These questions are related to resting when tired of writing, motivating yourself to write, using the internet to find information, and using a dictionary to help with the writing process. This strategy is used by writers to interact with other people to clarify some issues and adjust their emotions, motivations, and attitudes in writing.

The third strategy is a communicative strategy which produces a Mean of 3.93. These items relate to paraphrasing to avoid writing problems, to express ideas better, to remove difficult words from written text, and to avoid difficult words for writing. This strategy is used by writers to express their ideas more effectively.

The fourth strategy is a the cognitive strategy which produces a Mean of 3.65. This item deals with changing language when writing, inferring ideas from reading for writing, changing plans or outlines when writing, and outlining content in writing. This strategy is used by writers to complete the actual writing effort.



The last strategy is a rhetorical strategy that produces a Mean of 3.04. This item deals with translating ideas into English, such as writing in English, using the first language (L1) to plan paragraphs, and using the first language (L1) to plan sentences. This strategy is used by writers to organize their thoughts and present them in conventions that are acceptable to native speakers of the language.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the strategy that is mostly used by non-English language students in writing is the metacognitive strategy. Planning, monitoring, and assessment are often components of the metacognitive writing process, which assist students in creating effective plans to improve their writing skills (Zhang & Qin, 2018).

From the results of statistical data analysis, researchers also conducted interviews with five students with the highest scores and five students with the lowest scores. It aims to find and collect more accurate information. The researcher interviewed the five students who received the highest grades and the five students who received the lowest marks in their writing class.

The first category relates to the writing process. The writing process consists of stages from pre-writing to publication activities. When one stage has been carried out and the next stage will be carried out, students can return to the previous stage. The question is, did you arrange those ideas before writing? The student who got the highest score, Student A reported that:

*Before writing sentences, organizing ideas is very necessary. I think of ideas before sentences because it makes it easier to start writing (SA, February 25, 2023).*

Student C also reported the same that:

*Before writing, I will think about these ideas. I arrange these ideas to make it easier to express the ideas we want when writing (SC, February 25, 2023).*

The students who got low scores, Student Z reported that:

*Sometimes I don't organize the ideas that I will write down because usually I immediately write down what's on my mind without organizing the ideas (SZ, February 26, 2023).*

The same thing was also reported by Student AB that:

*Usually I draft my ideas and usually I don't, because usually immediately write down what is in the mind without compiling these ideas (SAB, February 26, 2023).*

The second category which deals with interactions with others to clarify some issues and emotional adjustment. Interact with people to explain difficulties and change emotions, motives, and attitudes in writing. The question; Do you motivate yourself when you write? The students who got the highest score, Student A reported that:

*I always motivate myself when I want to write. Writing can be a place to express ideas, thoughts. In addition, writing is also useful for training ways of thinking, enriching insights and increasing imagination and creativity. I usually motivate myself by rewarding myself when I reach a target (SA, February 25, 2023).*

The same thing was also reported by Student D that:

*I have to always motivate myself so I'm not lazy and always looking for ideas and adding to my vocabulary so I don't get bored. If i get bored, i will look for new nuances to write. I motivate myself by rewarding myself when my goals are achieved (SD, February 25, 2023).*

The students who got low scores, Student AB reported that:

*I motivate myself not to be lazy and write more actively, and look for new situations to write when I start to feel bored (SAB, February 26, 2023).*

Student AC also reported the same that:

*I motivate myself and look for new situations so I don't get bored and I am fresher in looking for the latest ideas (SAC, February 26, 2023).*

The third category deals with expressing their ideas more effectively. It is a plan, method, or way of sharing information adopted to achieve certain social, political, psychological, or linguistic goals. The question; Do you avoid difficult words when you write? The students who got the highest score, Student A reported that:

*I avoid using difficult words if they can be replaced with others, but if the word is important to be included in the sentence, then the use of difficult words is necessary (SA, February 25, 2023).*

The same thing with Student A, Student C also commented on that:

*I avoid difficult words in my writing so that everyone can understand, and so that it is easier to learn and understand (SC, February 25, 2023).*

The students who got low scores, Student AB reported that:

*I avoid difficult words in my writing to make it easier to write, because I'm afraid the meaning will be different (SAB, February 26, 2023).*

The same thing was also reported by Student AC that:

*I avoid difficult words to make them easier to understand and avoid words with different meanings (SAC, February 26, 2023).*

The fourth category has to do with completing the actual writing effort. It help students process, transform, and create information to help writers use language effectively in the process of acquiring knowledge. The question; Did you describe the content in your writing? The students who scored the highest, Student A reported that:

*I explain the contents of my writing so that it is conveyed better and clearer so that readers can understand the contents of the writing (SA, February 25, 2023).*

Student D also reported the same that:

*I describe the contents in my writing so that what is planned in the idea can be conveyed properly through the description of the contents (SD, February 25, 2023).*

The students who got low scores, Student Z reported that:

*Sometimes I don't describe the contents of my writing because it doesn't need to be explained clearly or in general, and usually I also only explain what is needed (SZ, February 26, 2023).*

Student AD also reported that:

*Sometimes I describe the contents of my writing in general and just what is needed (SAD, February 26, 2023).*

The last category relates to the strategies used by writers to organize their thoughts and present them in a way that is acceptable to native speakers of the language. The question; Do you use the first language to plan a sentence? The students who scored the highest, Student D reported that:

*I use my first language in planning a sentence, because it will be easier to express what I will write (SD, February 25, 2023).*

The same thing was also reported by Student E that:

*I use the first language in writing because it makes it easier to express what I'm going to write, even if it's sometimes misplaced (SE, February 25, 2023).*

The students who got low scores, Student AA reported that:

*I use the first language in writing to make it easier and understand my writing (SAA, February 26, 2023).*

Student AB also reported the same that:

*I use the first language in writing because it can make our intentions and goals easier when writing (SAB, February 26, 2023).*

From the results of the interview data, it can be stated that non-English students with high scores use metacognitive strategies to be able to write in English and improve their writing skills. They do all the writing processes that are good and right, outline the contents in writing, and motivate themselves, so that they can express ideas through writing effectively. For students who get low scores, rarely use all the writing processes, so they cannot express their ideas to the fullest.

The finding from the first research question is that the writing strategy has a significant correlation with writing skills. These findings relate to findings from other studies. For example, Setiyadi, Sukirlan, and Mahpul (2016) revealed that writing strategies are significantly correlated with writing skills. Some language learning strategies will be more effective for improving certain skills while others will be better for others. Kato (2018) also reported more frequent and more efficient use of writing strategies among high-ability learners compared to their less proficient counterparts. Students in the high proficiency group were able to grasp the material without employing these tactics, but students in the low proficiency group were unable to utilize them because they lacked desire to try to finish the task.

Besides that, Sun and Wang (2020) also revealed a statistically significant correlation between writing ability and the use of writing strategies. Students who feel confident tend to perform better on writing tests. English composition is evaluated more on learners' linguistic competencies such as lexical, syntactical, and grammatical skills rather than on idea generation and content.

The findings from the second research question reveal that the writing strategies that are often used by non-English students are metacognitive strategies related to the writing process, namely planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Those who get high marks follow all the proper writing procedures, plan topics in writing, and motivate themselves to successfully convey thoughts through writing. Students who receive low grades rarely use all of the writing process, limiting

their ability to fully communicate their views. Mistar, Zuhairi, and Parlindungan (2014) revealed that students most often use metacognitive affective strategies in learning writing skills. These strategies are part of the indirect strategy (Oxford, 1990) and have a helpful aspect, i.e. they promote language acquisition indirectly by concentrating, planning, evaluating, pursuing chances, anxiety management, boosting cooperation and sensitivity, and using other instructional methods. (Oxford, 1990).

Similarly, Yulianti (2018) also revealed that in general students in writing classrooms employ metacognitive skills as their primary learning strategies. Students use these strategies while attempting to uncover and manage areas of English language acquisition. Furthermore, students can set the aims and objectives of the language learning plan for language assignments. They can identify practice opportunities and assess their progress by self-evaluating and self-monitoring.

Different from Kao and Reynolds (2017) revealed that the most frequently used writing strategy is a supportive/compensatory strategy, but it is the cognitive/preparation strategy that contributes more to students' writing abilities. Compensation strategies appear to be extremely widespread and widely adopted among university students. Although compensatory strategies can facilitate the development of students' second language writing, their beneficial effects may be very limited. As a result, the outcomes of this study suggest that additional strategies should be emphasized in EFL writing lessons. It is recommended that EFL writing instructors utilize every available minute in their writing class to introduce, demonstrate, and provide opportunities for students to apply cognitive/preparation strategies.

Additionally, Bailey (2019) also revealed that the strategy that is often used is a cognitive strategy. Cognitive strategies are brief acts that occur regularly during the writing process, making them more accessible than planning procedures, which require time-consuming idea contemplation. Thus, many planning tactics require less time than certain forms of corrective feedback because they do not necessitate discussing or modifying the content. In other words, using corrective feedback procedures might take days or even weeks (e.g., initial draft, review, get

corrective feedback, apply modifications), and it frequently occurs only while taking an L2 writing course.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study investigates first whether there is a significant correlation between the writing strategies used by non-English students and their writing skills. Second, how the non-English department students use writing strategies in writing. The results show that the writing strategy has a significant correlation with writing skills. From the results of the interviews it was concluded that students who got higher scores in writing class used all stages in writing and vice versa, for students who got low scores did not use the writing stage as a whole. Of the five strategies analyzed, it was revealed that the strategy mostly used by non-English students was a metacognitive strategy. From the results of the interviews, those who scored high adhered to all writing methods, planned subjects for writing, and pushed themselves to successfully convey concepts through writing. Students who score low rarely use the entire writing process, limiting their ability to fully express themselves.

The writing strategy used by students determines students' writing skills. Students need to be taught how to plan to develop ideas and plans before starting to write. Students should be taught effective ways for improving the quality of their writing. Teaching and incorporating strategic learning between teachers and students is very important to raise awareness of strategic behavior and achieve more promising L2 achievements. Therefore, teachers must encourage students to apply appropriate writing strategies so that students can develop writing skills in the context of English as a foreign language. It is hoped that this research can contribute to L2 students or teachers by providing insights about teaching or using good writing strategies. Future researchers are advised to research in a longer term with the same participation and in different and wider places to better contextualize the use of writing strategies and especially learning tasks by considering the different features of writing assignments.

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