

Article history (leave this part):

Submission date: 2024-09-03

Acceptance date: 2024-12-13

Available online: 2024-12-28

Keywords:

Compensation strategies, EFL university lecturers, language learning strategies, metacognitive strategies, writing proficiency

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing interest:

The author(s) have declared that no **competing interests** exist.

Cite as (leave this part):

KOBIBI, H. (2024). Challenges of teaching in new media in Algerian universities A field study using semi-structured interviews. *Journal of Science and Knowledge Horizons*, 4(01), 71-81. <https://doi.org/10.34118/jskp.v4i01.3852>
Keltoum GADJA, K. (2024). University Students' Preferences in Seeking Help from Others for Their Personal Issues. *Journal of Science and Knowledge Horizons*, 4(01), 424-439. <https://doi.org/10.34118/jskp.v4i01.3874>



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Journal of Science and Knowledge Horizons

ISSN 2800-1273-EISSN 2830-8379

Writing Evolution: Assessing the Influence of Language Learning Strategies on EFL Algerian Lecturers

Rima SADEK*, Associate Professor

University of Algiers 3 (Algeria) *, sadek.rima@univ-alger3.dz<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2912-7959>

Abstract:

English writing is a compulsory requirement for EFL Algerian University Lecturers; yet, there are many factors that hinder their good writing skill achievement. The present quasi-experimental study identifies the ways in which LLS enhances the writing skill of these teachers learning English at the Intensive Language Teaching Centre of Algiers 3 University. As the emphasis is made on implementation and success rate of various LLS, the research offers exhaustive coverage of how particular training would result in significant enhancements in the features of writing. The findings revealed that incorporating LLS into the English classes offered significant benefits, fostering better writing proficiency and overall language learning outcomes. It also disclosed that the two valued strategies were metacognitive and compensation. It finally emphasized the potential for targeted LLS training to address writing difficulties and promote advanced language development.

***Dr. Rima SADEK**

Introduction

Over the past few years, the Algerian government has attempted to incorporate English into higher education through several official measures. The Executive Decree No. 16-280, issued on November 9, 2016 authorized universities to introduce English-taught programs. This was succeeded by guidelines in 2018, concerning curriculum and program proposals in the English language. By 2022, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research launched teacher training initiatives to improve their English proficiency and pedagogical skills. The language policy was further updated in 2023 to enhance the offered English taught courses and strengthen the support for both students and academics, reflecting a strategic push to align Algerian higher education with global standards.

As part of the Ministry of Higher Education and in support of the general drive to incorporate English to higher education, the Intensive Language Teaching Centre also known as ‘*Centre d’Enseignement Intensif des Langues*’ (CEIL) of Algiers 3 University was then established, offering general and specialized English courses for university teachers. These courses are intended to improve their performance and prepare them with the necessary knowledge to teach in English. Through requiring the professors to undertake CEIL’s programs, the ministry ensures that they are well-equipped to deliver quality English-Medium Instructions and help in the achievement of the aimed English-Taught Programs across Algerian universities.

In addition to enhancing English language proficiency, a key component of the initiative is the boosting writerly practices among university teachers. Writing in a foreign language, particularly in English is a challenging task for the EFL learners as it requires the selection of the accurate vocabulary, appropriate grammar rules, and proper sentence structures (Richards & Schmidt, 2010). Regarding EFL university lecturers learning English at the CEIL of Algiers 3 University, mastering these skills is essential for their professional career. However, many of the adults who embarked on their academic journey with English are still overwhelmed by the act of writing. These challenges are stem from the use of plain language and the cognitive processes involved in organizing language to compose something as simple as an email. The daily demands of commuting, conducting research, attending lectures, writing assignments affects

learners' psychological health (Gadja, 2024). This stress makes writing in English even more difficult, as managing both mental load and daily pressures complicates producing clear and coherent texts.

Therefore, this research aims to find out the effects of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) on the writing output of EFL university lecturers at CEIL. Specific attention is paid to which of these strategies are favoured by the teachers and how these strategies affect their writing outcomes. Previous studies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Cohen, 1998) revealed that various strategies; particularly the metacognitive and compensation strategies enhance the language proficiency including the writing skill. This discussion also points to unveil how these strategies function within the context of university-level teacher higher education. By exploring this, the research seeks to offer practical insights into how the prompting for writing could be tailored in more optimal ways that would benefit EFL lecturers and ultimately improve their academic writing and general use of English language.

In light of the importance of writing in both academic and professional contexts for university lecturers, this research explores these core questions: In what way does the use of LLS affect the writing performance of EFL university lecturers at CEIL? Which LLS do they employ most frequently in writing practices? The findings are expected to provide valuable insight on how strategy training could be incorporated in the English classes' instructions, thereby supporting EFL teachers in overcoming the obstacles of writing in English.

1. Literature Review

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most intricate and demanding skills to develop when it comes to the academic sphere in general, the higher education and scientific research in particular (Hyland, 2003; Hinkel, 2003; Flowerdew, 2008). This is particularly prolonged for Algerian university lecturers who are compelled to publish academic papers and teach in a foreign language, which is English. At the Intensive Language Teaching Center (CEIL) where these lecturers are enrolled in diverse levels of English studies to leverage their language, effective writing is not merely a mode of communication but also a strategic tool for success in career endeavours. However, many EFL university lecturers experience difficulties when writing due to the lack of proper approach or strategy that could complement their writing process. Consequently, learners

should be encouraged to make more effort (Kobibi, 2024) and adopt targeted strategies to improve their writing skills.

1.1 Definition of Language Learning Strategies

In the realm of language acquisition, different definitions of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) have been introduced by researchers. First, Tarone (1981) noted LLS as attempts adopted by learners with the intention of enhancing their linguistic and sociolinguistic proficiency in the target language that is incorporated in their interlanguage competence. Rubin (1987) later elaborated this by pointing out that LLS are the activities that positively interact with the language acquisition device and hence benefit the learners' language learning process. O'Malley and Chamot (1990) further refined the concept as the thoughts or actions that a learner uses to assist in understanding, acquiring or remembering the new knowledge.

Furthermore, Oxford (1990 & 1993) enriched significantly the understanding of LLS by describing them as specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques that students, often deliberately, employ to foster development of their second language skills. These strategies facilitate to internalize, store, retrieve and utilize the new language and act as aids towards self-motivated learning activities that is imperative for learning communicative ability. Over time, the focus of Language Learning Strategies definitions has shifted from the outcomes, such as the linguistic or sociolinguistic competencies, to more process-oriented and characteristic representations.

The following table provides a comprehensive framework of LLS:

Table 1: Language Learning Strategies Classification

Category	Description	Examples of Strategies
<i>Cognitive Strategies</i>	Mental processes that involve direct manipulation of the language.	- Repetition (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) - Summarization (Cohen, 1998) - Translation (Oxford, 1990) - Note-taking (Chamot, 2004)
	Strategies that involve planning, monitoring, and	- Goal setting (Oxford, 2011) - Self-monitoring (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990)

<i>Metacognitive Strategies</i>	evaluating one's learning process.	- Organizing study time (Oxford, 1990)
<i>Memory Strategies</i>	Techniques for storing and retrieving new information.	- Mnemonics (Oxford, 1990) - Flashcards (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) - Visualization (Cohen, 1998) - Chunking (Oxford, 1990)
<i>Compensation Strategies</i>	Techniques used to overcome gaps in language knowledge.	- Guessing meaning from context (Oxford, 1990) - Using synonyms (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) - Gesture use (Richards & Schmidt, 2010)
<i>Social Strategies</i>	Strategies that involve interaction with others to improve language learning.	- Asking questions (Cohen, 1998) - Practicing with peers (Oxford, 1990) - Seeking correction (Chamot, 2004)
<i>Affective Strategies</i>	Strategies to manage emotions, motivation, and attitudes toward learning.	- Self-encouragement (Oxford, 1990) - Stress reduction techniques (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) - Positive self-talk (Oxford, 1990)

The strategies mentioned in this table show how diverse the approaches are which students can employ to deal with different facets of foreign language learning. The combination of these strategies enables learners enhance their language abilities, solve particular difficulties, and consequently obtain better mastery in their target language.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This research is underpinned by several important theories that might explain how LLS influence EFL Algerian university lecturers to enhance their writing proficiency. The selected theories were used to provide broad knowledge about the way writing grows as a multifaceted designed skill influenced by cognitive, metacognitive and social components.

According to Piaget's Constructivism Learning Theory (1977)), learning occurs by the construction of new knowledge that is constructed and based on

ideas and knowledge prior experienced. It further argues that learners are active receivers and take the responsibility for their learning process. In the context of writing, this theory emphasizes the involvement of lecturers in the metaphysical processes and construction of the experience on their understanding of writing strategies employing the concepts of writing through experiential and interactive activities. Through using LLS, such as cognitive and metacognitive strategies, lecturers will actively develop their writing expertise and accommodate their practical needs pointing to the features of academic writing. The constructivism perspective describes the process in terms of internal mental activity of learners and external learning environment process, providing a foundation for the development of effective writing strategies.

Likewise, Flower and Hayes' (1981) Cognitive Theory of Writing offers a detailed model of the writing process, emphasizing three key stages: planning, translating, and revising. Writing is also considered as a problem-solving process which involves managing many cognitive operations together. While planning comprises creating content as well as organizing ideas into cognitive chunks. translating requires transforming such materials into written language. Last, revising the midpoints of editing, assessing, and enhancing the syntactical content semantics. Hence, this theory has a correlation with the practical cognitive LLS including; notes taking, summarizing, and goal setting as it offers the strategic and cyclical approach to writing. Algerian lecturers therefore need to capitalize on these cognitive processes to address writing challenges with a view to achieving mastery in EAP writing.

Another theory that enriches cognitive & constructivist theories is Zimmerman's (1989) Self-Regulated Learning (SRL). It places great emphasis on the direct control of the learner regarding learning processes, plannings, monitors, and assessments. SRL talks about motivation and self-efficacy in achieving academic success. Writing as a self-regulated strategy requires lecturers to set goals, monitor their progress, and reflect upon their performance to refine their skills. and self-regulated processes for learning and instruction. Organization of study time, monitoring, and seeking feedback suit this theory by enabling lecturers to stand on their own and be responsible for the improvement of their writing. In CEIL, the lecturers are learning English as a foreign language; hence, SRL

provides the framework for promoting independence and continuous writing practices.

Therefore, the theories supporting this study, including the Constructivist Learning Theory, Cognitive Theory of Writing, as well as Self-Regulated Learning, will emphasize the complexity of cognitive, metacognitive, and social factors of writing. Combined, these frameworks provide holistic understandings of Language Learning Strategies, which will assist EFL Algerian university lecturers to address the writing difficulties, attain the desired linguistic proficiency, and address academic/professional qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language.

2. Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental research design, using two groups of 14 EFL university lecturers, undertaking their English studies at CEIL. The experimental group received targeted training on LLS whereas the control group did not receive any instruction. This design enabled to compare the performance of the two groups in writing before and after the implementation of LLS to determine the effectiveness of LLS in enhancing their writing ability.

The involved participants comprised 28 university lecturers, all holding PhD degrees in different fields mainly economics, political science, information & communication and other related disciplines. All participants were at an intermediate level of English proficiency at CEIL, which provides three to six months training in general English using the Headway 5th edition book published by Oxford University Press. The participants were selected in a purposive sampling to ensure homogeneity. Additionally, qualitative insights were gathered from interviews with six English instructors at CEIL, who provided perspectives on the implementation and perceived effectiveness of LLS.

3. Data Collection

Data was collected through a rigorous mixed method approach with quantitative as well as qualitative methods in order to gain a rich understanding of the research question underpinning the study. The main data collection tools were questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and pre-experimental post-test design.

To obtain detailed quantitative and qualitative data from the participants who were university lecturers teaching EFL, the Language Learning Strategy Questionnaire (LLSQ) was developed. The questionnaire stemmed from two important research questions. The first part evaluated the respondents' perceptions of writing, focusing on affective and cognitive dimensions. The second section, titled Strategic Mastery, consisted of 21 statements distributed across six language learning strategies: strategies like cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective, Memory and compensation strategies. This approach of data collection enabled the assessment of both the frequency and intensity of their strategy use based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*always*) to 4 (*rarely*).

A semi-structured interview was then conducted with six experienced EFL instructors teaching at CEIL. The interview was carefully structured into three main sections:

1.

Background and Teaching Experience

- This section explored the professors' educational qualifications, professional development, and teaching experience at the university level.

2.

Attitudes Toward Writing Strategies

- It focused on their perceptions of the importance and relevance of writing strategies in EFL contexts. It also investigated the specific techniques they employ to enhance writing instruction.

3.

Strategy Use and Teaching Methodology

- It comprised eleven closed-ended questions, along with one polar question, designed to delve into the specific strategies and methodologies they use in their teaching practice. The responses ranged from "often" to "never," providing a clear picture of the prevalence and perceived effectiveness of different teaching strategies.

Figure 1 : Teachers' Interview

Subsequently, the focus group discussions were guided after the instructional phase to get more information regarding the participants' experience that they had with the language learning strategies. These discussions offered the opportunity to the university lecturers to ventilate their ideas, report their practice and think

over the effectiveness of the applied strategies on their teaching/learning practice and their language development.

4. Procedure

The study was meticulously structured into three major phases. At the outset, the university lecturers were administered a pre-test to assess their initial proficiency and familiarity with Language Learning Strategies. Following, they undertook a series of seven informative-educational sessions wherein the different LLS were tackled in detail. Each session encompassed practical tasks, discussions, and exercises designed to improve their understanding and ability to utilize these strategies. Upon the end of the instructional phase, the same pre-test was re-administered to the participants as post-test in order to compare any changes in the participants' writing performance and strategy use. The three steps are presented in depth below.

4. 1 Pre-Instruction Stage

In the pre-instruction stage, the University Lecturers were accommodated with the research objectives of the study and Language Learning Strategies synopsis. The pre-test was conducted to gauge the participants' initial knowledge, familiarity and application of LLS in their writing. This stage served as a diagnostic tool to determine the participants' baseline proficiency and strategic awareness. They were also requested to spend 15 minutes self-reflecting on the various strategies that they currently employ in their writing and teaching. The purpose of this activity was to set the context for the instructional sessions that were to follow it and to have the participants be more mindful of their strategies.

4. 2 While-Instruction Stage

This stage aggregated the largest part of the study, comprising seven structured and highly descriptive sessions with the purpose of yielding direct teaching of the various LLS. Each session lasted approximately 90 minutes and was carefully crafted to highlight a particular strategy.

Table 2 : LLS Training Sessions

<i>Sessions & LLS</i>	<i>Content & Objectives</i>
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Session 1: <i>Cognitive strategy</i>	Involved exercises on vocabulary acquisition, sentence structuring, and contextual guessing, aimed at improving the lecturers' ability to recall and apply new vocabulary effectively.
Session 2: <i>Metacognitive strategy</i>	Focused on higher-order thinking skills, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own writing processes, with exercises centered on complex grammatical structures such as conditionals.
Session 3: <i>Social learning strategy</i>	Emphasized collaborative learning through group activities where lecturers created quizzes, fostering peer interaction and collective problem-solving.
Session 4: <i>Memory strategy</i>	Introduced mnemonic devices and other memory aids through activities like poetry recitation and rhythm-based exercises to enhance retention and recall of academic language.
Session 5: <i>Affective strategy</i>	Aimed at managing emotions and reducing writing anxiety, this session involved class surveys and reflective discussions on the emotional aspects of writing.
Session 6: <i>Compensation strategy</i>	Taught strategies for overcoming language gaps, such as using context clues, synonyms, and non-verbal communication cues, with tasks designed to simulate real-life writing challenges.
Session 7: <i>Review & Reflection</i>	Lecturers were interviewed individually to reflect on the effectiveness of the strategy training. This session also included a post-test to measure any improvements in their writing proficiency and strategy use.

By the end of this stage, the participants were not only awaited to have deeper understanding of these LLS but also have the capacity to correctly apply these strategies appropriately in their writing.

4. 3 Post-Instruction Stage

In this final stage, the pre-test was re-administered as a post-test immediately at the end of the seventh session of the intervention. This comparative approach was fundamental in identifying any shift in the writing ability of the participants and their LLS training outcomes. Following the post-test, participants were asked to discuss the strategy training in a focus group in order to acquire qualitative data regarding the lecturers' impressions of the training. This discussion availed an opportunity to gain deeper understanding into their experience, difficulties faced, and the perceived effect of the mentioned strategies in relation to their writing as well as teaching practices.

5. Results

Based on the findings of this study, the effects of LLS training on the writing ability of EFL university teachers were determined. The data collected included both the quantitative and qualitative results, offering a balanced picture of how participants' writing were impacted by LLS training.

The results obtained from quantitative analysis of pre- and post-tests revealed improved writing abilities of the participants that undertook LLS training. The pre-test revealed several broad concerns: problems with the syntactical construction of sentences, grammatical mistakes, the choice of the appropriate vocabulary, and the organization of relevant thoughts. Nevertheless, the statistical comparisons between the pre-test and the post-test outcomes showed that the experimental group had notably improved their scores in these areas. The participants made marked progress in the manner in structuring their essays more coherently. There was a significant increase in the clarity of ideas expressed, with fewer ambiguities and more precise language use. The post-test findings also featured a higher understanding and proper usage of complex syntactic structures and writing patterns.

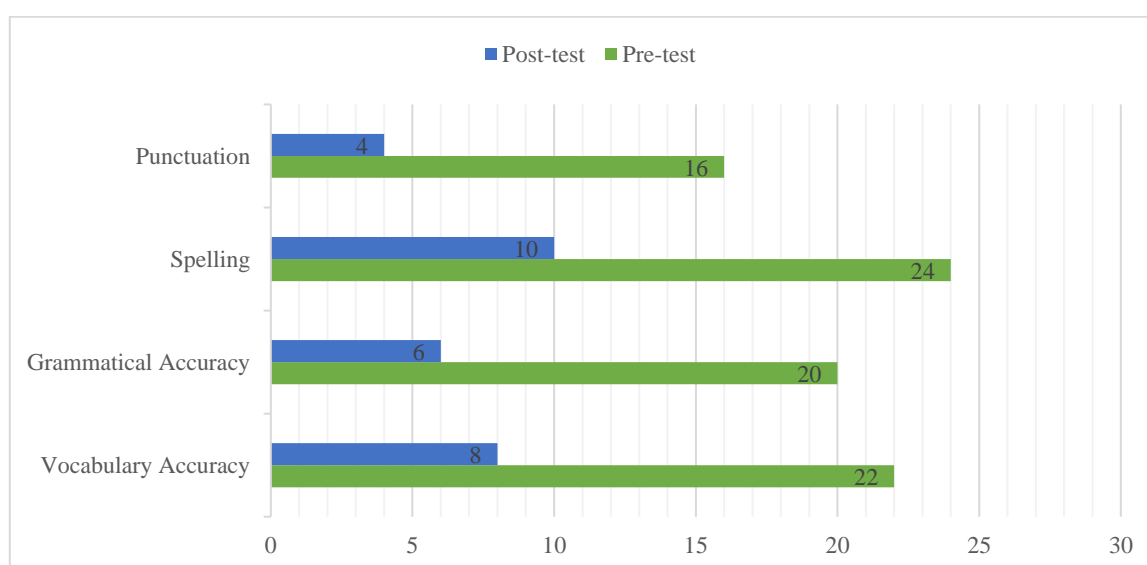


Figure 2 : Learners' Writing Problems

The above figure depicts the writing difficulties that the participants faced and as observed from the figure the number of learners that experience these difficulties have reduced drastically after LLS training. These improvements were statistically substantiated by paired sample t- tests to compare the pre- test and

post- test overall scores of the subjects in experimental group, thereby signifying the efficacy of the trained LLS.

Interview data from the instructors and focus group data from the learners served to further elaborate on the effects of LLS training. Several specific positive changes in the learners' writing behaviour and attitude were observed and reported by teachers (Figure 3). They noted higher activity level during writing assignments and perceived higher levels of self-confidence among learners. In the same token, the teachers stressed that they are more active in terms of seeking feedback and adopting LLS strategies independently.

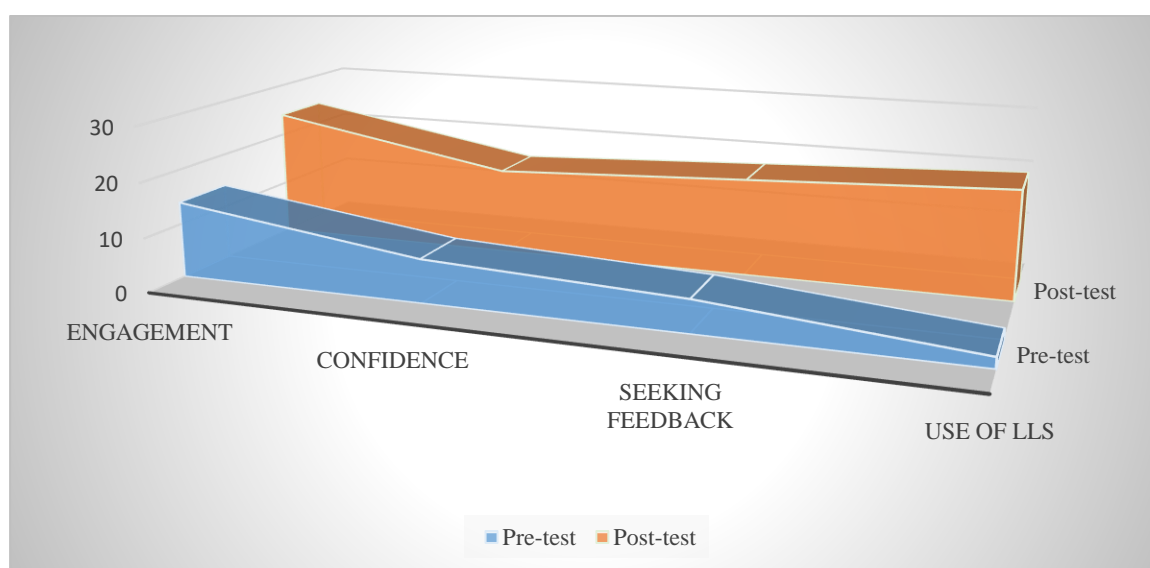


Figure 3 : Teachers' Feedback

In addition, there was evidence that the LLS training benefited the current writing practice of university lecturers as illustrated by results from focus group discussion. Many reported that these strategies allowed them to approach writing tasks with a more systematic mindset. They added that the strategies structured nature organized the flow of their writing process and reduced their anxiety levels. They particularly prized the use of metacognition strategy to monitor their learning, which they found useful for self-monitoring and improving their writing skills.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative results demonstrated quantitative changes in the LLS training and qualitative changes in learners' attitudes and self-efficacy toward writing in the process. The findings in this study provided further evidence to display that specific LLS instruction can yield a

positive impact in improving teachers' professionalism and self-efficacy of EFL university teachers.

Regarding the most frequently used strategies while writing, metacognitive and compensation strategies were found to be the highest ranked among the participants.

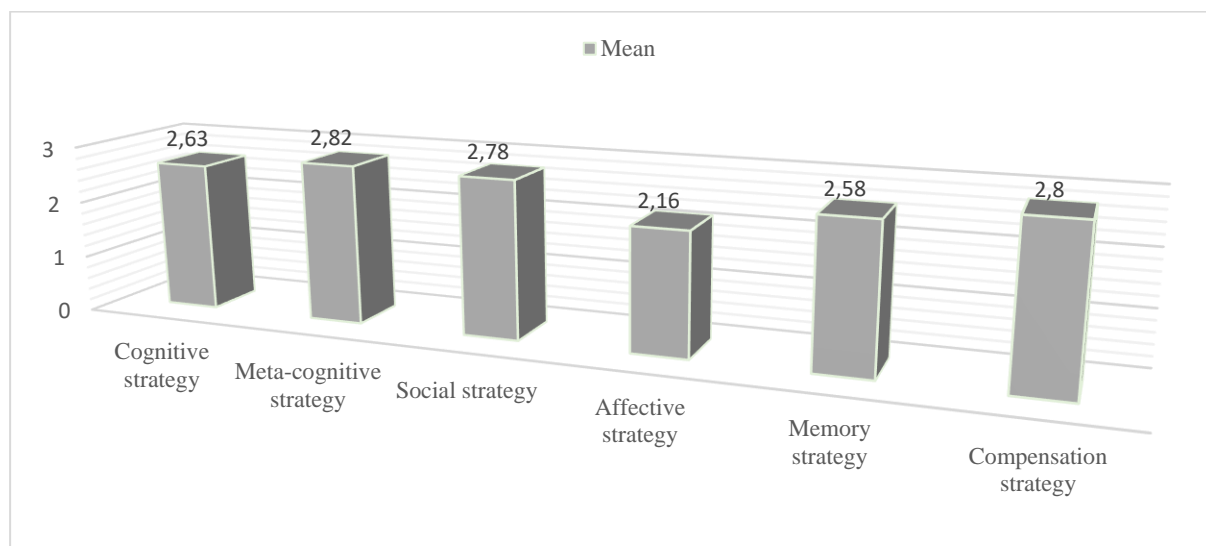


Figure 4 : Learners' Most Used Language Learning Strategies

University lecturers often employed the metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes of the writing. Another common form of coping was compensation strategies including translating from L1 to L2 or in the cases, the L2 students were using dictionaries to look up the meaning of the words they did not understand. These strategies were implemented because it enabled them to articulate their ideas in a more effective and competent manner reducing writing apprehension and enhancing the general writing proficiency.

6. Discussion

This study re-affirmed that the language learning strategies indeed affect the writing performance of EFL university lecturers studying at CEIL, with special emphasis given to the metacognitive and compensation strategies. This again goes in tune with Piaget's Constructivist Learning Theory (1970), which states that any learning occurs through active engagement and construction of new knowledge. Participants' application of metacognitive strategies-planning, monitoring, and evaluating their writing-is proof of how experiential learning help construct and refine the writing skills of learners themselves into better-organized, coherent, and polished essays.

On the other hand, the efficiency of language learning strategies was also clearly felt in the improvement of the learners' writing proficiency. This observation is supported by Flower and Hayes' (1981) Cognitive Theory of Writing, which views writing as a problem-solving process involving planning, translating, and revising. The participants demonstrated increased abilities in goal setting, monitoring, and reflecting on the writing process; all these activities are embedded in the cognitive operations suggested by the theory. This gave rise to more systematic and efficient writing, which reflected the skill of writing as strategic and cyclical.

Compensation strategies also helped to compensate for lecturers' possible language difficulties and made other approaches and resources accessible. This is in line with Zimmerman's (1989) SRL theory: autonomy, goal-setting, and self-monitoring comprise the main elements of that theory. By using such strategies, participants were able to fill gaps in their skills and improve the quality of their written output, a typical characteristic of the self-regulated learner. The ability to set goals independently, evaluate progress, and adjust strategies to surmount the challenges is indicative of the role SRL plays in fostering confidence and competence in writing.

All these strategies incorporated in their classes allowed students to deal with their writing tasks more productively and confidently. Theories that were merged in the process, such as Constructivist Learning Theory, Cognitive Theory of Writing, and Self-Regulated Learning, give evidence of how language learning strategies may work transformational in enhancing writing proficiency among EFL university lecturers.

It is thus worth integrating LLS training into the educational curriculum because it would greatly benefit the EFL learners. Teachers must also be prepared for how to use LLS in the English classes and in writing chores so that apprentices would be provided with the opportunity to use the strategies. Furthermore, this strategy has a great significance while using formal purposes of LLS when the usage requires accurate and precise language. For example, EFL university teachers who have to carry out universal academic writing tasks may benefit pointedly from these strategies, improving both the clarity and quality of their written output.

Conclusively, the research brings into view the need for a change in methodology from the conventional basic writing instructions to practical skills training that prepares the learners for writing tasks. By incorporating LLS,

teachers will constructively impact learners' writing performance and their academic success in developing language writing skills. Besides, theories like Piaget's Constructivism, Flower and Hayes' Cognitive Theory, and Zimmerman's Self-Regulated Learning also provide a sound basis for the explanation of how these strategies empower the learners. Besides, teachers have the ability to add a personal touch by offering emotional support, fostering social contact, and making learning more relevant, helping them become more proficient writers and researchers (Jarrahi, 2018; Bouras, 2024).

Conclusion

The findings of the study disclosed that the deliberate use of Language Learning Strategies, particularly metacognitive and compensation strategies improved the writing achievement of EFL Algerian university lecturers studying English at CEIL. Many of the participants who used these approaches displayed noticeable enhancement in terms of planning and composing their papers, as well as in terms of the language complexity they applied. The gathered results from pre-test and post-tests showcased a direct gain in the upgrading of writing within this scope of education and therefore supporting how a strategy training can help development of writing performance within this educational setting.

Moreover, the analysis of the interview with the instructors that were supervising the English classes and learners' focus group discussions strengthened the obtained results towards the importance of LLS in writing classes. Most of the teachers noted that there was a positive change in learners' writing descriptors after the LLS training and they were in a better position to tackle complicated writing tasks. Implication of LLS into the syllabus could therefore be very fruitful especially in setting where communication is precise and efficient.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the study was conducted with a relatively small sample of participants and within a specific context, which may limit its conclusions' applicability. Despite these constraints, this research provided an understanding of how learning strategies are useful in terms of language acquisition and has provided recommendation for future research on LLS training and its impacts on adults educationally. It offered insights for educators and underscored the importance of integrating LLS more vigorously into language teaching to enhance learners' academic and career performance, in the long run.

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