The Impact of Using A Learning Strategies-based Program on Developing EFI Iraqi Preservice Teachers Writing Skills at Tikrit University

By

Yaseen Rabeea Ahmed

Supervisors

Dr. Eman Mohamad Elbashbishy
Professor of Curriculum & Instruction (EFL)
Faculty of Education,
Mansoura University

Dr. Nadia Safwat Alkamisy
Lecturer of Curriculum & Instruction (EFL)
Faculty of Education,
Mansoura University

The Impact of Using A Learning Strategies-based Program on Developing EFI Iraqi Preservice Teachers Writing Skills at Tikrit University

Yaseen Rabeea Ahmed

Abstract

This research aimed at studying the impact of a learning strategies-based program on improving EFL Iraqi Preservice Teachers' writing skills. The participants of this research were (30) EFI Iraqi Preservice Teachers at Tikrit University. The research adopted the quasi-experimental design using two groups: an experimental group (n = 30), and a control one (n = 30). To collect data, the researcher used one instrument; an EFL writing skills test. The researcher taught both groups: the experimental group was taught through a learning strategies-based program, while the control group was taught through the regular method of teaching. Research results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group students in the EFL writing skills test. Moreover, the effect size of the program was found to be high. Therefore, this research recommended using a learning strategies-based program in teaching the four skills of the English language at different university levels.

Keywords: Learning strategies, Preservice Teachers, writing skills, EFL

Introduction

EFL preservice teachers need to master the four English skills while being prepared and trained to be teachers in the future. Mastering writing skills is important because students deal with various writing genres. Writing has an important role in conveying ideas and concept. Keshta and Harb (2013) stated that writing is necessary in everyday lives such in business, creativity, and in scholarly pursuits. Langan (2001) supports that there are two reasons why writing skill is very important. First, writing ability is a basic need for English learners to support their academic success. English learners are often asked to do written assignment and their English competence can also be seen from their writing performance. Second, English writing skill is a practical need to support their future carrier.

Writing is regarded as a creative act that requires time as well as suggestions and criticism to produce better results. To teach students how to

write, the role of teacher is important during the process, teacher need to view that writing is a systematic and gradual process. In the writing process, the teacher is not someone who gives the topic to students and evaluates the final product without being involved in the writing process itself (Sun & Feng, 2009).

However, writing is considered a challenging task. It is an individual, private or solitary activity. It is challenging because this skill needs a long process. Many scholars suggested that the best way to write is acknowledging that the process needs several steps to produce a written product. Therefore, learning to write in foreign or second language is not a simple matter because students need to master both linguistic aspects and attitude such as willingness to practice several times in the process of writing. (Di Loreto & McDonough, 2013).

Learning strategies applied by language learners have been deeply investigated for their contribution in the foreign or second language acquisition and learning. Before starting teaching English skills to students, it is important to know the characteristics of learners in acquiring the language for the success of the foreign language learning. Knowing the strategies employed by more successful and less successful learners can be the basis of a building a syllabus or planning lessons. That's why this study focused on learning strategies to develop preserve teachers reading comprehension and writing skills.

Cognitive and metacognitive strategies have been indicated to contribute to helping students face their challenges in comprehending a text. There were several studies conducted on the topic of cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies and the students' reading comprehension performance. Some of these studies examined the relationship between cognitive and meta-cognitive strategy use and reading comprehension employing multiple correlation analysis (e.g., Naeni & Rezaei, 2015). Some studies have shown that the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies has a positive impact on the students' reading comprehension performance.

Learning strategies were researched to be important in developing language skills. Thus, this research adopted using learning strategies to develop EFL preservice writing skills at the University of Tikrit.

Review of Literature and Related Studies
Writing Skill
Nature of Writing

Writing is an important basic language skill and it is a vehicle of communication that represents language through the inscription of signs and

symbols. It is, also, a complex process that implies mastery on almost all language levels; morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse. Although the four English skills are important for language learning, the writing skill is probably the most needed for academic and professional purposes. It constitutes an important means of communication through which the writer expresses feeling, ideas beliefs and arguments (Romadhoni, 2014).

Nunan (2003) stated that writing is both a physical and mental act. Writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express these ideas and put them on paper, and organizing them into sentences and paragraphs that will be clear to be read later by different readers.

Researchers in the field of teaching English language regard writing as both; a skill and a process. As a skill, writing is built on the idea that it is a skill like driving, playing a musical instrument, cooking, or any other skill. Therefore, it can be learnt if the person is willing to learn. While, writing as a process means that writing a paragraph, an essay, book review, or a research paper is a difficult task to do. Rather, it is an organized process that follows some steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing and proofreading (Langman, 2010).

Writing Approaches

During the long history of research, linguists and educators have clarified three approaches for writing. They are:

- **Product-Based Approach:** According to Tangpormpoon (2008), this approach is also called controlled-to- free approach, the text-based approach and the guided composition. It mainly focusses on grammatical and syntactical forms through the use of model paragraphs. Many teachers prefer to use it since their learners are syntactically involved in the writing process through employing pattern-product techniques such as descriptive, narrative and persuasive compositions. However, this approach may create many drawbacks to students whose focus is only on the mechanics leaving aside the readers' reactions and the purposes behind their pieces of writing. Students may also lose their motivation in writing as they only pay attention to accuracy and neglect the creation of new ideas for their writing tasks. Furthermore, the product approach is defined as "a traditional approach in which students are encouraged to mimic a model text, usually is presented and analyzed at an early stage".

Product approach model comprises four stages: studying model texts and analyzing their features in depth by the students; highlighting the most important features by the teacher; organizing ideas; and finally work independently relying on the previously taught structures and vocabulary. To conclude, the product approach mainly deals with mechanical aspects of writing, neglecting the purpose and the audience to whom students write (Kamrul & Akhand, 2010, p.78).

- **Process-Based Approach**: Many linguists and researchers during the 1970s and 1980s questioned the product- oriented approach and considered writing as a combination of some processes (Alharthi, 2012). Based on this approach, writing is regarded as a process of three stages, namely, pre-writing, writing and post writing. In the prewriting stage, students think about the topic and plan their ideas; the writing stage concerns how students transform their ideas and thoughts into writing, and the post writing stage focuses on revising what is written for accuracy. Recently, the process approach to writing is proved to be effective because it emphasizes the way students write to accomplish the final product; rather than having the final product. It is considered as the way writers manage to develop their writing activity from the beginning stage to the end of the writing process. The process approach is an activity through which learners are encouraged to consider writing not as a competition of grammar tasks, but as a way of transferring meaning and ideas. The process-based approach is useful for students because they learn how to write appropriate types of texts, and at the same time they learn from each other through peer feedback. Thus, they develop autonomy and self-regulation in their studies. Although this process is highly used by educators, it has some weaknesses that hinder the writing process; for example, in order to create a coherent piece of writing, students take much time to produce sentences. In addition, students do not have a model to follow and write effectively; therefore, they sometimes feel lost and are unable to continue writing (Kamrul & Akhand, 2010).

- **Genre-Based Approach**: It is also called "English for Academic Purposes" or "English for Specific Purposes" (Dudley-Evans, 1998). It emphasizes the value of different types of writing which are closely related to social communicative purposes. According to Badger and White (2000), this approach is the extension of the

product-based approach as it concentrates on the study of a huge range of writing patterns such as business letters, reports, emails, scientific articles, etc. All of these pieces of writing require teachers to give models to their learners to follow to produce their own piece of writing. The negative aspect of this approach is the learners' lack of technical words or suitable expression that they need to accomplish their communicative needs. Badger and White (2000) contended that genre theory is "an extension of the product approaches, and it varies with the social context in which it is produced" (p.155). That's why the language is determined by the purpose and the context. Hence, the role of the teacher is to provide a model so that learners understand the aim and the context of the written text. The genre based approach is also defined as "abstract, socially recognized ways of using language" (Hyland, 2008, p.21). It relates writing to social and cultural practice. It is purposeful communicative writing that relies on the context and speech community. Thus, teachers should reinforce the use of a combination of the three approaches product, process and genre, or what can be named "a process-product hybrid". Therefore, teacher should gradually integrate each approach during a writing activity to help students transfer the knowledge they get from each approach smoothly and to move naturally from one mode to another to produce a coherent piece of writing.

Writing Stages

Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that the process of teaching writing includes four main stages; planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Every stage includes a variety of learning activities:

a- **Planning or pre-writing**: Planning the writing activity before engaging in real writing encourages and stimulates students to write. So, the writing activities must be prepared to provide learners with learning experiences of writing such as brainstorming.

b- **Drafting**: While doing the drafting for their work, students need to focus on the fluency of writing more than focusing on the accuracy of their works. While engaging in a writing activity, students should focus on the content and the meaning of the writing. Furthermore, they should bear in mind that they would deliver their messages to different audience such as peers and other classmates.

c- **Revising**: To revise means that students check and revise the text to find out if they have effectively delivered their ideas to the reader.

Revision does not only mean to check language mistakes, but it is also done to enhance the content and organization of the ideas, so the writer's purpose is clear for the readers.

   d- **Editing**: In this final stage, students focus on neatening their work as they prepare the final version to be checked and corrected by the teacher. They check mistakes of grammar, spelling, word order, and punctuation.

Writing Strategies

Improving writing skill in both EFL and ESL is a difficult goal to achieve. Kellogg (2008) and Baradaran and Sarfarazi (2011) stated that writing is a means of producing cognitive processes that depends mainly on planning, organizing and revising. Some of the variables that affect the writing process include language proficiency, L1 writing competence, writing knowledge, cohesive devices and writing strategies. Among these variables, writing strategies are considered important because their use differentiates successful writers from less ones.

Through using interviews, Victori (1995, as cited in Si Bouziane, 2020) classified seven types of writing strategies. These are:

1. Planning strategies in which the writer plans and discusses ideas, objectives, and organization.
2. Monitoring strategies which the writer uses to solve problems, check and revise their composition in the writing process.
3. Evaluating strategies used by the writer to revise again the written text, objectives, and ideas and do changes about to the text.
4. Resourcing strategies are concerned with the references used about the target language such as looking up the dictionary for any grammatical or spelling mistakes or to find synonyms.
5. Repeating strategies which are chunk of ideas repeated during the writing stage.
6. Reduction strategies which are used to avoid a problem or solve it.
7. Use of L1 strategies which means using the mother language to generate or evaluate ideas.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher concentrated to four writing skills to deeply investigate the effectiveness of using learning strategies in improving them. These skills were identified as sentence structure, grammar, word choice, and mechanics of writing.

Teaching Writing Skills in Higher Education

Writing is the process of structuring ideas which can sharpen the intelligence. The learners should understand and think of many things to

produce good writing. According to Harmer (2004), there are many advantages of learning writing. First, writing does not have a time limit, which is different from conversation. It means that writing is different from speaking because in writing, students can prepare and edit the writing pattern in a longer time. Second, the students can write and at the same time think about the idea so that they get good motivation. This is the process of composing writing that is influenced by the learning in the class. The brain will inform the language to be written.

Teaching writing skills in higher education emphasize the processes of how students practice to write; what is called by educators as 'the process-based instruction'. This instruction is considered by language researchers as activities that confine students from exploring their ideas to produce a text. This model does not see the end of writing activities to produce a complete text type. To support this instruction, educators in higher education echo the product-based instruction. Coffin et al. (2003) stated that "when writing skills have been explicitly subjected to higher education, the emphasis has been on writing text as a final product". The process and product-based instruction in the teaching of writing has been increasingly applied.

According to Harmer (2004), the writing process is admitted as stages for students to go through in order to come to its final written form. In the class, students are provided certain topics to write about. The process then is designed in stages. The stages applied mostly by educators who identified four stages, namely planning, drafting, editing, and publishing. In the same tune, Syarof, Kuswahono, and Rizky (2018) adopted the stages of writing process cover pre-writing, drafting, sharing and responding, revising and editing, and publishing. It is reinforced by Rusinovci (2015) who argued the publishing phase is the last stage for students to present their complete writing text as a result of taking a long process of learning.

The process-based instruction has different aims of learning rather than the product-based instruction. The product-based instruction is believed by educators to enable students to improve their writing skills. In class, students are asked to read a book or article first and then they write what they got from it. That is the same tune with Haerazi (2018) who described the product-based instruction as text-based instruction. Thus, text-based instruction becomes one of communicative frameworks echoed by Richards (2006); the other name of it is called by the genre-based instructional (GBI) model.

Writing Assessment

According to Brown (2000), there are six categories that can be used as a basis for assessing students' EFL writings. These are:

- *Content*: The content should include: a thesis statement; related ideas; developing ideas through personal experience; opinions, facts, and illustrations; use of description, cause/effect relationships, and compare/contrast relationship; and consistent focus.
- *Organization*: It includes: an effective introduction; logical sequence of ideas, a strong conclusion, and appropriate length.
- *Discourse*: The paragraph should: start with a topic sentence; and have a unity, transitions, discourse markers, cohesion, reference, fluency, economy, rhetorical conventions, and variations.
- *Vocabulary*: This includes appropriate and adequate use of vocabulary.
- **Syntax**: This means that sentences and phrases are grammatically structured to create coherent sentences.
- *Mechanics*: It includes correct spelling, punctuation, citation, neatness, and appearance.

Studies Related to Preservice Teachers' Writing Skill:

Many studies investigated improving writing skills using different strategies. Some of these strategies are mentioned below.

The study of Hakim et.al. (2022) aimed to critically analyze the strategies and policies implemented in conducting Quranic reading and writing learning at the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Imam Bonjol Padang. Participants of this study were: 4 lecturers of the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, 2nd or 3rd semester of Islamic education students in 2016–2017 who took part in Quranic reading and writing learning. Study instruments consisted of interviews, observations, and study documentation. Based on the results of the study, Quranic reading and writing skills learning starts from mapping the abilities of all students, but the follow-up of mapping is not realized in continuous learning. However, the intracurricular and extracurricular activities carried out can improve students' Quranic reading and writing competencies.

In their study, Castillo-Cuesta et. al. (2021) aimed at analyzing the impact of digital storytelling on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pre-service teachers' writing skills. The participants were 101 students, who were enrolled in four distance courses of the English Major at a private university in Ecuador; one control (49) and one experimental (52) group. The instruments included a pre-questionnaire, a pre-test, a post-questionnaire, and a post-test. The main findings indicated that there was a

significant improvement in students' writing skills, particularly in aspects related to grammar and vocabulary.

In their study, Haerazi, Irawan, Suadiyatno, and Hidyatullah, H. (2020) aimed to find out the effectiveness of genre-based instructional model in the teaching of writing skills viewed from students' creativity. This study employed a quasi-experimental research design. The samples consisted of two classes in which one class was treated by using genre-based instructional (GBI) model and the second class was subjected to the process-based instruction (PBI) model. Instruments of the study were a writing test and a creativity test. Study findings indicated that the GBI model was more effective than the PBI model. Thus, students having high creativity have better writing achievement than those who have low creativity.

The study of El-Sweedy (2019) aimed at developing EFL creative writing skills, as simplified in short stories, and writing dispositions using Salmon's E-activities model of online learning. Participants of the study were 96 from fourth-year preservice teachers enrolled in the English Section at the Faculty of Education, Benha University. Two main instruments were used; the EFL creative writing pre-posttest with a scoring rubric and the writing disposition scale. Results showed that e-activities learning model was effective in developing EFL creative writing skills and writing dispositions, and that writing disposition can be used as predicators for EFL creative writing skills. It

The study of McMullen (2009) investigated the use of language learning strategies (LLSs) by Saudi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students inside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study investigated if gender and academic major have any effect on that use. Data was collected during the academic year 2007–2008 from three sample universities in Saudi Arabia using Rebecca Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a self-report questionnaire, as the instrument. Participants of the study were 165, 71 male students and 94 female students. The results showed that female students used slightly more LLSs than male students, and Computer Science students used slightly more LLSs than Management Information Systems students.

Learning Strategies
An Overview of Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are specific steps taken by learners to enhance their learning. The active use of language learning strategies helps learners to be in control of their own learning by developing language skills,

increasing confidence and motivation while learning. Strategy instructions enhance learners' self-dependence and autonomy and help learners to take responsibility for their own learning. The more strategies a learner uses, the more he/she feels confident, motivated and self-efficacious. Teachers are encouraged to choose appropriate teaching techniques and learning strategies for students and teach them how to understand learning strategies to enhance levels of self-directed learning (Shi, 2017).

According to Graham (2012, as cited in Si Bouziane, 2020), "a strategy is a series of actions (mental, physical or both) that writers undertake to achieve their goals. Generally, there are three main types of language strategies; meta-cognitive, cognitive, and social strategies. Meta-cognitive, which is also called mental process helps the learners monitor their own learning. This process also helps the learners during learning, which includes planning, deciding to choose the way they want to learn, and evaluating their learning. Moreover, the stages of the learning process include planning, monitoring, and evaluating. The second strategy, cognitive strategy, involves mental processes. This process deals with selecting appropriate information/source. The last social strategy deals with how students interact with other speakers. It aims to develop learner cultural understanding (Kalati, 2016; Ellis, Denton, & Bond, 2014 & Montaño-González, 2017).

Features of Learning Strategies

According to Oxford, language learning strategies are defined as the often-conscious steps of actions used by language learners to improve the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information. They are also defined as the processes which are consciously chosen by learners and which may lead to actions taken to promote the learning or use of a second or foreign language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about that language. Learning strategies are the particular approaches or techniques that learners employ to try to learn a second or a foreign language. Learning strategies consist of "mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stage in the overall process of language acquisition or language use, in other words, they can be behavioral (for example, repeating new words aloud to remember them) or they can be mental (for example, using the synonyms or situational context to infer the meaning of a new word). Strategies can make learning "easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to different situations" (Oxford, 1990, as cited in Shi, 2017).

A strategy is helpful if it: (a) relates well to the L2 task at hand; (b) fits the specific student's learning style preference to one degree or another' and (c) is used effectively by the student and he/she links it with other relevant strategies (Oxford, 2003). Strategies are also long-range, compared with learning tactics, which are often used interchangeably with learning strategies. Learning tactics are short-term use of particular behaviors or devices while learning strategies are long-term process and learners use different strategies in their different stage of learning process (Ellis, 2008). Learners use different learning strategies when they face different problems, so learning strategies are also problem-oriented which also can be found in Oxford's studies. Oxford (1990) identified twelve key features of language learning strategies as follows: (1)Contribute to the main goal, communicative competence; (2) Allow learners to become more self-dependent; (3) Expand the teacher's role; (4) Are problem-oriented; (5) Are specific actions taken by the learners; (6) Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive; (7) Support learning; (8) Are not always observable; (9) Are often conscious; (10) Can be explained to learners; (11) Are flexible; and (12) Are influenced by a variety of factors.

Importance of Using Learning Strategies

It is well-known that some learners appreciate learning while others regard it as boring and troublesome. That's why learners do not necessarily learn similarly. Therefore, it is essential to see how different learners learn and use information to enhance their written work. This idea is coincided with the immense line of research on LLSs that dated back to the 1970s, when many researchers investigated different studies on the theme "what the good language learner can tell us". One of these researchers characterized the good language learner as making use of strategies, such as making inferences, practicing, self-monitoring, and using the language in real communication. Another researcher emphasized the most important and widely used strategies by good language learners which are as follows:

- Making an effort to communicate and to learn through communication.
- Finding strategies for overcoming inhibitions in target language interaction.
- Making reasoned guesses when not sure.
- Paying attention to meaning
- Monitoring their speech and that of others.
- Attending to form (e.g. grammar)
- Practicing the language whenever possible. (Cohen & Weaver, 2005, p.5)

Since 1970s, research has proved that good language learners make use of learning strategies (Chamot & El- Dinary, 1999; & Cohen, 2003) and has stressed how consciously and unconsciously language learners perceive, store and retrieve what they learned. According to Grenfell and Harris (1999),

a good language learner is one who takes personal decisions, in an implicit or explicit manner, regarding what to do to facilitate learning in whatever context they find themselves. They know what to focus on and which strategies might apply at any particular stage of the learning experience. They actively seek information, opportunities to practice and assistance from available resources, including people around them and from printed documentation. (Grenfell and Harris, 1999, p.39)

Types of Language Learning Strategies

Recently, increasing evidence of the effectiveness of LLSs has been highlighted to perform specific tasks and acquire knowledge. Researchers have clarified that the continuous use of LLSs in language classroom leads to the success of EFL learners. Therefore, an increasing number of foreign studies have investigated LLSs. Many researchers tried to identify LLSs, e.g., O'Malley et, al. (1985) who arranged them into Metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective.

Besides, Oxford (1990) clarified the distinction between the direct and indirect strategies; the former is like what the performer do in a play; while the latter is like the language learners' do as if he/she adopts the role of the play's director in regulating and controlling. Remembering vocabulary and understanding new grammar rules can be grouped under the heading of direct strategies; in contrast, planning for learning, cooperating, regulating emotions are involved within indirect strategies. Later, Oxford (1990) catered for language learning strategies classification in depth. She lately transferred into a readymade questionnaire named Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) which is employed in almost all studies related to LLSs all over the world. A huge number of studies on LLSs using Oxford SILL are investigated throughout the world and classified into three categories. The first category is about studies striving to depict the use of strategies. The second focuses mainly on how the use of strategies result in the production of more successful learners as gauged either by language proficiency or achievement test. The last category includes the investigation of the variables that may affect learning strategies use. These factors encompass motivation, age, proficiency level, gender, the subject taught and so forth. As already mentioned, Oxford (1990), in her Strategy Inventory for

Language Learning (SILL), orchestrated six categories of LLSs: (1) memory strategy (e.g., grouping, representing); (2) cognitive strategy (e.g., repeating, analyzing); (3) compensation strategy (e.g., switching to the mother tongue); (4) metacognitive strategy (e.g., linking new information with already known one); (5) affective strategy (e.g., lowering anxiety by listening to music, motivating oneself); and (6) social strategy (e.g., working collegially). These strategies are discussed in more details as follows:

- **Memory Strategies**: Memory strategies enable learners to restore and retrieve new information. Memory is one of the most important primary mental functions of human beings. It is the active mental procedure of retraining and reviewing information or experiences. These strategies (Also known as mnemonics) have been found to upgrade recalling through the association of new information with natural words and pictures. These strategies include relating the word to be held with some already learnt information, employing some type of symbolism and grouping. Based on memory strategies, many steps are offered to help learners build up a more proficient and compelling memory. Students benefit from being given directions in both visual and verbal format. A difficult word can be replaced by a common word; utilizing visual pictures to remember words; the use of handouts to effectively well sort out the information, improving short memory enrolment by making learners underline, highlight new words; taking a test as a retrieval practice. The use of mnemonics, which are memory training devices or ways of making sentences to help remembering, include, rhymes, acronyms or reviewing the primary letter of each word (Atay & Ozbulgan, 2007).

- **Cognitive Strategies**: Cognitive strategies are mental routines or procedures for achieving cognitive goals like solving a problem, studying for a test or understanding reading texts. Cognitive strategies are personal strategies that help learners change and deal with information. Cognitive strategies can be recognized by the use of a dictionary, organizing information, reading out loud, analyzing, summarizing and reasoning. Other researchers identified three kinds of cognitive strategies: organization strategies, which recognize information to be learned to make it more meaningful; rehearsal strategies, which include the repetition of the information to be learned; and elaboration strategies, which link new knowledge and previously acquired information (Alharthi, 2012, pp.75-76).

- **Compensation Strategies:** Compensation strategies include compensation for any missing knowledge. Deneme (2008) contended, "Compensation strategies allow learners to use the language despite the gaps in knowledge" (p. 84). Some of these include approximation, through using an alternative term that expresses a close meaning of the target lexical term. Moreover, students would make up new words to communicate an idea that they do not have the required vocabulary so far. Even using non-linguistic signals such as mimes, gestures or facial expressions when having difficulties to communicate, using equivalent words to demonstrate an expression including several words to describe a single word are considered compensation strategies. Besides, students may choose the subject of discussion in light of interest and simplicity of vocabulary. Students may employ an L1 word by changing it to L2 phonology, for instance, adding to it an L2 suffix within L1 morphology. This procedure is called foreignising.
- **Metacognitive Strategies**: Metacognitive strategies involve the awareness and control of one's thought and ideas. This kind of strategy requires knowledge that is used to interpret ideas, to solve problems, to think, to reason, but most importantly to learn. Self-direction, mindfulness and conscious control of one's own reasoning and learning are referred to as Metacognitive strategies. Adopting Nunan ideas, Mistar et.al. (2014) defined metacognitive strategies as "learning strategies that encourage learners to focus on the mental process underlying their learning" (p. 297). Thus, Metacognitive are the way in which learners plan, monitor and control their reasoning. In the classroom, teachers are responsible for helping learners develop better metacognitive skills by joining dynamic reflection through the learning procedure. The teacher may assess learners' work to discover where their strengths and shortcomings lie. Students may also consider their learning and decide how well they have learnt something. They may also use self-questioning to check their own particular information as they are learning. In addition, learners may employ discourse to examine thoughts with each other and their instructor as they may give constructive comments to their peers.
- **Affective Strategies**: Affective strategies are concerned with how to manage feelings, inspiration, attitudes and one's affective traits. Deneme (2008), clarified that affective strategies help regulate emotions, motivations and attitudes (for example, strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self-encouragement). In fact, lessening

anxiety levels through listening to slow music and profound breathing are one sort of affective strategies. Laughter and the use of humour is also an excellent way to reduce one's tension. Bringing self-talk to the conscious level by reminding oneself of his/her progress and his/her available resources, setting goals for learning; using journals in which one may expound on his emotions to peers; using agenda to quiet nonsensical apprehensions; sharing feelings to a trusted, positive companion are all steps and techniques implied within affective strategies.

- **Social Strategies**: Social strategies include working with peers, collaboration and cooperation with others are. These strategies enable learners to learn through connection with others. Social strategies are altogether variations of three essential strategies. Initially, coordinating with others i.e., communicating with companions or individuals proficient in the target language one is learning. Second, making inquiries for help, clarification, explaining for correctness and lastly, having compassion with others through offering the human experience to others and understanding them. Cohen and Dornyei (2002) identified three most important social strategies: asking questions, co-operating with others to complete a task, and peer revision. Shapira and Lazarowitz (2005) emphasised the importance of interacting with peers so as to overcome learning obstacles and its effects on improving thinking, facilitating the writing process and thus developing writing as a whole.

This study focused on using the cognitive and metacognitive strategies to improve EFL preservice teachers in Tikrit.

Related Studies about Using Learning Strategies

A number of studies investigated the effect of using learning strategies on improving EFL writing skill. Some of them are discussed below:

In this study, Kpeglo and Mortey (2021) investigated English language learning strategies of pre-service teachers in a Ghanian College of Education. Participants were 48 (1st and 2nd year)pre-service teachers of a public College of Education in the Volta Region of Ghana, offering Bachelor of Education (JHS) programme. In this study, the instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire whose items are based on Oxford (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The study showed that the most often utilized methods by the students were metacognitive and

compensatory strategies. Students made little use of memory and cognitive techniques.

Junianti, Pratolo, and Wulandari (2020) aimed at identifying the strategies of learning writing used by EFL learners at a higher education institution. Participants of this study were EFL learners registered as active students in an Indonesian higher education aged mostly between 18 until 22 years old. Instruments of this study included a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as data collection concerning the three types of strategies; cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies. The result showed that the average use for each strategy is as follows, 79% for metacognitive strategy, 74% for cognitive strategy, and 81% for social strategy.

Si Bouziane (2020) investigated the impact of using language learning strategies on enhancing the writing skill of EFL learners at the intensive language teaching centre of Mostaganem University. The participants of the study were learners enrolled in the Intensive Language Teaching Centre of Mostaganem University representing three levels of proficiency: elementary, intermediate and advanced. They were males and females whose ages ranged from 18 to 38 years old. The researcher used Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (1990) to assess learner's strategy use. The results showed that memory strategies are the least ranked by elementary and intermediate learners. Advanced learners reported using affective strategies most frequently as they are ranked in the first position, followed by compensation strategies.

The purpose of Baltaoğlu and Güven's (2019) study was to analyze the relationship between the perceptions of self-efficacy, as well as learning styles and strategies of teacher candidates at Anadolu University, in terms of various variables. The research were 4100 teacher candidates at Anadolu University Faculty of Education. Three different assessment tools were used for data collection: the "Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale"; the "Kolb Learning Styles Inventory III"; and the "Learning Strategies Scale". The study revealed a low level of relationship between the self-efficacy perceptions of teacher candidates, their learning styles, and the learning strategies they use.

Dejene, Tamiru, and Dagnew (2018) explored preservice teachers' entry characteristics: approaches to learning and their teaching approach preference when joining teacher education programs. Descriptive survey method was employed. Participants of the study were (293) selected from secondary preservice teachers enrolled in two Universities for Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching (PGDT) program. The Revised-Two-Factor Study Questionnaire and Approaches to Teaching Inventory were used for data

collection. The study revealed that the preservice teachers have joined teacher education program with behaviorist orientation, which is not in harmony with the reform in teacher education.

Pilot study

In order to provide evidence for the problem of the study, the researcher conducted a pilot study on 30 preservice teachers at Tikrit University to determine their writing skills level.

To test the writing skills of the preservice teachers that participated in the pilot study, a writing skills test was compiled based on what they study in their English language subject. The writing skills test consisted of written texts in their English syllabus. It was noticed lack of Coherence, cohesion, and even proper use of proper mechanics of writing.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the researcher's experience in the field of TEFL, results of the pilot study, and the review of literature, the research problem was stated as follows:

EFL preservice teachers at Tikrit University have a low level in their writing skills. Therefore, the researcher suggested using a learning strategies-based program as a means of improving the EFL preservice teachers writing skills.

Research Questions

This research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. -What are the features of a learning strategies-based program to develop the writing skills of EFL pre service teachers at Tikrit University?
2. What is the effectiveness of a learning strategies-based program effective in improving writing skills of EFL preservice teachers at Tikrit University?

Hypotheses

This research attempted to verify the following hypotheses:

1. There is a statistically significant difference at the ≤ 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group on the post administration of the EFL writing skills test in favor of the experimental group.
2. There is a statistically significant difference at the ≤ 0.05 level between the mean score of the experimental group on the pre and post administration of the EFL writing skills test in favor of the post administration.

Purpose

The present research aimed at:
1. Developing a learning strategies-based program to develop EFL writing skills of preservice teachers at Tikrit University.
2. Determining the effectiveness of the learning strategies-based program in developing EFL writing skills of preservice teachers at Tikrit University.

Significance

The present research would contribute to:
1. Enriching literature concerning using learning strategies in enhancing EFL writing skills of preservice teachers.
2. Providing EFL teachers with a teacher guide on how to various learning strategies in improving students' writing skills.
3. Paving the way for other researchers to do more studies on the effectiveness of using learning strategies in improving the English language skills.

Delimitations

This research was delimited to:
1. Sixty EFL preservice teachers at Tikrit University in Iraq.
2. Four writing skills that are necessary for the preservice teachers: sentence structure, word choice, grammar, and mechanics of writing.

Participants

A sample of 60 EFL pre service teachers from Tikrit University divided into two groups. An experimental and a control group. Thirty in each group. The experimental group was taught via the strategies based program. The control group was taught through the regular method.

Design

The current research adopted the quasi-experimental design to apply the learning strategies-based Program. The participants were divided into two groups: experimental and control. The experimental group was taught through using the proposed learning strategies-based program to improve their writing skills. At the same time, the control group continued to study according to the regular method. The pre-post EFL writing test was administered to both groups before and after the program. The results of the pre-post EFL writing test were analyzed by using t- test for independent samples.

Instruments

The following instrument was designed and used by the researcher.
- A writing skills pre-posttest.

Definition of terms

Writing Skill

For the purpose of this research, the researcher defined writing skill as the ability to think and use your thoughts on paper to form clear sentences that convey clear meaning using correct sentence structure, grammar, word choice, and mechanics of writing.

Learning Strategies

For the purpose of this research, the researcher defined learning strategies the actions or processes made by the learner in order to improve their reading comprehension and writing skills.

Results and Discussion

Testing the First Hypothesis

The first hypothesis stated that "There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean score of the experimental group and that of the control group on the post administration of the EFL writing skills test in favor of the experimental group.

Table 1 shows the results of t-test of the control and experimental groups on the post administration of the writing skills test.

Pretest:

By using t-test for independent groups:

Table 1

Comparing the Performance of the Control and Experimental Groups on the Post-Administration of the EFL Writing Skills Test

skills	group	N	Mean	SD.	t	df	Sign.
SS	Exp.	30	4.8000	.40684	0.614	58	None
	Control	30	4.8667	.43417			
WO	Exp.	30	4.7667	.67891	0.424	58	None
	Control	30	4.8333	.53067			
G	Exp.	30	4.8000	.80516	0.584	58	None
	Control	30	4.9000	.48066			
MoW	Exp.	30	5.9667	.18257	1.414	58	None
	Control	30	6.0333	.18257			
total	**Exp.**	**30**	**20.3333**	**.99424**	**1.256**	**58**	**None**
	Control	**30**	**20.6333**	**.85029**			

Table (1) shows the results concerning the third hypothesis which addressed the differences between the mean scores of both the control and the experimental group on the post administration of the writing skills test in favor of the experimental group.

Table (1) indicates that there is a statistical significant differences at the 0.01 level between the mean score of the post administration of the

writing skills test of the experimental group and those of the control group in favor of the experimental group as the t value was .64 is statistically significant at 0.01 level. These results support the fact that the experimental group outperformed the control group which may be attributed to the effect of the strategies program (the proposed treatment).

Testing the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis is stated that "There is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean score of the experimental group of the pre and post administration of the EFL writing skills test in favor of the post administration of the writing skills test.

Table 2

Comparing the Performance of the Experimental Group on the Pre-Post Administration of the EFL Writing Skills Test

skills	group	N	Mean	SD.	t	df	Sign.	η^2	E.S.
SS	Pre	30	8.7667	.97143	16.746	58	None	0.83	Great
	Post	30	5.2333	.62606					
WO	Pre	30	8.8000	.61026	22.474	58	None	0.90	Great
	Post	30	5.3000	.59596					
G	Pre	30	8.6000	1.16264	13.379	58	None	0.76	Great
	Post	30	5.3333	.66089					
MoW	Pre	30	9.3000	.91539	16.572	58	None	0.83	Great
	Post	30	6.1333	.50742					
total	**Exp.**	**30**	**35.4667**	**1.22428**	**33.634**	**58**	**None**	**0.95**	Great
	Control	**30**	**22.0000**	**1.81944**					

Bonferroni correction of significance = 0.01

Results in table (2) shows that the mean score of the experimental group pre service teachers on the pre administration of the writing skills test is (35.4667) while the total means of the post administration of the writing test is (22.000). This indicates that the high mean score was obtained for the post administration of the test.

The results in table (2) illustrate that the estimated value is significant at 0.01 level and this reflects that there is a significant difference at 0.01 level and this reflects that there is a significant difference between the two groups on the post administration of the writing skills test. Thus the results of the t-test was verified.

To calculate the effect size, the researcher used Eta squared. The value for Eta was high for the total test at (0.95). This shows that this high level of the effect size is due to the learning strategies program that had a great effect on the pre service teachers writing skills.

Conclusion

Based on the statistical analysis of the writing skills hypotheses, it was clear that the experimental group outperformed the control group in all the speaking and writing skills, and the *t*-values were highly significant at 0.01 level. Besides, the experimental group's post test results were much better than the pretest results. These findings indicate that the learning strategies based program proved to be more effective in developing the participants' ability to write better and enhance their writing skills.

References

Alharthi, K., (2012). *The impact of writing strategies on the written product of EFL Saudi male students at King Abdul-Aziz University.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. King Abdul-Aziz University, Saudi Arabia**.**

Atay, D., & Ozbulgan, (2007). Memory strategy instruction, context learning and ESP vocabulary recall. *ESP, 26*, 39–51.

Badger, R., White, G. (2000). A process-genre approach to teaching writing. *ELT Journal, 54*(2), 153–60.

Baltaoğlu, M., & Güven, M. (2019). Relationship between self-efficacy, learning strategies, and learning styles of teacher candidates (Anadolu University example). *South African Journal of Education, 39*(2), 1–11.

Baradaran, A., & Sarfarazi, B. (2011). The impact of scaffolding on the Iranian EFL learners' English academic writing. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 5*(12), 2265–2273.

Brown, D. (2000). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.

Castillo-Cuesta, L., uinonez-Beltran, A., Cabrera-Solano, P., Ochoa-Cueva, C., & Gonzalez-Torres, P. (2021). Using digital storytelling as a strategy for enhancing EFL writing skills. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 16*(13), DOI: https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v16i13.22187

Chamot, A., & Keatley, C. (2003). Learning strategies of adolescent low literacy Hispanic ESL students. Proceedings of the 2003 Annual Meeting of the America Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Cohen, A, & Dornyei, Z. (2002). Focus on the Language Learner: Motivation, Styles and Strategies". In N. Schmitt (ed.), *An introduction to applied linguistics*. London: Arnold, pp. 170–90.

Cohen, A., & Weaver, S. (2005). Styles and Strategies-Based Instruction: A Teachers' Guide. Retrieved August 15, 2022, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267796204_Styles_and_Strategies-Based_Instruction_A_Teachers'_Guide

Grenfell, M. & Harris. (1999). *Modern language and learning strategies: In theory and practice*. London: Rout ledge.

Coffin, C., Curry, M., Goodman, S., Hewing, A., Lilis, T., & Swann, J. (2003). *Teaching academic writing: A toolkit for higher education.* New York: Routledge.

Deneme, S., (2008). Language learning strategy preferences of Turkish students. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 4(2), 83–90.

Dejene, W., Tamiru, A., & Dagnew, A. (2018). Pre-service teachers' approaches to learning & their teaching approach preferences: Secondary teacher education program in focus. Cogent Education 5(1). DOI:10.1080/2331186X.2018.1502396

Di Loreto, S., & McDonough, K. (2013). The relationship between instructo feedback and ESL student anxiety. *TESL Canada Journal*, 20-25.

Dudley-Evans, T. (1998). Developments in English for specific purposes: A multidisciplinary approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ellis, A., Denton, D., & Bond, J. (2014). An analysis of research on metacognitive teaching strategies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 116,* 4015–4024. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.883

El-Sweedy, N. (2019). Using Salmon's e-activities learning model for developing EFL preservice teachers' creative writing skills and writing dispositions. *Journal of Faculty of Education, 120,* 51–110.

Haerazi, H. (2018). Developing an interculture-based language learning model in the teaching of writing skills for English language education in higher education. S3 Dissertation, Dept. of Language Education Science, UNY.

Haerazi, H., Irawan, L., Suadiyatno, T., & Hidyatullah, H. (2020). Triggering preservice teachers' writing skills through genre-based instructional model viewed from creativity. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE) 9*(1), 234–245. DOI:10.11591/ijere.v9i1.20395

Hakim, R., Ritonga, M., Khodijah, K., Zulmuqim, Z., Remiswal, R., & Jamalyar, A. (2022). Learning strategies for reading and writing the Quran: Improving student competence as preservice teachers at the

Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training. *Education Research International, 3*, 1–7. DOI:10.1155/2022/3464265

Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach writing*. London: Pearson Education.

Hyland, K. (2008). *Academic discourse*. London: Continuum.

Junianti, R., Pratolo, B., & Wulandari, A. (2020). The strategies of learning writing used by EFL learners at a higher education institution. *Ethical Lingua, 7*(1)1, 64–73.

Kalati, E. (2016). Learning strategies in second language acquisition. Research & Reviews: *Journal of Educational Studies, 2*(4), 4–8.

Kamrul, M., & Akhand, M. (2010). Approaches to writing in EFL/ESL context: Balancing product and process in writing class at tertiary level. *Journal of NELTA, 15*(1-2), 72–88.

Kasımi, Y. (2012). Cognitive and metacognitive strategies employed by Iranian and Turkish EFL readers. *ELT Research Journal, 1*(3), 159–174.

Kellogg, T. (2008). Training writing skills: A cognitive developmental perspective. *Journal of writing, research, 1*(1), 1–26.

Kpeglo, S., & Mortey. F. (2021). English language learning strategies of pre-service teachers in a Ghanian College of Education. *International Journal of English Language Teaching, 9*(6), 52–81.

Keshta, A., & Harb, I. (2013). The Effectiveness of a blended Learning program on developing Palestinian tenth graders' English writing skills. *Education Journal, 2*(6), 208. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.edu.20130206.12

Langan, J. (2001). *College writing skills* (6th ed.). New York: The McGraw Hill Companies.

Langman, J. (2010). *Exploring writing: Sentences and paragraphs* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

McMullen, M. (2009). Using language learning strategies to improve the writing skills of Saudi EFL students: Will it really work? *System 37*(3):418–433. DOI:10.1016/j.system.2009.05.001

Mistar, J., Zuhairi, A., Parlindungan, F., (2014). Strategies of learning English writing skill by Indonesian senior high school students. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ), 5*(1), 290–303.

Montaño-González, J. (2017). Learning strategies in second language acquisition. *US- China Foreign Language, 15*(8), 479–492.

Naeini, M., & Rezaei, R. (2015). Examining and dealing with the issue of reading strategy use by Iranian EFL learners. *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal, 15*(2), 182–195.

Nunan, D. (2003). *Practical English language teaching*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.

Nguyen, T., Hudson, P., & Reedy, D. (2008). Preparing preservice teachers to teach EFL writing: Motivations, perceptions, expectations, and challenges. In: JALT conference 2008: Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads, 31 October – 3 November, 2008, Tokyo, Japan. Retrieved from: https://eprints.qut.edu.au/16813/1/16813.pdf

O'Malley, J., Chamot, A., Stewner-Manzanares, G., Kupper, L., & Russo, R. (1985). Learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students. *Language Learning*, 35(1), 21–46.

Oxford, R., (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know.* Newburry House Publisher.

Oxford, R. L. (2003). Language learning styles and strategies: An overview. Retrieved from: http://www.education.umd.edu/EDCI/SecondLangEd/TESOL/People/Facult y/Dr.%20Oxford/StylesStrategies.doc

Phakiti, A. (2003). A closer look at the relationship of cognitive and metacognitive strategy use to EFL reading achievement test performance. *Language Testing, 20*(1), 26–56.

Richards, J. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Romadhoni, M. (2014). The nature of writing. Retrieved December 20, 2022, from https://syahruzzaky.wordpress.com/ 2014 /01/07/the-nature-of-writing/

Rusinovci, X. (2015). Teaching writing through process-genre based approach. *US-China education review, 5*(10), 699–705. DOI:10.17265/2161-623X/2015.10A.006

Shapira, A., & Lazarowitz, R. (2005). Opening windows on Arab and Jewish children's strategies as writers. *Language Culture and Curriculum, 18*(1), 72–90.

Shi, H. (2017). Learning strategies and classification in education. *Institute for Learning Styles Journal*, 1, 25–36

Si Bouziane, S. (2020). *Using language learning strategies in enhancing the writing skill: The case of EFL learners at the intensive language teaching centre of Mostaganem University.* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University Abou Bakr Belkaid, Tlemcen, Algeria. Retrieved from:

http://dspace.univtlemcen.dz/bitstream/112/16019/1/ouldsibouziane_%20sabria.pdf

Sun, C., & Feng, G. (2009). Process approach to teaching writing applied in different teaching models. *English Language Teaching, 2*(1), 150–155.

Syarof, A., Kuswahono, D., & Rizky, H. (2018). Implementing process writing strategy using weblogs to improve students' ability in writing descriptive text," *Lingua Cultura, 12*(4), 351–355.

Zarra-Nezhad, A., Shooshtari, Z., &Vahdat, S. (2015). The effects of attitude &motivation on the use of cognitive & metacognitive strategies among Iranian EFL undergraduate readers. *English Linguistics Research, 4*(4), 11–22.

Zhang, L., & Seepho, S. (2013). Metacognitive Strategy Use and Academic Reading Achievement: Insights from a Chinese Context. Electronic *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching, 1*0(1), 54–69.