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## Unlocking the Secret of Language Learning Strategies: Improving Year 4 ESL Pupils' Writing Skills

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### Abstract

English is widely acknowledged as Malaysia's second language and learners' proficiency in the language is strongly influenced by their learning preferences, needs, and styles, as well as their cultural backgrounds and experiences. This study aims to investigate the general usage as well as most preferred and least preferred language learning strategies (LLS) in improving language skills particularly writing skills among Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school. This qualitative research targeted the population of primary school ESL learners and used a survey design research approach. The sample in this study was Year 4 ESL pupils in an urban school in Selangor, Malaysia, selected using purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire from Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was adapted as the data collection instrument. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data obtained and the findings showed the common, the most preferred as well as the least preferred LLS used by Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school to improve their writing skills. The importance of using a plethora of LLS in teaching writing skills to ESL learners was also highlighted in this study. The implications of the study suggest the awareness among teachers of the LLS used by their students in improving their writing skills to better tailor their teaching to suit their students' needs. Overall, this study is expected to be significant in providing insights into the effective LLS while guiding Malaysian ESL teachers in enhancing learners' writing skills.

**Keywords:** Descriptive Statistics, ESL Learners, Language Learning Strategies, Survey Questionnaire, Writing Skills

### Introduction

English has become a lingua franca and is increasingly used as a medium of communication worldwide. On that account, it is vital for individuals to learn and master English as it is the second language in many countries, especially here in Malaysia. In order to ensure effective

language learning, language learning strategies (LLS) are crucial in playing their huge role in improving language proficiency and this has been well-documented in the literature. Nevertheless, notwithstanding the growing need in LLS for effective language learning, there is still a lack of understanding among primary school English as Second Language (ESL) learners, especially in the context of writing skills. Writing, in specific, is a crucial part for language proficiency. Alas, it is commonly neglected in the school's language learning curricula, specifically in primary schools (Ellis, 2019; Munchen et al., 2021).

Hence, this study endeavoured to find out the common, most preferred and least preferred LLS in improving writing skills among Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school. This study will be a contribution to the education field on language learning strategies and writing skills, specifically in the primary school ESL learners context, where learners' language proficiency and academic success could be enhanced (Arnawa & Arafah, 2023). By looking into the LLS used by Year 4 ESL pupils, this study aspired to discover the effective learning strategies that can be integrated into language writing lessons. This study will also pinpoint the cruciality of using a plethora of LLS to accommodate and meet the varied learning needs of primary school ESL learners. Overall, this study shall unlock the secret of LLS in improving Year 4 ESL pupils' writing skill with the aims to answer the following research questions

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the common language learning strategies used by Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school to improve their writing skills?
2. What are the most preferred and least preferred language learning strategies among Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school when it comes to improving their writing skills?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Language Learning Strategies**

Over the years, there have been several definitions to language learning strategies (LLS) given by different scholars. One of the most clear and accurate definitions was given by Oxford (1990) where learning strategies are interpreted as 'the certain activities carried out by learners to make the learning process simpler, more efficient, more comfortable, more self-directed, more effective and more applicable to other contexts'. In short, learning strategies are the approaches used to ensure successful language acquisition and they are an essential component of language learning.

Oxford (2011) too categorised language learning strategies (LLS) into two types: direct and indirect, each with three subcategories. Direct strategies are specific to the target language which include cognitive, compensation and memory strategies. Cognitive strategies address the mental processes used by learners to understand their learning. Compensation strategies describe using alternatives to overcome knowledge gaps. Memory strategies involve memorisation in facilitating learning. On the other hand, indirect strategies are related with the overall management of learning and include affective, metacognitive and social strategies. Affective strategies involve emotional needs to aid learning. Metacognitive strategies involve guiding learners in monitoring their own learning whereas social strategies

call out interaction and collaboration with others to learn a language (Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 2011).

Past studies have investigated the role of LLS in language acquisition for ESL learners. Similarly, these studies' findings were on the same page of LLS' significant contribution to language acquisition. LLS can help learners to overcome language barriers like anxiety and enhance their language learning process where learners tend to be more relaxed when speaking. Learners are more engaged and confident hence enhancing their willingness to communicate (Munchen et al., 2021).

### **Memory Strategy**

One of the direct strategies classified by Oxford (1990) is memory strategies. Memory strategies are the mental processes involved in storing new information in memory and retrieving it later. According to Balini (2018), memory strategy helps learners to remember, recall, retrieve and transfer knowledge for subsequent language use. By enabling them to gather and retain new information, memory strategies enable students to classify material as either permanent or transitory memory and recall it as needed throughout learning activities (Sani & Ismail, 2022). As suggested by Oxford (1990) cited in Balini (2018), there are four tactics that learners use as part of their memory strategies, which include creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well and employing action.

Creating mental linkages involves linking new information with existing knowledge through grouping, associating or elaborating and placing new words into a context. For instance, learners create a mental link between the characters and their personality traits to help them remember the characters and their roles in the story. Moreover, applying images and sounds requires learners to relate and connect the images or pictures of the words and their sounds. Learners use visual imagery, sound associations, multimedia to improve their memory. This tactic is especially effective and helpful for visual and auditory learners. O'Malley et al (1985) found that using mnemonic devices improves the accuracy and completeness of learners' writing. Train & Yawiloeng (2022) also proved that using mind-mapping had positively improved EFL students' writing performance. Reviewing well involves practising new information through repetition or other means. Learners conduct regular revisions to be familiar with the new information and eventually store the information in their long-term memory and language usage becomes automatic. For example, learners practise a new grammar structure by writing sentences and repeating it aloud. Rahimi (2021) advocated that revision well contributed to students' writing quality by reducing small grammatical errors, improving expression clarity and making their writing more comprehensible.

Employing action is another tactic that language learners use as part of their memory strategies. This tactic involves physically engaging with new information such as through gesture, movement, role-play or immersion to help remember it. For instance, learners practise ordering food in a restaurant by role-playing with a partner to practise and remember the language concepts. Employing action is helpful for kinesthetic learners. Learners who struggle with rote-memorization techniques can improve their capacity to remember and recall new knowledge by physically interacting with it. This helps learners make stronger connections between the information and their memory. As proposed by Sudarmaji et al (2020) the use of digital storytelling is an excellent strategy to develop students' visual

memory capacity and writing ability since it enables them to engage in active mental processes to strengthen their memory. Without a doubt, teachers play crucial roles in helping learners to acquire memory strategies so that they have the potential to expand their language learning development and succeed as language learners (Tahang et al., 2019).

### **Cognitive Strategy**

Cognitive strategies assist students to communicate in the target language. The acquisition, retention, and utilisation of language knowledge are facilitated by cognitive strategies, which encompass mental processes and techniques that are crucial to language learning (Oxford, 1990). They encompass a range of techniques, such as practice, classification, evaluation, integration, expansion, and self-regulation, that are employed to facilitate and enhance one's own learning. According to Khan & Rasheed (2019) the utilisation of cognitive strategies, specifically rehearsal and elaboration, are fundamental mental processes employed during the encoding of newly acquired knowledge into memory.

Studies have demonstrated that cognitive strategies are of paramount importance in the acquisition of a second language. Cohen's (1990) research revealed a positive correlation between the implementation of cognitive tactics, such as contextual guessing, requesting clarification, and self-monitoring, and the level of English language proficiency among second language learners. The study done by Gustanti & Ayu (2021) also observed a beneficial correlation between cognitive strategies and scores on English proficiency tests. Pupils' learning strategies in writing come in many forms including cognitive strategies. The repetition of writing a text to achieve its intended writing purpose is a cognitive process. Nurharjanto & Widyanoro (2020) stated that pupils manage their plans or opinions both before and during writing by using cognitive strategy. They become more mindful of how their opinions are being organised and how the opinions will be conveyed in their writing task.

Overall, by using these cognitive strategies, learners can enhance their writing skills and become more effective writers. However, it is essential to note that different learners may use different cognitive strategies based on their learning styles and preferences.

### **Compensation Strategy**

Identical with the name, compensation strategies are the approaches designed to compensate for their limitation in an existing knowledge or capability in a specific language aspect like fluency, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary (Oxford, 1990). In order to convey meanings and make the information comprehensible, non-linguistic cues could be used. For instance, Chamot & Harris (2019) suggested gestures or facial expressions could help learners to interpret the meaning easily despite their lack of knowledge or ability. Yet, it is of paramount importance for ESL learners to be sensible to the cultural differences. Certain gestures or facial expressions might have different significance in distinct cultures, hence the usage and interpretation of the cues might be affected. Hence, it is encouraged for learners to be aware of these differences and modify the use of non-linguistic cues accordingly.

To improve ESL learners' language skills, there are several direct compensation strategies that ESL learners can use. To give an instance, when learners are unsure of the accurate and concise word to use, descriptive language could be used to help express their ideas more effectively and in a simpler manner. Syafryadin et al (2020) advocated that



descriptive language could prevent confusion and ensure the intended meaning to be portrayed better. Another strategy is to use circumlocution, synonyms or antonyms to replace an exact word they could not remember from their new knowledge. To give an example, this was suggested by Salam & Arifin (2020) that learners could use a roundabout expression involving several words to illustrate an idea when their used words were unfamiliar. Additionally, visual aids like illustrations or diagrams could be an aid in elaborating, explaining or reinforcing complicated ideas or concepts (Oxford, 2019). One more such strategy is the use of context clues. If learners come across unfamiliar words or expressions, they might depend on the surrounding context to presume the meaning. This example is specifically suitable for learners during reading and listening tasks. It is also another effective method to improve their understanding in reading and add to their vocabulary knowledge (Nguyen, 2022). Lestari & Wahyudin (2020) also mentioned that compensation strategies pertain to the act of making intelligent guessing and surmounting constraints in verbal and written communication.

To sum up, compensation strategies are, without a doubt, practical and beneficial for learners particularly in language learning. By using non-linguistic cues, descriptive language, context clues, visual aids and many other more compensation strategies, learners are able to effectively express their thoughts better, clearer and more understandable.

### **Metacognitive Strategy**

The theory of metacognition has been widely studied in cognitive psychology because of its emphasis on the individual's 'thinking about thinking'. Tetzlaff et al (2021) stated that there are three main components of metacognition that contribute to self-regulated learning: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience and metacognitive skill. Metacognitive knowledge provides a 'database' for regulating learning, whereas metacognitive experience refers to an affective aspect through which learners know or monitor how well they are learning to facilitate future learning; and metacognitive skills are strategies learners use to apply their learning. These are not distinct, independent factors; rather, they interact in intricate ways to affect how learners learn, create and solve problems. This is aligned with Wenden (1998)'s definition of metacognition that learners develop metacognitive knowledge when they gain insight into their own learning processes and outcomes. On the contrary, the ability and techniques that learners use to manage, direct, organise and guide their learning through explicit planning, supervision of the process, and evaluation of the learning outcomes are known as metacognitive skills.

Undeniably, learners benefit greatly from learning how to think, which highlights the significance of teaching metacognitive skills. According to Marantika (2021), metacognitive skills assist learners to improve their thinking which in consequence affects their learning outcomes. Many past studies reviewed that learners who are able to use metacognitive skills have been shown to have better learning outcomes as they are able to use autonomous learning strategies to overcome learning challenges and are motivated by their own initiative (Teng and Zhang, 2020). Similar findings were reported by (Karademir and Akgul, 2019). Learners that employ metacognitive strategies are more effective and efficient learners because they are more capable of discovering relevant information, identifying reliable sources, and selecting effective methods for solving problems in learning. Hence, teachers play a crucial role in metacognition strategy since they are responsible for fostering the

development of learners' metacognition and instructing them on the usage of efficient strategies for the many activities required for language learning.

### **Affective Strategy**

The affective strategy that emphasises learners' ability to manage attitudes and emotions during the learning process, such as reducing anxiety, discussing feelings with others, self-encouragement, self-reinforcement and self-talk, is crucial in English language learning. (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). It involves the learner's learning development, including intrinsic affective factors such as learning motivation, attitude and goals (Alrashidi, 2022). Learners' self-motivation and interests that have been generated throughout the learning process are essential in attaining and sustaining their engagement and persistence towards their self-learning capabilities (Lai et al., 2022). Driven by the self-motivation that learners themselves develop, learners will voluntarily remind themselves of the advantages of autonomous learning and mastery of a new language (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Deepening into learners' intrinsic factors, affective strategy is forecasted to be the best solution to overcome English Language Learning (ELL) anxiety that many of the ESL and EFL learners have. (Gaoat et al., 2022). Learners' anxiety and passive attitudes towards learning might arise due to the non-conducive learning environment, teachers' favouritism and peer comparison. They are afraid of making mistakes and are reluctant to express and share their opinions. By referring to the results of this past study, learners' learning needs, preference learning styles, learning opportunities and learning environment, which may influence their emotions, confidence, motivation and engagement to master a language skill should come beforehand the knowledge content to optimise their learning. In this context, the affective strategy enables the teachers and learners to obtain information about learners' psychological and mental readiness to learn and continue to monitor their mentation throughout the knowledge acquisition process. Therefore, at the beginning of the learning process, it is particularly important to guide learners to set learning goals that are compatible with their learning ability and proficiency (Ceylan, 2019; Bulqiyah et al., 2021).

### **Social Strategy**

Social strategies emphasise relationships and interactions with people to practise the language, and it involves the process of helping to receive and obtain feedback, such as collaboration and question clarification, with the goal of gaining knowledge about the target language (Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Lai et al., 2022). This strategy encourages cooperation and communication with others while learning a language, a form of social behaviour in which learners practise language learning with others.

Under this circumstance, peer cooperation and collaboration in the form of discussions and sharing opinions are the most frequently reported strategies, in which learners feel more comfortable to check information, evaluate their learning outcomes and present their learning performance with their peers as mentioned by (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). In addition to classroom learning and practice, most learners are now considered millennials and Gen Z and they have their own ways of practising and acquiring English writing skills outside of the classroom. They feel less pressure to interact with others using written English and often express their feelings on social media, such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and WeChat because it is more informal (Kuznetsova & Soomro, 2019; Lai, 2019).

Peer feedback is another effective social strategy that allows the learners to gain insights and realise one's mistakes or errors through discussion, sharing and expressing their

thoughts and exchanging ideas with the others (Rachmayani et al., 2018). Learners correct their writing together during the learning process as they seek peer feedback as effective and useful guidance to improve their writing due to their easy-to-understand and clear feedback. This positive interaction between learners and their peers amplifies their learning experience as it is an opportunity for them to notice their shortfalls which, in addition to gaining knowledge, helps to improve their writing performance (Kusumaningrum et al., 2020) and motivate the learners to write to achieve the learning outcomes (Noroozi et al., 2020). Hence, the social strategy has a great potential to support and promote learners' writing performance and ability with the help of their peers and guidance from the teachers.

### **The Characteristics of a Good and Successful Language Learner**

Several studies have investigated the characteristics of good and successful language learners. These studies have identified various characteristics, including motivation, learning strategies, self-regulation, language aptitude, and attitudes towards the target language (Kussin & Omar, 2018; Hashim, 2018; Kuehn, 2019; Buckingham & Kervin, 2020).

Good and successful language learners tend to use a variety of LLS and have a positive attitude towards learning the language. According to O'Malley et al (1985), acquiring a second language is primarily supported by effective learning strategies as opposed to first language acquisition. Successful language learners have a strong commitment to learning and the ability to manage their own learning. They constantly monitor their progress and use a variety of language learning strategies which can help them achieve the goal of language learning. Hashim (2018) outlined the traits of effective language learners as using their background knowledge to set goals and strategies, track and assess their progress, and most importantly, find effective solutions to issues or problems arising in language learning. The ability to explore, plan, search for meaning, structure, experiment, develop new language systems, practise, and self-monitor with the language in novel and engaging ways is another trait of successful language learners (Lam et al., 2022). According to Han (2021), intrinsic drive in language learners functions as a catalyst in language learning. Intrinsically driven learners are not concerned with making mistakes; instead, they view them as opportunities to learn and enhance their skills. They are frequently eager to interact with and communicate in the language. Aside from that, good language learners are expected to have a high level of metacognition, which means they are aware of their own strengths and shortcomings and can compensate for them while also regulating their own learning (Hui et al., 2022).

To summarise, in order to help students become successful language learners, teachers and learners are thought to take Language Learning Strategies (LLS) into account. From there, the teacher assists the learners in developing appropriate and effective strategies to help them attain their language learning goals.

### **Writing Skills in English as Second Language (ESL)**

Writing skills are an essential component of language acquisition for ESL learners. This intricate language skill requires a wide range of words and phrases in order to get the message clearly and accurately. As a result, solid thinking skills, precise and brief language, coherence and cohesion, and a writing process were necessary (Muhammad et al., 2022). In the primary ESL classroom, the development of writing skills is a crucial aspect of language learning. The acquisition of writing skills is necessary for effective communication, academic achievement,



and social interaction. Selvaraj & Aziz (2019) asserted that in contemporary times, it's important to be able to write well because nearly each profession that needs paperwork requires writing skills. Therefore to get a job in the current world, one needs to be able to write well. Writing is a cognitive activity that requires the brain to work. Writers need to be able to conjure up ideas and be creative when bringing their thoughts into words. As a result, the instruction of writing skills needs to be incorporated into primary schools as required curriculum because it is such an essential skill for effective communication in today's internationalised world.

Primary ESL pupils, according to Abdullah and Yunus (2019), are risk-takers when it regards writing. Although children are exposed to writing skills and strategies from a young age, English language learners nevertheless view writing as a challenging and complex skill. Pupils must be proficient in all four language skills: reading, speaking, listening, and writing. Writing has been deemed to be the hardest ability to master and teach out of the four skills (Yusuf et al., 2019). The process of writing gets difficult when there are so many different practical and theoretical elements to take into consideration. Pupils' attempts to write in a second language are hampered by a lack of linguistic skills (Ghulamuddin et al., 2021). Habibi and Singh (2019) supported that the skill to write was one of the hardest components of the language due to the fact that it involves both syntax and semantics elements.

The acquisition of writing skills is a crucial aspect of language learning in primary ESL classrooms. Teachers must identify effective methods that enhance primary ESL pupils' writing skills. LLS are required due to the complicated nature of writing skills in order to assist pupils in comprehending and establishing a relationship between writing abilities and other language skills (Sarip et al., 2021). It is suggested that LLS can help learners to develop their writing skills by providing them with the necessary tools and techniques to write effectively in the target language. These strategies promote active participation, peer interaction, and the use of digital tools and resources, which enhance pupils' engagement, motivation, and self-efficacy.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the general usage as well as most preferred and least preferred language learning strategies among Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school, particularly in improving writing skills. The use of qualitative methods for both data collection and data analysis made it easier to give elaboration on the findings according to respective categories.

### **Population and Sample**

This study targeted the population of primary school ESL pupils in Malaysia. The scope was narrowed through purposive sampling. Participants were selected based on specific criterias relevant to the study. Firstly, Year 4 ESL pupils were chosen as they were not exposed to lots of writing tasks back in Year 3. Hence, the findings from this study will help to find out language learning strategies that suit them and contribute to their mastery and proficiency in the target language. A sample of 35 Malaysian Year 4 ESL pupils in an urban school in Selangor were involved.

### **Instrument**

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire adapted from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by using a survey design research approach. The questionnaire was divided into six parts, where every part represented a respective language learning strategy, namely Memory Strategy, Cognitive Strategy, Compensation Strategy, Metacognitive Strategy, Affective Strategy and Social Strategy. Under each part, there are a total of 4 statements about language learning strategies, specifically related to writing skills practised by ESL pupils, making it a total of 24 statements for the participants to look at. Participants were to read each statement and choose one suitable response that describes them best. By referring to the 3-point Likert scale, the three responses provided were 'Always true of me', 'Somewhat true of me' and 'Never true of me'. To ease participants' understandings, visual representations like emoticons were given along with the responses. The use of emoticons was supported by Fischer & Herbert (2021) as it provides emotional meanings and reduces the ambiguity of the responses. The validity of the instrument was confirmed by the Head of English Panel of the school.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The procedure in collecting the data ensured the protection of the privacy and anonymity of the participants. Before approaching the participants, permission was sought from the administrative unit in the school for carrying out this study. After gaining approval from the school, pupils' information was assessed and the participants were selected according to specific criterias. Participants' consent was gained before distributing the questionnaire too. They were informed of the aim of the study and their rights when taking part in this study. Participants were entitled to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

After obtaining confirmation from both the participants and their respective parents or guardians, the questionnaires were handed out to them during a school day where everyone was present. The researchers briefed the participants on their task for this questionnaire and reminded them not to write their names to keep their identities confidential. Participants were given adequate time to complete the questionnaire during school hours. They were given the right to ask for explanations on any statements they were doubtful of, hence the researchers made sure to be present and available during the data collection period to answer any uncertainties and assist them on the queries they might have had.

To guarantee the confidentiality of the respondents' responses, the completed questionnaires were stored securely right after they were collected. The process in collecting the data followed research ethics and guidelines to avoid and limit any biases, which is quite a common limitation in qualitative research (Bergen & Labonté, 2020).

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

The entire procedure in analysing the data was conducted in adherence to ethical guidelines, hence ensuring the privacy and anonymity of the participants. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify the commonly, most preferred and least preferred LLS in improving writing skills among Year 4 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school. The participants' responses were collected, tabulated and presented in the form of percentages. The data was summarised and patterns were identified after categorising and analysing them thematically according to their respective LLS. The participants' experiences

and points of view were able to illustrate the LLS used by them in improving writing skills. The data was then presented using qualitative data analysis techniques where elaborations and conclusions were made. The presentation of data was thorough and easily accessible to aid the evaluation and transcription of the results. Limitations from this study were acknowledged and the implications for future research were provided in the later chapter on limitations and implications.

## Findings and Discussion

### Memory Strategy

Table 1 presented the number of responses and corresponding percentage of participants in relation to the statements pertaining to memory strategies.

Table 1

*Number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under memory strategies*

Statements	(Always true of me)		(Somewhat true of me)		(Never true of me)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I use visuals or pictures to help me remember the new vocabulary words and sentence structures when writing.	1	3	18	51	16	46
I revise new vocabulary words and sentence structures that I learned so that I can use them in my writing.	7	20	22	63	6	17
I use mind maps to help me remember the key ideas in writing.	9	26	12	34	14	40
I act out or role play the scenarios related to my writing to help me remember the key ideas.	5	14	7	20	23	66

Based on the results from the survey, it was found that the majority of the participants, constituting 51% of them, incorporate visuals or pictures to help them remember the new vocabulary words and sentence structures and one participant (3%) consistently made use of pictures and visuals in remembering new words and sentence structures. In contrast, it was discovered that 46% of them abstained from using visual or pictures to help them remember the new vocabulary words or sentence structures. The findings also indicated that a significant number of the participants, comprising 22 participants or 63% of the sample, demonstrated that reviewing new vocabulary words and sentence structures aid them in their writing is partially true. Yet only 20% of the sample agreed that reviewing had helped them use the words and structures in their writing. Whereas, 17% of them failed to revise new vocabulary and sentence patterns.

Out of 35 participants, 26% always utilise mind maps to retain the important concepts and 34% do so occasionally. The study revealed a contrast where 40 % of the samples did not favour using mind maps in their writing. A cohort of 23 participants, which is 66%, more than half of the samples did not prefer the role-playing approach for aiding in the retention of the important concepts. Only 14%, which is 5 participants, preferred acting out the scenarios, compared to 20% who occasionally did. To sum up, it can be drawn that reviewing is the most frequent employ memory strategy by the learners. Aligned with Rahimi's (2021) study, learners gain higher ability to produce writing that has fewer grammatical errors and is more readable through effective revision.

### Cognitive Strategy

Table 2 presented the number of responses and corresponding percentage of participants in relation to the statements pertaining to cognitive strategies.

Table 2

*Number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under cognitive strategies*

Statements	(Always true of me)		(Somewhat true of me)		(Never true of me)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
In my writing, I often use new vocabulary.	8	23	17	48	10	29
I use English to write notes and messages.	21	60	11	31	3	9
When I write, I use English words that I know.	25	71	7	20	3	9
I read English learning materials like textbooks and newspapers and apply the sentences to my writing task.	6	17	20	57	9	26

Based on the results obtained from the survey, the statement 'In my writing, I often use new vocabulary' suggested that approximately half of the total 35 participants, constituting 48% of them, sometimes used new vocabulary in their writing task. For the remaining 52% of participants, it was found that 23% consistently incorporated new vocabulary into their written work, while 29% abstained from utilising new vocabulary in writing tasks. The data indicates that a significant proportion of the participants, comprising 21 individuals or 60% of the sample, exhibit a preference for utilising the English language when composing written notes and messages. The study revealed a contrast between 3 participants (9%) who refrained from utilising English in their written notes and messages, and the remaining 11 participants (31%) who occasionally employed the language for this purpose.

The statement 'When I write, I use English words that I know' demonstrated a positive value, with 71% of the participants, 25 from the total respondents, consistently adhering to this practice. A minority of participants, comprising 20%, occasionally incorporate English words with which they are familiar when writing and only 9% of participants reported never engaging in this practice. A cohort of 20 participants, constituting 57% of the sample indicated that they engage in occasional perusal of English language learning resources, including textbooks and newspapers, with the aim of adapting the acquired sentences from the aforementioned materials into their writing tasks. 26% of the participants did not engage in the aforementioned behaviour, while 17% frequently adhered to it.

It can be inferred that the cognitive strategy used by the majority of respondents is vocabulary selection. Specifically, they have made a conscious decision to use English words that they know when writing. Vocabulary selection is a cognitive strategy that involves selecting and using appropriate words to express oneself effectively (Golparvar & Khafi, 2021). It requires an understanding of the meaning, usage, and connotations of different words and the ability to choose the most appropriate words based on the context and purpose of the communication.

### Compensation Strategy

Table 3 reported the number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under compensation strategies.

Table 3

*Number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under compensation strategies*

Statements	(Always true of me)		(Somewhat true of me)		(Never true of me)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
If I don't know an English word, I try to imagine what it looks like or what it might mean.	10	28	16	46	9	26
If I can't think of a specific English word, I try to use another word that has the same meaning.	16	46	17	48	2	6
I use a dictionary when I don't understand difficult words.	5	14	11	32	19	54
I ask for my teachers' or friends' help when I don't understand difficult words.	9	26	17	48	9	26

The findings showed the majority of the participants would try to guess the meaning or replace unknown or unfamiliar words with another word, instead of relying on reliable



sources under compensation learning strategies. More than half of the participants imagined what the English word looks like or guessed the meaning. Out of the 35 participants, 28% always envisioned the unknown English word, 46% sometimes visualised it while only 26% never did this. Other than making assumptions, a greater number of participants replaced the unknown word with another word with similar meaning. 46% replaced with an almost identical word, 48% sometimes used an alternative word, while only 6% never did. This verified that pupils preferred to deal with matters on their own by substituting the unfamiliar word without ensuring the accuracy of it.

By the same token, most of them avoided using a dictionary or asking for teachers' or friends' help when in need. This could be clearly seen in Table 3 where merely 14% of the participants made use of the dictionary when they encountered difficult words, 32% of them sometimes utilised it and more than half of the participants, which is 54%, never put the dictionary to use. Seeking help from teachers or friends was much the same as the situation of using a dictionary. 26% never attempted getting help, 48% sometimes tried to ask for help while 26% always did. In short, the findings prove that majority language learners tend to depend on their own intuition and assumptions when dealing with unfamiliar words, instead of seeking help from valid sources such as dictionaries and asking for assistance.

### Metacognitive Strategy

Table 4 displayed the number of responses and the proportion of participants who agreed with metacognitive strategies.

Table 4

*Number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under metacognitive strategies*

Statements	(Always true of me)		(Somewhat true of me)		(Never true of me)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I plan and brainstorm to ensure my ideas are more organised.	8	23	22	63	5	14
I try different sentence structures to make my writing more interesting.	15	43	15	43	5	14
I carefully check my work to make sure there were no mistakes.	9	26	18	51	8	23
I ask other people for comments to help me get better at writing.	3	8	9	26	23	66

Based on the results obtained from the survey, the statement 'I plan and brainstorm to ensure my ideas are more organised' suggested that more than half of the total 35 participants, constituting 63% of them, sometimes plan and brainstorm before they start writing. Approximately a quarter of them (23%) always plan and brainstorm first to organise their ideas. However, 14% of them never plan before they write. The data also indicates 86%

of the participants try different sentence structures to make their writing more interesting. Specifically, half of this 86% always try alternative sentence structures to make their writing more intriguing or engaging. A minority of participants, comprising 14% refrained from making their writing more interesting by trying different sentence structures.

Out of 35 participants, 51% review their work to ensure it is error-free with some degree of care. In addition, 26% of the participants always carefully checked their work to make sure there were no mistakes. In contrast, 8% of the participants did not indulge in the aforementioned behaviour. Surprisingly, only 3 participants (8%) seek feedback from others in order to improve their writing. 66% of participants have never considered asking for assistance, compared to 26% who do so occasionally. In summary, the majority of language learners acquire the ability and techniques to manage, direct, and organise their writing through explicit planning and supervision of the process, which is consistent with Tetzlaff et al (2021) findings. However, they lack the essential metacognitive strategy of soliciting feedback or evaluation from others.

### Affective Strategy

Table 5 showed the number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under affective strategies.

Table 5

*Number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under affective strategies*

Statements	(Always true of me)		(Somewhat true of me)		(Never true of me)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I feel happy when I can write well.	16	46	13	37	6	17
I am confident that I can write.	14	40	12	34	9	26
I reward myself when I write well.	6	17	7	20	22	63
I feel nervous whenever I am asked to write.	10	28	9	26	16	46

The study revealed that while 46% of the majority of participants experienced happiness upon successfully completing a writing task, only 17% of the participants did not derive a significant sense of joy from performing well in English writing. Interestingly, the majority of participants (63%) did not have the practice of rewarding themselves for accomplishing writing tasks. Among the remaining 37% of participants, only 17% compensated themselves upon performing well in writing, whereas 20% occasionally gave themselves a treat or prize for excelling in English writing. These findings suggest that the participants were primarily motivated by internal gratification rather than external rewards, as most felt content and happy after producing an excellent written piece in English, without the need for tangible rewards.

The survey of 35 participants found that 40% expressed confidence in their writing abilities by agreeing with the statement "I am confident that I can write," while 46% reported never feeling nervous when asked to write in response to the statement "I feel nervous whenever I am asked to write," indicating a calm attitude toward English writing tasks. However, more than half of the participants (60%) lacked confidence in their writing skills or were hesitant to write in English, which may result in tension when writing is required, as evidenced in the table above. Specifically, 28% of participants reported always feeling nervous when asked to write and another 26% felt occasionally nervous when tasked with completing English writing assignments. The reason for this could be attributed to the participants' inadequate foundational writing skills and insufficient drive to complete writing tasks, as noted in studies by (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019; Yulianawati, 2019; Nurkholijah & Muhd, 2020).

### Social Strategy

Table 6 demonstrated the number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under social strategies.

Table 6

*Number of responses and percentage of participants towards the statements under social strategies*

Statements	(Always true of me)		(Somewhat true of me)		(Never true of me)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I enjoy sharing ideas and opinions with my friends.	6	17	14	40	15	43
I love to discuss a given topic with my friends.	8	23	11	31	16	46
I accept comments and feedback from my friends.	13	37	16	46	6	17
I prefer to write with my friends instead of writing alone.	9	26	15	43	11	31

Based on the presented data, the majority of the participants (43%) did not incline to share their thoughts and ideas about a given topic with their peers. Furthermore, 46% of the participants never discussed the given writing task with their friends. However, more than half of the participants (57%) were interested in exchanging ideas and perspectives with their friends. Specifically, 17% always shared their ideas and opinions, while 40% did so occasionally. Out of the 54% of participants who expressed a liking for discussing a given topic with their friends, 23% always did it while 31% did it sometimes. Despite a significant proportion of participants not enjoying sharing ideas and opinions or discussing a topic with their friends, the majority still demonstrated positive attitudes towards these activities.

The results of the study indicate that the majority of the participants (83%) were receptive to receiving feedback and comments from their peers. Of these, 37% reported that they always welcomed peer feedback, while 46% stated that they somewhat agreed with the statement. This suggests that the peer feedback approach was well-received among the participants, and it did not have any adverse effects on their attitudes towards writing. Furthermore, peer feedback can serve as a useful tool for students to identify their writing strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas where they can improve (Kurniawati, 2022).

In terms of writing preference, 69% of the participants (24 out of 35) preferred to work on writing tasks with a friend rather than alone. Out of these, 26% always chose to collaborate with a friend while 43% occasionally opted for this approach. The remaining 31% of the participants preferred to work on their writing tasks alone. As Kurniawati (2022) points out, interaction with peers and sharing ideas can provide valuable reference and guidance, helping pupils to identify their areas of improvement and understand the opinions of others.

### **Implications and Limitations**

Writing is essential in ensuring academic success and effective communication in many contexts. Using language learning strategies has been proven to be a great approach in enhancing ESL learners' writing skills. The study highlights the importance of incorporating LLS in the curriculum for ESL pupils. The results indicate that the implementation of LLS can have a noteworthy impact on the writing proficiency of Year 4 pupils who are learning English as a second language. In order to implement them successfully, here are some implications for both learners and educators to refer to.

First of all, it is important for learners to acknowledge their own limitations of their own knowledge and make good use of the available resources to improve their language proficiency. Learners' different needs and goals ought to be identified in order to choose the right LLS to cater their strengths and weaknesses, particularly when it comes to writing.

In addition, it is crucial to create a supportive learning environment that motivates learners to collaborate and explore writing courageously. Peer feedback and group discussions allow learners to learn from each other while building collaborative skills and interpersonal relationships. Self-reflections could be another method to encourage learners to be independent where they take more control and responsibility in their own learning by finding out their respective areas for improvement.

Besides, the study underscores the need for teachers to provide explicit instruction and training in LLS. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing effective strategies in writing. Teachers may assist by starting off with listing the available strategies, briefing on when and how to use them effectively. For instance, teachers may provide guidance on the strategies, demonstrate examples on the writing strategies, prepare opportunities for practising different writing strategies and offer feedback and support.

Nonetheless, there exist multiple limitations that warrant careful consideration. The research was centred on a particular cohort of students, specifically those in Year 4 who are learning English as a second language. This may constrain the applicability of the results to

different settings and demographics. It is possible that the results may not be applicable to ESL pupils in different age groups or with different language backgrounds.

Furthermore, the study employed a limited sample size, potentially impacting the statistical power of the analysis and the generalizability of the results. Hence, increasing the sample size would enhance the robustness and reliability of the findings. Moreover, the research utilised self-report instruments to evaluate the implementation of LLS, which could potentially be influenced by social desirability bias and may not precisely depict pupils' authentic utilisation of LLS.

In general, this research paper provides significant insights regarding the utilisation of language learning strategies to enhance the writing proficiency of Year 4 ESL pupils. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of the study when interpreting the results and extrapolating them to different settings and demographics. Further research could be conducted to explore the reasons behind this LLS used in enhancing writing skill for ESL pupils.

### Conclusion

Generally, incorporating language learning strategies (LLS) in the curriculum of ESL pupils to enhance their writing skills is important. Learners need to identify their strengths and weaknesses and choose appropriate LLS to cater to their needs and goals. Besides, peer feedback, group discussions, and self-reflection are some strategies that can help learners become more independent in their learning. On the other hand, teachers are also crucial to LLS implementation. It is essential to create a supportive learning environment that encourages collaboration and exploration of writing as well as provide explicit instruction and training in LLS. However, there are several limitations of the study such as the small sample size and potential biases in self-report instruments, which need to be considered when interpreting the results. Overall, incorporating LLS into the curriculum is an effective approach to enhance the writing proficiency of ESL learners. Further research can be conducted to explore the reasons behind LLS use in enhancing writing skills for ESL learners.

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