Using Language Learning Strategies to Enhance Writing Skills: An Empirical Study of Student-Centered Learning Approaches In Saudi Context

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Abstract

Arabic is the mother tongue of Saudi students. The current research project aims to investigate the extent to which the learning strategies utilized by PSAU students effectively enhance their writing skills and modify their attitudes toward writing. In the present study, the methodology used has been qualitative and quantitative, which is a mixed approach. The reason behind using a mixed approach is that this study aimed to collect qualitative and quantitative data concerning the learners' writing strategies during writing classes. The research uses observation, questionnaires, and interviews to collect the data. For the study, around 250 students will be selected from the writing courses of various PSAU colleges. The effectiveness of the students' strategies used in learning employed by the students of PSAU for promoting writing skills and changing passive attitudes towards writing is expected to reveal the role and usefulness of improving writing skills as a result of using students' strategies.

Keywords: Action Research; Students' Participation; Saudi Arabia; Public Speaking

INTRODUCTION

In the classroom, it has been witnessed that students find learning to write in English a problematic task (Patak et al., 2021). How to construct a sentence, move from one sentence to the next, follow the steps in the process of writing, and combine sentences to produce a good composition, making their notes, and doing the writing assignments by themselves are some of the areas where the learners face difficulties (Abdelrady et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022). To bring some instances of the problem, it has been witnessed that what they understand and write is different because they cannot express what they know in written forms. If the problem is unresolved, the students will face more severe problems in their future careers.

The following are the anticipated ramifications of the study's conclusions for educators, learners, and pertinent organizations: first, concerning classroom teachers, writing strategies help them to teach the students strategic writing. Teachers will benefit if they sufficiently practice strategy-based instruction because it helps them guide the learning tasks, help the learners learn independently, and assess their progress in learning to write (Yunus et al., 2022) (Yulianti, 2018). Secondly, language education should assist learners in mastering the language utilizing it, and understanding other subjects relevant to their study area. Students must cultivate and enhance their writing skills in the classroom. Losing interest in learning to write mostly emanates from the difficulty of the skill to master; therefore, as learning requires strategy in general, learning to write needs

strategies, too (Ajmal & Kumar, 2020; Aslam et al., 2022). As a result, this study tried to disclose the writing strategies so that the learners can use them when they learn to write in English. Thirdly, the country's language curriculum planners, syllabus writers, and material producers are beneficiary groups. The study's results may motivate them to incorporate these writing techniques into curricula and educational materials such as textbooks (Kumar et al., 2021). The overall and specific objectives of the present inquiry are as follows. The primary aim of this research is to ascertain whether or not students employ any strategies in their pursuit of writing proficiency. The study's specific objectives are to examine the approaches that students use in writing courses to acquire writing skills. Identify whether the students are employing the appropriate writing strategies in learning to write. Disclose the standardized writing strategies so that the students can be aware of them and use them in learning to write.

Writing is an essential skill in teaching English as a foreign language. Developing writing skills involves learning writing standards, norms, and capabilities. Students should be acquainted with these tactics and know how to regulate and oversee them. Developing writing skills in a second language is a unique and personalized process. Utilizing learning strategies is essential for acquiring a new language. Strategies assist language learners in recalling and storing knowledge and organize the learning environment to enhance learning. (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992). Learning strategies are "specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990: p. 8). Different academics have provided their definitions of strategies. According to Rubin (1987) and Yu et al. (2022), Learning strategies let students actively engage in and impact the learning process to develop their language system. In addition, Cohen & Scott (1996) argue that strategies contribute to learning either consciously or unconsciously. Even if the learner may not be aware of the strategies s/he is using, the strategies do support the learning process. In addition, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) describe that learning strategies are distinctive methods used to enhance comprehension by absorbing knowledge. Strategies refer to specific measures a language learner learns to adjust their learning approach in various contexts to facilitate language acquisition (Oxford 1,990; Kumar, 2018).

Many scholars, such as Lessard: Clouston (1997), Hismanoglu (2000), and Paulmony et al. (2022) in the field have pointed out that the focus has shifted from teachers and teaching methods to learners, leading to research on language acquisition practices. One reason for this significant change is that learners' accountability for their learning has been recognized more recently. Griffiths (2004: p. 2) says, "Even with the best teachers and methods, students are the only ones who can do the learning." This indicates that learners' role is vital in the learning process.

Strategies for Language Learning both aid and expedite the learning process. There is a correlation between students' linguistic proficiency, methods utilization (Oxford, 2001: p.170), and self-confidence (Chamot, 1994; Vinu et al., 2022). Research demonstrates that the approaches learners use substantially influence their performance in language acquisition. Language learning systems serve multiple tasks and are adaptable to diverse concepts, methods, and strategies for language instruction. The communicative language teaching approach includes social and compensatory strategies. In contrast, the grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods may involve memory and cognitive strategies. The interlanguage theory supports using metacognitive and cognitive strategies, while

suggestopedia includes affective strategies (Griffiths & Parr, 2001). It is believed that instructing LLSs results in learner empowerment. When taught tactics, students feel "self-involvement," enabling them to study independently (Morley, 1993; Khan et al., 2020). We empower students to acquire the ability to perform tasks often done by teachers alone by fostering the growth of their language and learning abilities in tandem (Wenden, 1985). Testing learners' usage of strategies before starting strategy education serves various purposes. Identifying learning strategies can be used as a basis for learner training and is a method to implement the learner-centered approach in language acquisition (Kouraogo, 1993: p.166).

METHOD
The methodology used in the present study will be qualitative and quantitative, a mixed approach. The reason behind using a mixed approach is that this study aimed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data concerning the learners' writing strategies used during writing classes. Research tools such as classroom observation, questionnaires, and interviews were used to collect the relevant data for the study. All those tools were designed to bring qualitative and quantitative data for the study. To this end, questionnaires, classroom observation, and interviews will be designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, the data obtained in these ways will be presented and analyzed both qualitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data will be presented and analyzed using tables, percentages, frequency, and mean values. In contrast, the qualitative data will be presented and analyzed using descriptive analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Identifying the language acquisition strategies used by kids can be beneficial for writing. Survey questions examined the most and least favoured writing strategies selected by students, using both open-ended and closed-ended formats.

Table 1. The Language Acquisition Strategies Used

Statements	Most Frequently Used		Frequently Used		Never Used		Weighted Average	SD
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %		
I prefer writing class notes seriously.	44	17.7%	136	54.8%	68	27.4%	2.10	0.67
I prefer writing assignments and answers in my own English.	49	19.8%	101	40.7%	98	39.5%	2.20	0.75
I write letters to other people in my own English.	63	25.4%	93	37.5%	92	37.1%	2.12	0.78
I look up the words in a dictionary or glossary.	69	27.8%	103	41.5%	76	30.6%	2.03	0.77
I proofread my writing to make sure it is correct.	59	23.8%	117	47.2%	72	29.0%	2.05	0.73
I solicit an editor for my written work.	71	28.6%	96	38.7%	81	32.7%	2.04	0.78
I revise my writing to enhance its quality.	65	26.2%	116	46.8%	67	27.0%	2.01	0.73

I utilise the computer's spell checker.	101	40.7%	93	37.5%	54	21.8%	1.81	0.77
The computer's grammar checker is something I use.	66	26.6%	108	43.5%	74	29.8%	2.03	0.75
I utilise words from my language.	62	25.0%	123	49.6%	63	25.4%	2	0.71

This research paper is an empirical study of the language learning strategies to enhance writing skills in student-centered learning approaches in the Saudi context. The English Department of the College of Science and Humanities at Sulail, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia, has been selected for this study in Computer Science and Business Administration of Prince Sattam bin Abdul Aziz University. The discussion here is based on the descriptive survey method among the students. For that ten exhaustive statements are surveyed.

From statement 1, it seems clear that most students (72.5%) prefer writing class notes seriously, and 27.5% never do, which confirms that there are factors behind language learning strategies to enhance writing. The second statement is about using writing assignments and answers in my own English. Two reasons justify their choice. The first reason is tiredness; just over two-thirds of the students (60.5%) admit that when individuals write about the subject they are learning in a class, they display excellent retention and comprehension of the material. In addition, writing helps students develop their capacity for critical thinking. It increases their engagement level with the material being taught in the class. It is necessary to devise a writing assignment to include writing in the classroom successfully.

The following statement reveals my inability to write letters to others in English. The above table shows that 25.4% of the students use their own English language to write letters, 37.5% use it frequently, and 37.1% never use it. The overall Weighted Average is 2.12. Engaging in the practice of letter writing can serve as a beneficial cognitive exercise, fostering the development and enhancement of several cognitive abilities, including but not limited to concentration, retention, and interpersonal communication. To enhance one's mental well-being, it is advisable to engage in the practice of letter writing. Furthermore, composing letters serves as a valuable means to confront the various obstacles encountered in daily existence, foster introspection, and contemplate the desired trajectory of one's journey. One of the examined language learning strategies to enhance writing is the use of a dictionary or glossary during writing. According to the interpretation of statement 4, 27.8% of the students use a dictionary or glossary during writing, 41.5% use it frequently, and 30.6% never use it. One plausible hypothesis for this phenomenon is that students might derive significant advantages from employing dictionaries to expand the scope of their vocabularies and acquire familiarity with unfamiliar words. The utilization of dictionaries by students has been found to yield enhancements in various aspects of their academic skills, including reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, spelling proficiency, and the capacity to identify and apply spelling patterns accurately.

According to the results of this study (statement 5), almost 23.8 % students confirm that they read what they wrote to see if it is good, 47.2% of them do it frequently, and the rest 29% of them never do it. The process of editing and proofreading holds

significant importance as it facilitates the development of a coherent line of reasoning in one's ideas and arguments. Furthermore, it can be argued that the process of revising one's writing not only guarantees the comprehensive development of ideas, but also demands a significant investment of time. It is widely observed that longer pieces of writing tend to exhibit more robust and superior concepts compared to their shorter counterparts. Revision is the act of making substantial modifications to the content, arrangement, and/or framework of a written work. The sixth statement in the table surveys reads as "I ask someone to correct my writing." According to this survey, 71 students teachers (28.6%) use this approach most frequently and 96 students (38.7%) use frequently whereas, 81 students (32.7%) don't follow this approach. To improve one's academic performance, make it a habit to seek feedback on one's work from a friend or a mentor before completing and submitting it. This is one of the most efficient methods for accomplishing this. Please ask them to evaluate and amend what you wrote for them and express your gratitude for their assistance. People will be able to detect minute discrepancies or inaccuracies in the information they get. After you have completed your essay, it can be a very valuable and profitable endeavour to solicit feedback from others on what they thought of it. The act of thoroughly reviewing and verifying one's work not only facilitates the identification and correction of errors, but also provides valuable insights into the content and structure of an individual's essay.

The seventh statement is about rewriting the text until it is near perfection. Here also, the response is highly favorable to the self-learning approach. 26.2% (65 respondents) use this statement in the classroom most frequently. 46.8% (116 respondents) use this statement frequently. And only 27.0% (67 respondents) don't use this statement. The weighted average of all the statements mentioned in this table is encouraging as they tend to touch the optimum satisfaction level. This approach works on the principle of 'Writing is rewriting.' A revision involves the student making significant changes to the material, either by rephrasing or reorganizing it, to enhance its coherence, lucidity, and brevity. The act of rewriting can have advantages in terms of reducing the overall word count of a text. However, it should be noted that this process does not involve significant additions or expansions of the content.

Regarding the use of spell check, 194 students out of 248 use this approach in writing, which is 70.2 % of the total. Further, 66 (26.6%) students use grammar checkers most frequently, 108 (43.5%) students use grammar checkers frequently, and only 74 (29.8%) students don't use them. The prevalence of inadequate English pronunciation considerably contributes to the challenge of accurately spelling words. Developing proficient spelling skills in youngsters is crucial in enhancing their literacy capabilities by enabling them to employ vocabulary and express their ideas effectively through written means. Accurately spelling words allows children to effectively grasp the meanings of words and exhibit more precision in their writing. In the educational setting, it is customary for students to memorize spelling using the method of rote learning, wherein they rely on the repetitive recitation of word listings found in books. The task at hand involves a significant amount of exertion and diligence. The main advantage of employing a spell checker is its ability to enhance accuracy. Using a spell checker ensures a substantial decrease in the number of typographical errors found inside your manuscript. Spell checker software is designed to correct misspellings that can arise in electronic communication, word processing, or online discussion platforms. Correcting misspelled terms is a task that can be easily accomplished with the assistance of a spell check tool.

Additionally, it allows for manual searching of a document to identify words that are believed to be misspelled. Spelling and grammar analyzers are computational tools that employ an integrated dictionary and a set of criteria for proper usage to identify obvious misspellings and grammatical errors.

The last statement examined the use words from my own language. This factor, however, affect students' writing ability much. In respect to the results shown in table, only 25.4% of the students admit that they disagree with the use of own words from his/her own language in learning writing. There exist multiple rationales for employing language in a distinctive manner. Primarily, it serves to enhance interpersonal communication. Undoubtedly, it is achievable to independently acquire proficiency in a foreign language with the appropriate resources and tools. The concept of learning can be viewed as a transformative journey rather than a fixed objective.

CONCLUSION

This strategy-based approach is indispensable to second language acquisition, particularly in writing classrooms. First, it helps the students- by facilitating the conditions so that they can upgrade their writing skills and become better writers. Secondly, it helps the course instructors guide the students in the task because, at present, the role of the teacher is to show the students what to do and how to do it and help them measure the student's progress in the skill.

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