

LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Melti Oktavianda

Department of Business Administration, Polytechnic State of Pontianak
Correspondence email: meltioktavianda@polnep.ac.id

Received: 15th of November 2024, Accepted: 2nd of December 2024, Published: 28th of December 2024

Abstract

The theory of Language Learning Strategy (LLS) has been alluded to in many past works. This study examines the writing strategies employed by five high-achieving Indonesian bilingual university students in their academic essays. Writing at the university level is widely recognized as a challenging and complex process; therefore, this research seeks to identify similar and distinctive strategy use patterns among these bilingual students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews adapted from Oxford's (1990) language learning inventory and categorized into three writing stages: pre-writing, writing, and revising. The responses were transcribed and analyzed using directed content analysis to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The findings revealed shared strategies in the Cognitive, Memory, Affective, and Compensation categories. However, significant differences were observed in Metacognitive and Social strategies highlighting the influence of individual preferences and cultural factors on academic writing practices.

Keywords: Academic writing, language learning strategies, good language learners.

Abstrak

Teori Strategi Pembelajaran Bahasa (LLS) telah disinggung dalam banyak karya terdahulu. Studi ini meneliti strategi menulis yang digunakan oleh lima mahasiswa bilingual Indonesia berprestasi dalam esai akademis mereka. Menulis di tingkat universitas secara luas diakui sebagai proses yang menantang dan kompleks; oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berupaya mengidentifikasi pola penggunaan strategi yang serupa dan khas di antara mahasiswa bilingual ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur yang diadaptasi dari inventaris pembelajaran bahasa Oxford (1990) dan dikategorikan ke dalam tiga tahap penulisan: pra-penulisan, penulisan, dan revisi. Respons ditranskripsi dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis konten terarah untuk memberikan pemahaman mendalam tentang fenomena tersebut. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan strategi bersama dalam kategori Kognitif, Memori, Afektif, dan Kompensasi. Namun, perbedaan signifikan diamati dalam strategi Metakognitif dan Sosial yang menyoroti pengaruh preferensi individu dan faktor budaya pada praktik penulisan akademis.

Kata kunci: Penulisan akademis, strategi pembelajaran bahasa, pembelajar bahasa yang baik.

Copyright © 2024 Melti Oktavianda

INTRODUCTION

Language Learning Strategies (LLS) have been explored in the field of second language learning for several decades now. However, the significance of this research area remains advancing as it affects both learners' and educators' daily classroom reality. Rubin (1975) first started conducting research on language learning strategies that contribute both directly or indirectly to successful language learners. She defined strategy as "a technique or device that learners can use to acquire knowledge" (p.43). In line with this, Rigney (1978) clarifies LLS as actions or behaviours that learners deliberately carry out to improve their language acquisition, repository, recognition, remembrance, and knowledge use that they acquire when learning the target language.

A decade later, Wenden and Rubin (1987) also shared the same thoughts. They define LLS as a series of steps learners employ to understand their learning process sufficiently, starting from their learning behaviours, strategic knowledge, attitude, and motivation in learning the language. Macaro (2006, p. 328) rightly states that language learning strategies are a mental activity which students consciously utilise to achieve a goal that is "transferable to other situations or tasks". This definition can be interpreted much more broadly by considering that language learning strategies are a form of action taken consciously by students to make the language learning process much more accessible, enjoyable, and effective (Oxford, 1990).

Prominent within this canon is Oxford's (1990) seminal work of LLS, in which she classifies LLS into six primary categories: Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social, Affective, Memory and Compensation strategies. These categories may be utilised differently and have shown an unprecedented degree of effectiveness for one student and another. Nonetheless, the principal goal of these strategies has remained the same over the decades: to help language learners process and deal with new information effectively in acquiring the target language (Murat, 2000).

With such findings, it is also found that Language Learning Strategies are oftentimes closely related to the term Good Language Learners (GLL). Studies on high achieving students, also known as the good language learners (Naiman et al., 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975) are of relevance in the context of this discussion because they play an essential role in the development of L2 language learning strategies studies (Griffiths, 2013). In the pedagogical

aspect, conducting an in-depth exploration of the learning strategies carried out by GLLs will provide invaluable insights for both teachers and second language learners. Some closely related studies worth mentioning here are Takeuchi's (2003) and Shin et al.'s (2018) work on GLL's learning profiles, which suggest that the experience of high achieving second or foreign language students can provide other learners with essential instructions on how to achieve greater levels of the target language proficiency.

Regarding academic writing, several exploratory types of studies have proven that high-achieving students are particularly aware of strategies to help them write in L2 (e.g., Gordon; 2008; Manchon et al, 2007; Cumming, 2001). Research concerning the use of writing strategies by skilled student writers is mainly triggered by Rubin's (1975) findings that indicate the correlation between successful learners and the employment of specific strategies in L2 writing (Cohen, 2011). Flowers and Hayes (1981) also became one of the foremost pioneers in the empirical study of writing strategies with a recursive process with the tripartite model (i.e., planning, translating, reviewing) to replace the old conventional linear method.

A more recent study influenced by Flower and Hayes's (1981) model is Chien (2010). In his study of 36 college students in a university in northern Taiwan, he finds that high achieving students are aware of more strategies compared to low achieving students. His findings further suggest that high achieving students focus more on generating text and editing than low achievers who spend too much time thinking of ideas they will not use in the text later. Other researchers, such as Sasaki (2000) and Bai et al. (2014), state that skilled student writers apply various strategies more regularly in their writing process. In general, L2 writing strategy is defined as a conscious decision made by writers to solve the problems they face when completing a composition. It is found that the strategies used by GLLs are different from those used by unskilled student writers in terms of the appropriateness of strategies used and how they apply these strategies to different accomplice tasks assigned to them (Zamel, 1983; Mu & Carrington, 2007; Hu & Chen, 2007; Chien, 2010).

Despite the difficulties in academic writing, the students have to develop their ability because writing skill is essential for students not only for their academic success but also for their future career, thus Hyland (2011) believes that the learners are soliciting for a solution to overcome this problem. Academic writing is one of the primary ways to grade and assess

students' work in the university (Coffin et al., 2003). Compared to less successful student writers, GLLs have a clearer understanding of what learning strategies work best and what does not work for them in performing L2 writing tasks (Cohen, 2011; Chien, 2010; Zamel, 1983). Therefore, writing strategies, as parts of language learning strategies in general, serve the purpose as important aspects of enhancing and accomplishing the students' own learning. Such conclusions are perhaps best explained by the statement that "Language learning strategies are tools. They are used because there is a problem to solve, a task to accomplish, an objective to meet, or a goal to attain" (Oxford, 1990, p. 11).

Based on the definition of the writing strategy aforementioned, in the context of this study, the researcher focuses on the six writing strategies proposed by Oxford (1990), which are discussed in the following paragraphs. These writing strategies range from Cognitive, Metacognitive, Affective, Compensation, Social and Memory strategies.

Generally, cognitive strategies are essential to help language learners develop their own methods to accomplish tasks (Rosenshine & Meister, 1997). Oxford (1990) classifies four sets of cognitive strategies which the students can use to improve their writing: practising the language to reach expected proficiency; receiving the ideas and conveying messages; using logical analysis and reasoning in the new language; creating the structure for comprehension and production in the target language.

Metacognitive strategies have been investigated in several studies, such as Magogwe & Oliver (2007) and Chien (2012). The empirical data from the investigation conducted by Setiyadi et al. (2016) shows that metacognitive strategies were significantly correlated with the writing process in the EFL setting in the Indonesian context. These strategies serve the purpose as essential tools for students in paying attention and coordinating their writing process (Oxford, 1990). Despite the fact that each type of language learning strategy is considered equally important, Azatova (2021) affirms that metacognition is often cited as a significant advantage that is rarely possessed by less skilled language learners. This is particularly important as most of the time; the students have to deal with difficulties in the writing process, leading them to confusion and loss of focus. Thus, metacognitive strategies are considered one of the essential factors in determining the key to successful learning (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). With metacognitive abilities students are proven to set goals to be achieved, identify

their strengths and weaknesses in achieving these goals, adjust appropriate learning strategies, and monitor the extent to which their learning progress has been made (Bransford et al., 2000).

The term Affective Strategies refer to students' capability to control their "emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values", which affect their language learning (Oxford, 1990, p. 140). Positive emotions can make the writing process more engaging in the writing context, while negative emotions do otherwise. For example, Oxford (1990) argues that the students can reach their peak performance levels when they feel anxious about a writing task. Nevertheless, too much anxiety can hinder their writing process and language learning. The students who excel in language possess the ability to manage their feelings and attitudes in learning (Naiman et al., 1978).

Compensation strategies are described by Oxford (1990) as the strategies which enable learners to exchange their limited knowledge about the target language with another repertoire of related words or phrases in order to help them in comprehension and production. Furthermore, Oxford (1990) points out that in the context of the writing process, the students can use some strategies to overcome their limitations. These constraints vary from selecting the topic of the essay based on their interests, adjusting the message, formulating new words to express something, and using other words to describe the same things.

Finally, social strategies can be integrally related to the nature of social behaviours in which language learners communicate with each other. The students can apply these strategies by asking questions and corrections; cooperating with peers and other proficient users of the target language; and empathising with others (Oxford, 1990). Previous research on Social Strategies in the Asian context was conducted by Lan and Oxford (2003) in EFL classes in Taiwan. GLLs often ask for help from peers to pinpoint their mistakes and develop their abilities.

Built on a series of aforementioned studies, the present research aims to identify the writing strategies employed by five high-achieving Indonesian bilingual university students in their written assignments. The researcher is particularly interested in exploring the patterns of writing strategies employed by this group. Although previous studies, such as those by Bialystok (2009) and Costa et al. (2008), found that bilingual learners often outperform monolinguals in tasks requiring attention control and conflict resolution, examining these

findings in a specific EFL setting like Indonesia is essential. Notably, Bialystok et al. (2014) caution that these bilingual advantages are more pronounced in older adults and children than young adults, suggesting that the context of strategy use must be carefully considered.

This research will provide rich insights into practical writing strategies in EFL/ESL contexts. It will then lead them to be aware of the importance of autonomy in L2 writing since multiple previous researches have ascertained that autonomous second language learners are more likely to be successful in language learning (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Nambiar, 2009; Lee, 1998; Oxford, 1990; Rubin, 1975).

METHOD

Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach to gather "information not known previously" (Perry Jr., 2011, p. 88). Yin (2018) highlights that the case study approach is particularly well-suited for exploratory research, especially when the objective is to understand the how and why of complex phenomena within real-world contexts. Furthermore, Gao et al. (2021) argue that qualitative case studies are instrumental in investigating language learning strategies, particularly among bilingual learners, as they provide nuanced insights into participant behaviors and cognitive processes.

This study aims to identify the writing strategies employed by eight Good Language Learners (GLLs) from distinct learning environments and to determine whether common patterns emerge in their strategic approaches. The case study method was chosen for its ability to enable an "in-depth" exploration of this phenomenon through "the perspective of the participants involved" (Gall et al., 1996:545, cited in Perry Jr., 2011:81). This approach aligns with Wenden's (1986, cited in Lee, 2009) assertion that case studies allow participants to critically reflect on their perspectives and beliefs regarding L2 writing, making it an effective method for uncovering practical insights into writing strategies for L2 learners.

Participants

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to identify individuals who could provide deep and varied insights into the phenomenon under investigation. This approach prioritizes

maximizing learning potential over achieving a representative sample or understanding how experiences are distributed within a population (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 126). Palinkas et al. (2015) highlight the importance of purposive sampling for identifying participants whose experiences are most relevant to answering the research questions, particularly in qualitative studies.

In this study, the phenomenon under investigation was the employment of academic writing by Indonesian university students who excelled in an academic writing class. Criterion sampling ensured that the participants were credible and aligned with the research objectives. This method, as defined by Dörnyei (2007), involves selecting individuals based on “specific predetermined criteria” (p. 128). In this case, participants were required to have completed the academic writing course with an ‘A’ grade, which indicated a high level of English proficiency and strong academic writing ability.

The participant group consisted of five students aged 20–24 from a public university in Indonesia, including three females (pseudonyms: Aisha, Bella, Clara) and two males (pseudonyms: Adam, Ben). These students were part of a 16-week academic writing course. According to their lecturer, this was a demanding class in which only five students achieved an ‘A’ grade (scoring above 85) by the end of the semester. The course required students to complete comprehensive assignments, including a mid-term and a final project involving the production of a 3,000–4,000-word report.

These selection criteria ensured that the participants had undergone rigorous academic training in writing and were, therefore, well-suited to provide meaningful insights into their experiences and strategies for academic writing. Their accomplishments in this challenging course made them ideal contributors to the research.

Instruments

Interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method because they "provide retrospective information on students' recollection of strategies they have used for particular tasks" (Chamot & El-Dinary, 1999:321, cited in Manchon et al., 2007:237). This method allowed the researcher to investigate students' reflections on their use of writing strategies to address the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of data collection. This format provided the flexibility to guide participants back on track if they deviated from the questions or faced uncertainties, ensuring that the interviews stayed aligned with the research objectives (Dornyei, 2007). Additionally, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to delve into emerging themes and issues during the discussions, enriching the scope of the data (Dornyei, 2007). Open-ended questions were primarily used to encourage participants to share their feelings, attitudes, and detailed accounts of their writing strategies (Kothari, 2008). This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, as they could express their thoughts freely and authentically (Turner III, 2010).

A pilot study was conducted before the primary interviews to ensure the quality and clarity of the interviews. This process allowed the researcher to evaluate and refine the questions to avoid bias or leading phrasing (King & Horrocks, 2010). Based on the pilot study results, adjustments were made to ensure the interview questions effectively elicited meaningful and unbiased responses.

The semi-structured interview guide was developed to gather information about participants' backgrounds and their academic writing strategies. It comprised questions grouped into three categories: pre-writing, writing/composing, and revising. These categories reflect the main stages of the writing process and are aligned with established frameworks in writing strategy research.

Table 1 below presents the semi-structured interview guide used in this study, including questions designed to explore participants' writing strategies, resource usage, and methods for addressing challenges in academic writing.

Data Analysis

The researcher employed directed content analysis to analyze the data, as outlined by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). This method was chosen for its ability to systematically interpret qualitative data and identify recurring themes and patterns, mainly when guided by existing theoretical frameworks. Directed content analysis enables researchers to use prior knowledge to structure the coding process while remaining open to new insights from the data. This

approach was beneficial for exploring participants' cognitive and metacognitive strategies across different stages of the writing process.

Table 1. The semi-structured interview guide used in the present research

A. General questions about the respondents' background	
which consists of age, gender, level of education, level of English fluency, languages they used in daily and academic basis, their writing scores, etc	
B. Questions about respondents' writing strategies	
Pre-writing	<i>What do you do before you start writing?</i>
	<i>Do you arrange and plan your writing task before you write?</i>
	<i>If yes, how do you do that?</i>
	<i>When you learn writing, do you select the topic for the essay by yourself? why/why not?</i>
Writing / Composing	<i>What are your strategies during the process of writing an essay?</i>
	<i>How do you use resources in writing?</i>
	<i>Do you place new words into your essay? How?</i>
	<i>Do you have any anxiety during the process of writing an essay?</i>
	<i>If yes, how do you manage it?</i>
Revising	<i>What do you do once you have finished the first draft?</i>
	<i>Do you take your time to evaluate your writing?</i>
	<i>Do you cooperate and seek for feedbacks or corrections from others?</i>

The analysis began with reading all interview transcripts thoroughly and coding the highlighted sections according to pre-determined categories based on the six writing strategies outlined by Oxford (1990). These strategies were organized into three main stages of writing: pre-writing, composing, and revising. Coding definitions were established before and during the analysis to ensure flexibility in interpreting the data while maintaining alignment with the study's objectives (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

As the analysis progressed, the researcher reached the data saturation point (Dornyei, 2007), where no new themes or information emerged from the data. This saturation ensured the comprehensiveness and reliability of the findings. Additionally, raw data was categorized under specific codes or themes in a table format to facilitate organization and pattern recognition during the analysis.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase framework for thematic analysis, which emphasizes familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. By incorporating this framework, the researcher ensured that the process was systematic and transparent, providing a robust basis for interpreting the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Similar Writing Strategies

Cognitive – Using resources, taking notes, and highlighting

The five participants in this study—three females (pseudonyms: Aisha, Bella, Clara) and two males (pseudonyms: Adam, Ben), aged 20–24 from a public university in Indonesia—devoted significant time to gathering and processing resources to support their academic essays. Given approximately one month to complete a 3,000–4,000-word essay, they reported spending 1-2 weeks selecting appropriate resources, reading extensively, taking notes, and highlighting essential points. These activities were pivotal in constructing their understanding of the assigned topic and building well-founded arguments. These findings align with Gordon's (2008, p. 248) study, which highlighted that reading helps students develop ideas for writing tasks while equipping them with the rhetorical structures and vocabulary necessary for precise expression. Participants in this study echoed similar sentiments during interviews:

"Well, sometimes it took me around two weeks to find the appropriate resources and read them..." (Aisha)

"... I will find as many resources as possible. Sometimes it took me one week... sometimes two weeks, if the topic is difficult..." (Clara)

Although all participants employed similar cognitive strategies, slight variations emerged in their resource preferences. Bella, Clara, and Adam heavily relied on digital journals and e-books, citing their convenience and affordability. Conversely, Ben and Aisha occasionally turned to physical books in the university library. This difference in practices reflects the significant role of digital resources, especially in Indonesia, where cost and accessibility often influence resource selection.

For instance, Bella remarked:

"I usually download articles from open-access platforms. If I cannot get them from there, I ask my friend studying abroad to download the e-books I need. Buying physical books is too expensive for me.." (Bella)

Aisha, on the other hand, acknowledged the value of physical books despite the time investment:

"... e-books are convenient, but I do go to the library when I need something detailed or when I want to cross-check information. It takes more time, but it's worth it..." (Aisha)

The participants' preference for electronic resources highlights the role of technology in enabling academic success. Reinhardt and Thorne (2019) discuss the importance of digital literacies in language learning contexts, emphasizing the need for learners to develop skills to navigate digital environments effectively.

Lastly, participants also emphasized taking notes and highlighting key points to process and retain information. These cognitive strategies were used extensively during the reading and research phase to organize ideas and enhance comprehension.

Clara explained how highlighting important passages in e-books helped her identify key arguments quickly:

"When I read digital journals, I highlight sentences or paragraphs that seem important. It makes it easier to come back later and find exactly what I need for my essay." (Clara)

Similarly, Adam highlighted the connection between note-taking and critical thinking, explaining that writing down his thoughts helped him better understand the material:

"I make notes when I read, usually in my own words. It helps me think about the topic and organize my arguments before I start writing." (Adam)

These practices of note-taking and highlighting are crucial cognitive strategies that facilitate active engagement with the material, promote more profound understanding, and support long-term retention. Highlighting specific text points enables students to extract information efficiently during writing.

Memory – Placing New Words into a Context

In this study, participants emphasized the importance of placing new vocabulary into a meaningful context to enhance the clarity and quality of their academic writing. They noted that while using unfamiliar words could enrich their essays, it also posed risks of

misunderstanding if the vocabulary was not appropriately contextualized. For instance, Aisha shared her strategy of carefully incorporating new words to make her writing more comprehensible. She highlighted the significance of explaining such vocabulary within the text to avoid confusion:

“If it fits my topic, then maybe I will use new words. Being easily understood in my essay is important, so if I include any new words, I would probably use it, but I try to explain it in the text somehow.” (Aisha)

Adam echoed this sentiment, stressing that good writing should prioritize reader understanding. While he acknowledged the value of new vocabulary for enhancing the essay's quality, he also saw it as an opportunity to solidify his learning:

“For me, if I write something that can be understood by someone else, then it is good writing. I also think that using new words—those unfamiliar to us—is great for improving the essay. It helps me remember these words because I will not forget them when I use them in my writing.” (Adam)

Other participants described the additional benefits of using new vocabulary. Clara, for example, explained that incorporating unfamiliar words from her reading materials often led her to discover related vocabulary. She achieved this by consulting dictionaries and thesauruses, which expanded her vocabulary beyond the new words encountered:

“When I read books or papers for my essay, I find many new words... then, I look for the synonyms and antonyms from the thesaurus. This way, I get other words as well.” (Clara)

Bella also employed a similar strategy. She noted that exploring synonyms and antonyms through dictionaries and thesauruses enhanced her vocabulary repertoire and improved the sophistication of her writing. She referred to these unfamiliar words as “fantastic words,” emphasizing their impact on the quality of her essays:

“I find many new words every time I read books or journals. I won't forget these words if I write them in my notes and find their meanings first. These fantastic words make my writing better.” (Bella)

These findings align with Gordon's (2008) observation that taking notes on new vocabulary and experimenting with it in writing are effective strategies for academic development. Similarly, Moir and Nation (as cited in Griffiths, 2008) argue that the productive

use of new vocabulary reflects language learners' progress in integrating into academic communities.

Affective Strategies – Self-Rewarding and Making Positive Statements

Participants in this qualitative study, which involved in-depth interviews and reflective journaling, employed affective strategies such as self-rewarding and making positive statements to manage their emotions and sustain motivation while writing their essays. These strategies helped them overcome anxiety, maintain focus, and stay motivated throughout the writing process. Self-rewarding varied according to individual preferences, including taking breaks, indulging in treats, or engaging in enjoyable activities as incentives. Positive self-talk also played a significant role in boosting their confidence and helping them stay on track.

Participants noted that incorporating self-rewarding strategies into their writing routine effectively managed stress and maintained productivity. For instance, Clara shared:

“The break I take between preparation and writing helps with anxiety, I guess. I use this break time to watch cartoons or go out before I come back and continue writing my essay again.” (Clara)

Similarly, Adam explained how setting small goals and rewarding himself helped him stay focused:

“... I believe I can finish it, and I make a promise to myself, like when I finish writing 500 words a day, then I will eat ice cream or I can watch movies.” (Adam)

This is consistent with recent research by Ryan and Deci (2020), highlighting the importance of self-reward systems in promoting self-determination and intrinsic motivation, especially in academic activities that demand constant effort. Participants displayed self-regulated learning strategies essential for academic achievement by setting attainable goals and rewarding themselves.

Furthermore, participants oftentimes used positive self-talk to boost their confidence and mitigate stress or self-doubt. Aisha, for example, expressed the importance of optimism in maintaining focus:

“I keep telling myself that I can finish this essay and I will get a good score. I try to be optimistic, you know, so that I can stay focused.” (Aisha)

Bella conveyed a related thought, describing how positive reinforcement helped her combat the pressure of deadlines:

“When I feel overwhelmed, I just remind myself that I have done it before so that I can do it again. It is like cheering for yourself to keep going.” (Bella)

These results support Oxford’s (1990) claim that effective language learners use self-reward and positive self-talk as vital emotional strategies. Recent research, including that conducted by MacIntyre et al. (2019), emphasizes how effective strategies can lessen anxiety associated with language learning and improve overall performance. Positive self-statements, as suggested by Pajares and Graham (2020), alleviate stress and contribute to building self-efficacy, which is crucial for sustaining effort in challenging academic tasks.

Metacognitive Strategies – Organizing Writing Schedule, Planning Language Tasks, and Self-Evaluating

A significant distinction emerged between the participants’ writing strategies, particularly in their use of metacognitive strategies such as organizing writing schedules, planning language tasks, and self-evaluating. Participants differed in their approaches to managing their writing tasks. Aisha and Bella consistently used structured schedules to organize their writing and ensure steady progress. Aisha shared:

“I always create a plan before I start writing. For example, I make sure to write at least 300 words daily, and I follow that plan. It keeps me on track and helps me stick to my outline.” (Aisha)

Similarly, Bella emphasized the importance of having a visible timetable to manage deadlines:

“I have a timetable on my desk showing what I must do daily. It helps me break the work into manageable parts. If I finish one section today, I will start the next one tomorrow. This way, I know I am moving closer to the deadline.” (Bella)

In contrast, Adam and Ben were less inclined to use structured schedules. Instead, they relied on proximity to deadlines to guide their progress. Adam admitted:

“I know the deadline is there, and I work towards it. But I do not follow a schedule. I just do the writing when I feel like it and try to finish before the deadline.” (Adam)

Ben offered a similar viewpoint, acknowledging that previous attempts to create a schedule had not been effective for him:

“I tried to set up a writing schedule once, but it did not work for me. I ended up ignoring it and writing whenever I had time. Sometimes, I would procrastinate until the last minute.” (Ben)

These approaches reflect personality, time management skills, and academic training variations. Structured scheduling, as seen in Aisha and Bella's practices, aligns with research by Ryan and Deci (2020), who emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation and proactive planning in achieving academic goals.

Another key difference was observed in how participants evaluated their writing. Aisha and Clara frequently reflected on their drafts to identify weaknesses and make improvements. Clara shared:

"When I finish a draft, I review it carefully. I check if my arguments are clear and if my language is appropriate. It helps me make the essay better." (Clara)

In contrast, Adam and Ben were less consistent in self-evaluating. Ben admitted:

"I do not usually go back and review my work much. I rely on the feedback I get from my lecturer. If they say something needs fixing, I will fix it, but I do not spend much time on it myself." (Ben)

These differences highlight the importance of self-regulation in writing. According to Nicol (2020), self-evaluation is a crucial metacognitive strategy that enables learners to take control of their writing process and achieve better outcomes. However, not all students naturally adopt this approach, emphasizing the need for instructional support to foster reflective practices.

These findings reflect the core principles of metacognitive strategy use, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Flavell, 1979). Recent studies, such as those by Teng and Zhang (2020), highlight the importance of metacognitive strategies in writing, particularly for improving second-language academic performance. Participants who used structured schedules and engaged in self-evaluation demonstrated behaviors consistent with self-regulated learning theories. As Boud et al. (2018) argue, these strategies are essential for fostering academic autonomy and resilience. In contrast, those lacking these practices may benefit from explicit training in time management and reflective learning techniques, as MacIntyre et al. (2019) suggested.

Compensation Strategy – Selecting the Topic

As described by Oxford (1990), compensation strategies enable learners to overcome language knowledge and skills limitations. In this study, participants demonstrated varying approaches to addressing the constraint of limited topic selection in their academic writing. Unlike contexts where students are given autonomy to select their essay topics, the participants in this study were assigned one or two predetermined topics by their lecturers. This limited their ability to personalize their writing tasks but required them to find alternative ways to work within these constraints.

Adam highlighted this limitation, explaining how essay topics were predetermined and how students were expected to elaborate on them:

“Yes, the topic is from our lecturer. They will give us... I mean, ask us to write an essay by the end of the term, but the topic is only one or two.” (Adam)

This lack of choice posed challenges for some participants, mainly when dealing with broad or unfamiliar topics. Ben described how he addressed this issue by actively seeking clarification and asking questions during class discussions to refine his understanding and narrow the focus of the assigned topic:

“...The topic for the essay is given to us. However, if we are lucky, we can sometimes expand or elaborate more because the topic is too broad. That is why I asked many questions during the meeting to understand how to outline.” (Ben)

Ben’s proactive approach reflects a key aspect of compensation strategies—adapting and seeking solutions to enhance comprehension and task completion. By engaging with his lecturers, Ben effectively addressed his limitations, ensuring that his essay would meet the requirements despite the constraints of topic selection.

Interestingly, not all participants viewed the lack of topic choice as a limitation. Bella expressed relief at not having to choose her topic, citing the potential difficulty of finding an appropriate one. For her, the absence of choice reduced stress and saved time, allowing her to focus on the task at hand:

“We do not have the opportunity to choose, which I think is a good thing though! I would be confused if I had to choose the topic by myself because there are many interesting topics worth writing.” (Bella)

Bella's perspective highlights an alternative view of compensation strategies. Rather than seeing the lack of autonomy as a limitation, she perceived it as an advantage, enabling her to avoid the time and effort required to decide on a topic. This suggests that, for some students, the structured nature of topic assignment can alleviate the cognitive load associated with decision-making.

Different Writing Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies – Organizing Writing Schedules, Planning Language Tasks, and Self-Evaluating

A clear distinction in metacognitive writing strategies emerged among the participants, particularly in their approaches to organizing writing schedules, planning tasks, and engaging in self-evaluation. Aisha and Bella strongly preferred structured schedules and proactive task planning. For Aisha, adhering to a plan was central to her writing process:

“I write according to plan. I have the schedule... like, for example, in a day I have to write at least 300 words. I stick to that schedule... stick to my outline.” (Aisha)

Bella shared a similar approach, explaining how timetables helped her meet deadlines:

“I am used to making a timetable... I put this kind of timetable on my study desk. Moreover, I decided, like today, I would finish this, but tomorrow, I have to finish that. I see the timetable every day and realize that the deadline is coming. Putting a schedule for each task is important for me.” (Bella)

Their structured routines allowed them to manage their workloads effectively, maintain focus, and reduce the stress associated with academic deadlines. Teng and Zhang (2020) support this approach, arguing that time management and task planning are core metacognitive strategies that help reduce cognitive overload in second-language writing contexts.

In contrast, Adam and Ben adopted a more spontaneous approach, often working closer to deadlines without following a structured schedule. Adam admitted:

“During writing, I have done all my research already, but I do not have a specific writing schedule, I guess. I just count the days to the deadline.” (Adam)

Ben shared his challenges with maintaining a schedule:

“I tried to use a writing schedule once... But it does not work on me. I ignored the schedule and took my time to write... sometimes procrastinating at the end.” (Ben)

These differences highlight varying levels of discipline and time management skills among participants. Structured planning, as practiced by Aisha and Bella, aligns with research by MacIntyre et al. (2019), which emphasizes that proactive scheduling can reduce procrastination and improve writing quality.

Another significant distinction was observed in self-evaluation practices. Aisha and Bella regularly reflected on their work to identify areas for improvement. For instance, Aisha explained:

“When I review my drafts, I check if my arguments are clear and if the structure makes sense. It helps me improve for the next time.” (Aisha)

Bella noted how self-reflection after completing an essay helped her refine her strategies:

“After each essay, I think about what went well and what did not. This way, I can avoid making the same mistakes.” (Bella)

These practices demonstrate a reflective mindset, enabling participants to develop and refine their writing skills over time. As noted by Nicol (2020), reflective practices like these are essential for fostering self-regulated learning habits.

On the other hand, Adam and Ben were less consistent in self-evaluating. Ben explained his reliance on external feedback:

“I do not usually go back and review my work much. I rely on the feedback I get from my lecturer. If they say something needs fixing, I will fix it, but I don’t spend much time on it myself.” (Ben)

This highlights the importance of fostering reflective practices in students who may depend heavily on lecturer feedback. According to Boud et al. (2018), self-evaluation empowers students to take ownership of their writing, improving confidence and performance.

Furthermore, these findings align with Flavell’s (1979) concept of metacognition, which involves planning, monitoring, and evaluating one’s learning processes. As Aisha and Bella demonstrated, structured time management reduces procrastination and enhances task focus (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Similarly, reflective practices foster critical thinking and allow students to refine their strategies (Nicol, 2020). The observed differences in metacognitive strategies may also reflect variations in individual preferences and exposure to structured academic practices. Ryan and Deci (2020) emphasize that environments promoting autonomy

and providing clear guidance are more likely to encourage proactive learning behaviors, enabling students to take ownership of their academic progress.

Social Strategy – Asking for feedbacks and corrections

The importance of seeking feedback and corrections to improve their writing skills was also highlighted in the research finding. Feedback allowed them to identify their mistakes, particularly in grammar, and provided a basis for improvement. This aligns with Ferris (1997, as cited in Hyland, 2011), who found that teacher comments focusing on grammar often resulted in successful revisions. Similarly, Ferris and Roberts (2001, as cited in Hyland, 2011) observed that students receiving feedback demonstrated more significant improvements in writing than those who did not receive any.

Participants frequently highlighted the value of feedback from lecturers, noting that it helped them pinpoint mistakes and avoid repeating them in future assignments. For instance, Aisha shared:

"I always ask for feedback from my lecturers. It helps me to pinpoint my mistakes and learn from them... not to make the same mistakes again...." (Aisha)

Bella also explained her preference for seeking feedback from experienced lecturers, particularly when faced with challenging tasks:

"If we get the task from one lecturer, and the task is difficult, I ask for suggestions or feedback from other lecturers. Because most of the lecturers are old, we are comfortable asking for feedback because they are more experienced in dealing with students." (Bella)

Seeking feedback from lecturers reflects the participants' reliance on authoritative guidance to enhance their writing. This approach highlights that constructive feedback from writing tutor in and out of classroom is crucial for fostering academic growth and improving the quality of student writing.

Another common strategy observed among participants was peer feedback. Several participants expressed comfort in exchanging work with classmates for proofreading and suggestions. Adam explained:

"Classmates are thrilled if they can swap the works. So like two or three days before submission, we proofread each other." (Adam)

Similarly, Clara shared her experience of collaborative feedback:

"Sometimes when my classmates finish writing their essays, we will read each other's essays, and then we... we give our thoughts about it, like recommendations or something. Sometimes, we fix each other's grammar mistakes as well." (Clara)

Peer feedback fosters a collaborative learning environment where students can benefit from diverse perspectives while refining their writing skills. This finding aligns with Nicol (2020), who highlights the role of peer feedback in developing self-regulated learning and enhancing writing performance through collaborative dialogue. Interestingly, two participants, Ben, Bella, and Aisha expressed reluctance to seek feedback from classmates. They cited concerns about burdening peers who were also busy with their essays and fears of plagiarism or idea theft. Ben explained:

"My classmates are probably busy with their essays, and I am also afraid that they will copy part of my essay..." (Ben)

Bella shared a similar sentiment, emphasizing the cultural discomfort surrounding peer feedback:

"Honestly, I do not like the idea of asking for corrections from my friends, because... you know, they are probably busy... writing their essay. I do not think they have time to check my essay..." (Bella)

This reluctance reflects potential cultural and contextual differences in the use of social strategies. As individual motivations and perceptions of group dynamics often shape, Ryan and Deci (2020) note, social learning behaviors. In this case, concerns about peer workload and trust may inhibit collaborative feedback practices among Indonesian participants. However, cultural factors and individual perceptions significantly influence the willingness to seek peer feedback. Indonesian participants' reluctance to engage in collaborative feedback may reflect a need for greater emphasis on trust-building and the normalization of peer review practices in their academic environments. Creating a supportive and nonjudgmental culture for feedback exchange could encourage more widespread adoption of this strategy.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the writing strategies employed by five high-achieving Indonesian bilingual university students, focusing on their similarities and differences in strategy use.

Despite the initial assumption that the learning environment might significantly influence bilingual Good Language Learners' (GLLs) writing strategies, the findings reveal a nuanced picture. While differences in Metacognitive and Social strategies were evident, participants shared common approaches in Cognitive, Affective, Memory, and Compensation strategies when writing their academic essays. These similarities and differences highlight the adaptive nature of GLLs in navigating the complexities of L2 academic writing.

The findings underscore that the participants were highly aware of their strategy use and could justify their choices in learning to write in L2. The common themes identified through directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) point to shared cognitive and emotional processes underpinning successful L2 writing. However, the differences in strategies suggest that individual preferences and cultural factors within the learning environment play a significant role in shaping strategy use.

With only five participants, this research provides valuable insights but should be considered exploratory and tentative. The findings may not be fully generalizable to all L2 learners or bilingual students in other contexts. Future studies should narrow the scope to similar contexts or broaden the participant pool to include diverse learning environments and cultural backgrounds.

This study relied solely on semi-structured interviews for data collection due to time constraints. While effective for capturing reflective insights, additional instruments—such as think-aloud protocols, focus group discussions, and analysis of students' written work—could enhance the depth and breadth of future research. These methods would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how GLLs navigate L2 writing challenges and refine their strategies in varied academic settings. By extending this line of inquiry, researchers can continue to uncover the intricate relationship between language learning strategies, academic writing, and the role of the learning environment in fostering bilingual students' success in L2 contexts.

REFERENCES

Azatova, S. (2021, July). I Control My Own English Learning: Developing Self-Regulation in Elementary ELL Using Self-assessment and Explicit Strategy Instruction. *TEFLIN Journal*, 32(2), 183-213. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15639/teflinjournal.v32i2/183-213>

- Bai, R., Hu, G., & Gu, P. Y. (2014). The Relationship Between Use of Writing Strategies and English Proficiency in Singapore Primary Schools. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 355-365. doi:10.1007/s40299-013-0110-0
- Bialystok, E. (2009). Bilingualism: The Good, the Bad, and the Indifferent. In *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* (Vol. 12, pp. 3-11). doi:doi:10.1017/S1366728908003477
- Bialystok, E., Poarch, G., Luo, L., & Craik, F. M. (2014). Effects of Bilingualism and Aging on Executive Function and Working Memory. *Psychology Aging*, 696-705. doi:10.1037/a0037254
- Boud, D., Lawson, R., & Thompson, D. G. (2018). The calibration of student judgment through self-assessment: Disruptive effects of assessment patterns. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 37(3), 652-665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1446412>
- Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012). *Learner Autonomy: English Language teachers' Belief and Practices*. British Council. ELT Research Paper 12-07.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R. (2000). *How People Learn*. National Academy Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>.
- Chamot, A. U., & El-Dinary, P. B. (1999). Children's learning strategies in language immersion classrooms. *Modern Language Journal*, 83(3), 319–338. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00025>
- Chien, S. C. (2010). Enhancing English Composition Teacher's Awareness of their Students' Writing Strategy Use. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 19(3), 417-438.
- Coffin, C., Curry, M., Goodman, S., Hewings, A., & M. Lilis, T. (2003). *Teaching Academic Writing: A Toolkit for Higher Education*. Routledge.
- Cohen, A. (2011). *Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language* (2 ed.). Longman.
- Cohen, A. D. (2003, January). The Learner's Side of Foreign Language Learning: Where do Styles, Strategies, and Tasks Meet? *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching (IRAL)*, 279-291. doi:DOI: 10.1515/iral.2003.013
- Costa, A., Hernandez, M., & Sebastian-Galles, N. (2008). Bilingualism aids conflict resolution: evidence from the ANT task. *Cognition*, 59-68. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2006.12.013>
- Cumming, A. (2001). Learning to Write in a Second Language: Two Decades of Research. *International Journal of English Studies*, 1-23.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Fergina, A., & Oktavianda, M. (2019). Preserving Local Wisdom Through Extensive Reading Book “Traditional Games Of Indigenous People In West Kalimantan”. *UHAMKA International Conference on ELT and CALL (UICELL)*, (pp. 27-36). Jakarta.
- Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive–developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34(10), 906-911. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.906>
- Flower, L. and Hayes, J.R. (1981) A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 365-387. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/356600>
- Gordon, L. (2008). Writing and Good Language Learners. In C. Griffiths, *Lessons from Good Language Learners* (pp. 244-254). Cambridge University Press.

- Griffiths, C. (2003). Patterns of Language Learning Strategy Use. In *System* (pp. 367-383).
- Griffiths, C. (2008). Strategies and Good Language Learners. In C. Griffiths, *Lessons from Good Language Learners* (pp. 83-98). Cambridge University Press.
- Griffiths, C. (2013). *The Strategy Factor in Successful Learning*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters. doi:<https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847699428>
- Hyland, F. (2011). The Language Learning Potential of Form-focused Feedback on Writing: Students' and Teachers' Perceptions. In R. M. Manchon, *Learning-to-write and Writing-to-learn in Additional Language* (pp. 159-179). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2019). "Feedback on Writing: Contexts and Issues." Cambridge University Press.
- Hu, G. W., & Chen, B. (2007). A Protocol-based Study of University-level Chinese EFL Learner's writing strategies. *English Australia Journal*, 37-56.
- Lan, R., & Oxford, R. L. (2003). Language Learning Strategy Profiles of Elementary School Students in Taiwan. *IRAL - International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 339-379. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/iral.2003.016>
- Lee, K. W. (2009). What Can We Learn about How Students in Premier Secondary Schools in Malaysia Achieve Success in English Language Learning? In S. M. Thang, & B. Sinclair, *Learner Autonomy: Research and Practice in Malaysia and Singapore* (pp. 61-83). Pearson Longman.
- Macaro, E. (2006). Strategies for Language Learning and for Language Use: Revising the Theoretical Framework. *Modern Language Journal*, 90, 320-337. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2006.00425.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2019). "Language Teachers' Coping Strategies During Stressful Situations." *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(2), 227-246. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx>
- Magogwe, J. M., & Oliver, R. (2007). The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies, Proficiency, Age and Self-Efficacy Beliefs: A Study of Language Learners in Botswana. *System*, 35, 338-352. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2007.01.003>
- Manchon, R. M., De Larios, J. R., & Murphy, L. (2007). A Review of Writing Strategies: Focus on Conceptualization and Impact of First Language. In A. D. Cohen, & E. Macaro, *Language Learner Strategies* (pp. 229-250). Oxford University Press.
- Mu, C., & Carrington, S. (2007). An Investigation of Three Chinese Students' English. *Journal of Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, 11(1).
- Murat, H. (2000). Language Learning Strategies in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(8).
- Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., & Todesco, A. (1978). *The Good Language Learner*. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Nambiar, R. (2009). The Importance of Strategy Awareness in Preparing the Malaysian University Learner for Autonomous Language Learning. In S. M. Thang, & B. Sinclair, *Learner Autonomy: Research and Practices in Malaysia and Singapore* (pp. 85-105). Pearson Longman.
- Nicol, D. (2020). "The Power of Internal Feedback: Exploiting Natural Comparison Processes." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(5), 659-678.
- O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge, UK Cambridge University Press.

- Oxford, R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Knows*. Heinle & Heinle Publications.
- Pajares, F., & Graham, L. (2020). "Self-Efficacy and Motivation in Academic Writing." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(4), 589–602. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx>
- Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Reinhardt, J., & Thorne, S. (2019). Digital literacies as emergent multifarious repertoires. In N. Arnold & L. Ducate (Eds.), *Engaging language learners in CALL: From theory and research to informed practice* (pp. 208–239). London: Equinox Publishing.
- Rigney, J. (1978). Learning strategies: A theoretical perspective. In H. F. O'Neil (Ed.), *Learning Strategies* (pp. 165-205). Academic Press.
- Rosenshine, B., & Meister, C. (1997). Cognitive Strategy Instruction in Reading. In S. A. Stahl, & D. A. Hayes, *Instructional Models in Reading* (pp. 85-107). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.
- Rubin, J. (1975). What the "Good Language Learners" can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly*, 9, 41-51.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions*. Routledge.
- Sasaki, M. (2000, September). Toward an Empirical Model of EFL Writing Processes: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9(3), 259-291. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743\(00\)00028-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(00)00028-X)
- Shin, S.-j., Song, H.-j., Choi, H.-k., Hwang, M.-h., Lee, H., Lee, Y. M., . . . Lee, H.-K. (2018). Why we do and what we do: The experience of Good English Language Learners. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 15, 130-147. Retrieved from <http://journal.asiatefl.org/>
- Stern, H. H. (1992). *Issues and Options in Language Teaching*. OUP.
- Takeuchi, O. (2003). What Can We Learn from Good Foreign Language Learners?: A Qualitative Study in the Japanese Foreign Language Context. *System*, 385-392.
- Teng, L. S., & Zhang, L. J. (2020). Empowering learners in the second language (L2) classroom: Can self-regulated learning strategies-based writing instruction make a difference? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 47(1), 100701. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2020.100701>
- Turner III, D. W. (2010). Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators. *The Qualitative Report*, 754-760.
- Wenden, A. L., & Rubin, J. (1987). *Learner strategies in language learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Zamel, V. (1983). The Composing Processes of Advanced ESL Students: Six Case Studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 165-187.