AN ANALYSIS OF WRITING STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: June 2022 Revised: June 2022 Published: July 2022 *Keywords* *Writing strategies;* *Student-centered writing;* *Academic writing;*	*The trend towards more process-oriented academic writing instructions require students to pay more attention to and develop their use of writing strategies to ensure learning success. Accordingly, the current study investigates the use of writing strategies performed by freshmen of the English language department in an Indonesian teaching university. The study is an initial effort to provide a theoretical basis for the development of more student-centered and process-oriented writing instructions for the university's academic writing courses. To attain its purpose, the study focuses its investigation into the stage where writing strategies are most likely to be used and the types of writing strategies being employed by students. Questionnaires modified from Petrić & Czárl (2003) were distributed to 125 freshmen to obtain the data which constitute the types of writing strategies being used, their frequency of use, and the stages of writing within which they were used. Descriptive quantitative analysis was performed afterwards to the collected data. Results show that most freshman are medium users of the strategies, with While Writing as the stage within which students tend to use writing strategies, followed by Pre-writing and Revising Writing. This result implies that the development of learning instruction for academic writing needs to accommodate the development of writing strategies used in three stages of writing, particularly during the Pre-writing and Revising Writing. Further research is also required with different data collection method and instruments to allow for generalization to wider audience which is not possible with the current research, given its limited use of instrument and participants involved.*

INTRODUCTION

The process approach in teaching writing in which the stages of writing become the main highlight of the learning process rather than the final product has been circulating for quite a long time. Studies promoting this issue began in the 1980s, with some studies conducted by notable names such as Fowler (Fowler, 1989) and Nunan (Nunan, 1991). Over the year, research on the process approach in teaching writing across education levels and genres has resulted in many studies promoting more attention to the writing strategies in teaching writing (Brown, 2001; Hyland, 2004; Matsuda, 2003).

Studies on the use of writing strategies have revealed their significant importance in determining learners' success in a writing course (Kim, 2020; Mastan et al., 2017; Raoofi et al., 2017). It is often argued that the how and when learners employ these strategies are the reflection of their competence as writers. Therefore, it is understandable that there have been some suggestions to promote their use in language classrooms. Some studies even encourage the benefit of implementing instruction that encourages students' use of writing strategies. Among these studies are the ones conducted by (Mastan et al., 2017).

Writing strategy use, as previously mentioned, is among the factors that help determine learners' success in writing course. But what exactly is meant by writing strategies? And how do their use affect learners' performance in writing? According to Bloom, based on its stages, writing strategies can be classified into pre-writing strategies (resourcing, elaboration, and grouping), writing strategies (rereading, substitution and strategic use of the L1), and revising strategies (guided proofreading, resourcing, and recombining) (Bloom, 2008). The strategies involved within these writing stages help writers generate, organize, and fine-tune their writing. Considering this role, it is not an understatement to say that writing strategies use is one factor that determine learners' writing performance (He, 2005). To illustrate this point, research found that better writers appear to have more tendency in employing better writing strategies and are noted to use writing strategies more often than less proficient writers (Lei, 2016).

Contrary to this recognition, however, most learners may not be taking their use of writing strategies seriously or neglect its role in improving their writing performance, as shown by recent studies (Bai et al., 2020; Chien, 2012; Raoofi et al., 2017). The logical solution to face this discrepancy between expectations and reality would be to develop a writing instruction that fosters learners' use of writing strategies. As the basis for the development of such instruction, a sound need analysis would be required to figure out learners' initial writing strategy use prior to the implementation of the planned instruction. The result of the need analysis would then be used to predict the strengths and weaknesses of learners in their writing strategy use. Over the years, there have been studies conducted to map out students' use of writing strategies. Among these studies are the ones conducted by (Aluemalai & Maniam, 2020; Bai et al., 2020; Fajrina et al., 2021; Kim, 2020).

Within the aforementioned studies, writing strategies profile is investigated in its correlation to other aspects that affect students' learning in EFL/ ESL writing instructions. Among these aspects are proficiency level, gender, and level of education. Not only that, it also appears that the main focus of discussion, in some of those researches, is not on profiling students' use of writing strategies as a form of needs analysis. This not to mention that with the exception to a study by (Fajrina et al., 2021), these previous studies are all conducted with non-Indonesian students as participants of the study.

In view of the lack of studies conducted to profile learners' writing strategies in Indonesian EFL context, the current study aims to investigate learners' writing strategies use, particularly concerning the stages when they are most likely to be used and their types. It should be noted also that this study's investigation is a part of need analysis stage to develop an academic writing instruction to promote learners' use of writing strategies and improve their writing performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach where the data was analyzed descriptively. The data used in this study were collected from 125 English department freshmen in the first semester of their study. A questionnaire adapted from Writing Strategies Inventory developed by B. Petric´ & B. Cza´rl (Petrić & Czárl, 2003) was used to get the data needed. The original questionnaire by Petrić & Czárl (2003) uses a five-point Likert scale, however, the modified version used in this study questionnaire uses a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("never" or "almost never true of me") to 4 ("always" or "almost always true of me"). This modification was made so that the participants are forced to avoid the "neutral" option since the midpoint tends to be chosen when the participant is facing an unfamiliar statement in the questionnaire (Chyung et al., 2017).

The questionnaire consists of two-part, where the first part of the questionnaire is about general questions related to students' background information about learning English, especially in writing and the second part is related to the strategies that the students use for each

stage in writing. There are 51 items which are divided into three dimensions focusing on pre-writing strategies (11 items), while-writing strategies (19 items), and post writing strategies (21 items). The Cronbach's Alpha of this questionnaire is 0.86, indicating that it has a good internal consistency reliability.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Following the principal purposes of the study, this section aims to present the results and discussion of learners' writing strategies use. Furthermore, this section also elaborates in what stage the strategies are most likely be used and the types of strategies being used by the participants. To find the frequency of overall learners' writing strategies use, descriptive statistics were employed and then the score were categorized into; High (mean ≥ 3.19), Medium (mean= 3.19-2.77), and Low (mean ≤ 2.76) writing strategies use.

Table 1
The Frequency of learners' writing strategies use

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	HIGH	18	14,4	14,4	
	MEDIUM	91	72,8	72,8	
	LOW	16	12,8	12,8	
	Total	125	100,0	100,0	

Based on Table 1, 18 (14.4%) participants reported high use of writing strategies, 91 (72.8%) participants reported medium writing strategy use and 16 participant (12.8%) reported low writing strategy use. It means that most of participants, eventhough they are still in their first year, are quite used to the writing strategy. Some studies focusing on writing strategies use also reported similar result, that the first-year students tend to be medium users of writing strategy (Asmari, 2013; Syahriani & Madya, 2020). However, it should be noted that the frequent use of the writing strategy does not indicate the user's proficiency in writing (Maarof & Murat, 2013; Q. Mutar & Nimehchisalem, 2017).

Moreover, Table 2 presented the mean score of the three stages of writing strategies employed by the participants. The table indicates that While Writing Strategies were the most employed writing strategies (M=3.097, SD=0.321), followed by Pre-Writing Strategies (M=2.816, SD=0.317), and Revising Writing Strategies (M=2.795, SD=0.315). This finding is in line with several previous studies that found the while writing strategies are the most used writing strategies compare to the other two strategies (Y. Chen, 2011; Q. M. Mutar, 2019; Q. Mutar & Nimehchisalem, 2017). The fact that the teaching of writing at the secondary level of education is merely done to improve the students' English grammar and vocabulary, instead of the writing itself (Ramadani, 2014; Tans, 2012) can be the cause of this condition since the While Writing stage mainly deals with strategies that focus on mechanics, vocabulary and grammar.

Table 2
The Learners' Writing Strategies Use in Each Stage

	N	Min	Max	Mean
Overall Writing Strategies Use	125	2.18	3.44	2.9149
Pre-Writing Strategies	125	1.82	3.73	2.8166
While Writing Strategies	125	2.11	3.68	3.0978
Revising Writing Strategies	125	2.00	3.45	2.7956

To describe further the writing strategies most frequently used by students in every stage, a more detail descriptive analysis was conducted. The following table (Table 3), shows that Revise the assignment requirements before writing (M=3.22, SD= .670) is the most frequently used strategy in Pre-Writing stage, followed by Look at an example written by a native speaker or more proficient writer (M=3.13, SD= .842) and Make short notes related to the topic (M=3.02, SD= .823). While the least frequently used strategy in Pre-Writing stage are Start writing without having a written or mental plan (M=2.20, SD= .898), Make a timetable for the writing process (M=2.33, SD= .869), and Write notes or an outline in my native language (M=2.54, SD= .938).

Pre-Writing stage is a stage where the students start preparing themselves for writing and organizing the idea that they want to include in their writing (Bui & Van, 2018; Morris, 2012). This stage is plays important role in writing, particularly in keeping student motivated and creative (Mahnam & Nejadansari, 2012; O'Mealia, 2011). From the findings above, it can be concluded that most of the first-year students pay attention to the assignment requirements. Moreover, not only they try to understand what are expected from their writing, but they also show effort to find an example written by someone that they believe is more proficient in writing than them and take notes related the topic of the writing. Even though they seem to be mentally prepared to do the actual assignment, they still need to be taught to make a timetable for the writing process so that they can finish the writing on the time given.

Table 3
Mean Score of Pre-Writing Strategies Used by the Freshmen

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Make writing process time table	125	1	4	2.33	.869
Review the class notes/handouts before writing.	125	1	4	2.91	.684
Revise the assignment requirements before writing.	125	1	4	3.22	.670
Discuss what to write with other students or teacher.	125	1	4	2.79	.873
Look at an example written by a native speaker or more proficient writer.	125	1	4	3.13	.842
Start writing without having a written or mental plan.	125	1	4	2.20	.898
Think about what to write and have a plan in mind, but not on paper.	125	1	4	2.95	.841
Note down words.	125	1	4	2.94	.780
Make short notes.	125	1	4	3.02	.823
Write an outline.	125	1	4	2.95	.879
Write notes/an outline in native language.	125	1	4	2.54	.938
Valid N (listwise)	125				

Moreover, as indicated in Table 4, the most frequently used strategy in While Writing stage are Reread what have been written or the outline to get ideas how to continue (M=3.58, SD=.511), Check the grammar after finishing each paragraph (M=3.45, SD=.701), and Use the background knowledge to help elaborate the ideas (M=3.32, SD=.667). Whereas the least frequently used strategy in While Writing stage are Use a monolingual dictionary (M=2.39, SD=.888), Write a draft in the native language first and then translate it into English (M=2.49,

SD=.981), Write bits of the text in the native language and then translate them into English (M=2.86, SD=.936), and Finish the introduction with the topic sentence (M=2.86, SD=.820).

As stated above, the participants in this study were familiar with the While Writing strategies. At strategy item level, the most used strategy is rereading the outline to get the ideas how to continue the writing. This finding shows that the participants were aware that outlining helped them in organizing the idea and smoothen the writing process. In the other hand, using a monolingual dictionary is perceived as the least frequently used strategy. It means that the participants preferred to use monolingual dictionary even though they are still freshmen. The freshmen' preference in using monolingual dictionary is reported in other studies on ESL/EFL context (Kung, 2015; Yaman, 2015).

Table 4
Mean Score of While Writing Strategies Used by the Freshmen

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Start with the intro.	125	1	4	3.30	.710
Finish the intro with the topic sentence.	125	1	4	2.86	.820
Stop after each sentence and read it again.	125	1	4	3.15	.773
Use my background knowledge to elaborate my thoughts.	125	2	4	3.32	.667
Stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph, covering one idea.	125	2	4	3.13	.695
Reread what the outline to get ideas how to continue.	125	2	4	3.58	.511
Go back to my outline to make changes.	125	1	4	3.13	.751
Write bits of the text in native language and then translate them into English later	125	1	4	2.86	.936
Write a draft in my native language first and translate it into English later.	125	1	4	2.49	.981
Check the grammar after completing each paragraph.	125	2	4	3.45	.701
Check the vocabulary after completing each paragraph.	125	1	4	3.27	.755
Check the mechanics after completing each paragraph.	125	1	4	3.03	.782
Simplify what to write if it is difficult to express the ideas in English.	125	1	4	3.21	.722
Write it in native language and later try to find an appropriate English word whenever unfamiliar words come up.	125	1	4	3.15	.907
Find a similar English word whenever unfamiliar words come up.	125	1	4	3.30	.687
Stop writing and check the dictionary whenever unfamiliar words come up.	125	1	4	3.20	.803
Use a bilingual dictionary.	125	1	4	3.11	.815
Use a monolingual dictionary.	125	1	4	2.39	.888
Ask someone to help out when problems arise while writing.	125	1	4	2.91	.898
Valid N (listwise)	125				

In addition, related to the most frequently used strategy in Revising Writing stage, Table 5 shows that Check the mistakes after getting the feedback from the teacher (M=3.65, SD=.543), Check whether the essay matches the requirements (M=3.40, SD=.622), Ask the person who give comment to explain the comment if the comment is difficult to understand (M=3.34, SD=.832) and Read the feedback from the previous writing and use it in the next writing (M=3.34, SD=.610) are the strategies that the students are familiar with. While the least frequently used strategy in Revising Writing stage are Hand the essay in without reading it (M=1.60, SD=.741), Make changes in the content or ideas (M=2.32, SD=.789), and Make changes in the structure (organization) of the essay (M=2.44, SD=.777).

Table 5
Mean Score of Revising Writing Strategies Used by the Freshmen

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Read the text aloud.	125	1	4	2.50	.876
Read what have written when the whole essay finished.	125	1	4	2.57	.901
Hand in the essay without reading it.	125	1	4	1.60	.741
Make changes in vocabulary using the dictionary.	125	2	4	3.05	.633
Make changes in sentence structure.	125	1	4	2.79	.687
Make changes in the organization of the essay.	125	1	4	2.44	.777
Make changes in the content or ideas.	125	1	4	2.32	.789
Make changes in the spelling and punctuation.	125	1	4	2.78	.779
Focus on one thing at a time when revising (e.g., content, structure).	125	1	4	2.75	.839
Check if the essay matches the requirements.	125	1	4	3.40	.622
Drop the first draft and start writing again whenever the essay is not sufficient.	125	1	4	2.52	.858
Leave the text aside for a couple of days to get a new perspective.	125	1	4	2.54	.788
Show the text to somebody and ask for his/her opinion.	125	1	4	2.63	.963
Compare the paper with the ones written by my friends on the same topic.	125	1	4	2.49	.876
Give myself a reward for completing the task.	125	1	4	2.83	1.098
Check the mistakes after the teacher give the feedback.	125	2	4	3.65	.543
Ask another person to explain whenever a comment in the feedback is difficult to understand.	125	1	4	3.34	.832
Make notes or try to remember feedback for the next writing assignments.	125	1	4	3.26	.728
Record the types of errors I have made for the next writing assignments.	125	1	4	3.11	.710
Rread the feedback from my previous writings and use it in the next writing assignments.	125	1	4	3.34	.610
Valid N (listwise)	125				

Revising Writing stage is the last stage in writing process. This study found that the strategies in the Revising Writing stage are the least frequently used by the participants. This finding is in line with some studies focusing on similar context (Maarof & Murat, 2013; Syahriani & Madya, 2020). However, most of the participants seems to understand the importance of teacher's feedback since Checking the mistakes they made after the teacher give them their feedback is the most used strategy in this level. This is congruent with the finding in a study focusing on the freshmen attitudes toward teachers' written feedback (J. Chen, 2012). The participants were interested in the feedback written by the teacher especially when they address all the writing aspects instead focus on solely language accuracy. Moreover, most of the participants tend to read their writing carefully before they submit their assignment. In indicates that the students are positively motivated in fulfilling the requirement of the

assignment. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this attitude is shown when the assignments give the students autonomy (Abuhassna et al., 2020; Moos & Marroquin, 2010) and pique their personal interest (Ismailov & Ono, 2021).

Although this research can shed light on the teaching of writing, especially the profile of first-year English students' writing strategies, it has some limitations. First, the participant of this study come from the same department at the same university, so the findings in this study cannot be generalized on a larger scale. Second, this study only employ descriptive approach with one questionnaire to gather the data needed; as a result, a more in-depth investigation to reveal the reason for using the strategy is impossible to conduct. Thus, a further study employing more instruments and participants from different universities and across the four years of undergraduate education is still needed.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to investigate learners' writing strategies use, particularly concerning the stages when they are most likely to be used. The result revealed that the majority of the freshman are medium users of the strategies, or in other words, they are quite familiar with the writing strategies. In terms of the writing stage, the While Writing Strategies were the most employed writing strategies and the Review Writing Strategies were the least employed ones. Further, this study also shed light on what strategies that the freshmen most and least frequently used in each stage of writing.

As aforementioned, this study is a part of a need analysis proses in developing an academic writing instruction that foster learners' use of writing strategies, henceforth, writing instructors or course designers can use the findings of this study as a basis for planning a better writing course that caters the freshmen' needs. Additionally, based on the finding which indicate the freshmen's medium familiarity of writing strategies, particularly the While Writing strategies, it is suggested that process approach is used in the freshmen's writing course rather than product approach. Various activities and materials that promote the use of strategies in both writing stage should also be employed to accommodate the freshmen's low awareness of Pre-Writing and Revising Writing strategies.

However, it should be also mentioned that the primary limitation of this study was the nature of the method used. Employing a quantitative method with only one instrument prevents generalization to broader demographics possible. Thus, to address the freshmen's needs toward an ideal ESL writing course, future studies with different data collection method and instruments are still needed.

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