Language Learning Strategies Used by Year 6 ESL Pupils in Improving Writing Skill

Aimi Khairiyah Hamdan[1,7*], Auni Mohd Adli[2,7], Nur Ain Afifa Mohd Anuar[3,7], Nurul Izzati Mohd Amin Azhari[4,7], Prialoshini Naterkumar[5,7], Shafiyah Mohd Fadzli[6,7] and Harwati Hashim[7]

[1]Sekolah Kebangsaan Air Putih, Malaysia

[2]Sekolah Kebangsaan Sri Tumpat 2, Malaysia

[3]Sekolah Kebangsaan Bandar Baru, Malaysia

[4]Sekolah Kebangsaan Seri Telok, Malaysia

[5]Sekolah Menengah Pin Hwa, Klang, Malaysia

[6]Sekolah Kebangsaan Tekir, Malaysia

[7]Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the importance of Language Learning Strategies (LLS) in supporting English as a Second Language (ESL) learners has gained global attention. As writing is often one of the most challenging language skills to master, understanding which strategies learners use can help teachers better support their development. This study aims to identify the most preferred language learning strategy employed by Year 6 pupils in learning English writing. Using a quantitative research method, data were collected through a survey questionnaire administered to Year 6 (12 years old) ESL pupils. The questionnaire which is adopted from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990), focused on six categories of LLS, including memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, social strategies. Findings revealed that affective strategy is the most preferred language learning strategy among the participants. This suggests that pupils place significant value on managing their emotions, motivation, and anxiety when learning to write in English. While many existing studies focus on adult or older learners, this research highlights a gap by exploring the preferred language learning strategies in improving writing skill among young learners, specifically Year 6 pupils. The findings imply that ESL teachers should incorporate activities that build emotional support and motivation, such as using positive reinforcement, self-encouragement techniques, and a low-anxiety classroom environment. In conclusion, recognising the role of affective strategies can lead to more effective and supportive writing instruction for young ESL learners.

Keywords: writing, language learning strategies, pupils, esl

INTRODUCTION

In the globalized era, proficiency in the English language is no longer a luxury but a necessity, with writing standing as a core skill in both academic and professional domains. Among the four fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—writing is often regarded as the most cognitively demanding. It requires learners to synthesize vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and organization while expressing thoughts effectively (Hyland, 2019). For English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, mastering writing is particularly challenging due to the need for high levels of linguistic competence and metacognitive control. In response to these challenges, Language Learning Strategies (LLS) have gained significant attention as tools that can empower learners to take charge of their own language development.

LLS, as defined by Oxford (1990), are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques used by students to enhance their own learning. These strategies include six main categories: cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective, and social strategies. The strategic application of LLS has been found to correlate positively with overall language proficiency, including writing performance (Griffiths, 2020; Pawlak, 2021). Writing-specific strategies such as planning, organizing ideas, revising drafts, and self-monitoring are particularly associated with metacognitive strategies, which allow learners to regulate and evaluate their writing processes (Rahimi & Zhang, 2021). Thus, examining how learners employ LLS in writing can provide deeper insight into how they develop and refine their writing skills over time.

In recent years, research across various educational contexts has reaffirmed the value of LLS in enhancing writing outcomes. For example, studies in China and Indonesia (Zhang & Yin, 2020; Putri & Marlina, 2021) have shown that students who actively engage in metacognitive and cognitive strategies tend to perform better in academic writing tasks. These learners plan their writing, monitor their progress, and apply grammar and vocabulary rules with greater efficiency. Such findings highlight the universal benefits of strategic learning, regardless of linguistic or cultural background.

In Malaysia, where English functions as a second language and is a critical subject in the national curriculum, developing writing skills among primary school pupils remains a persistent concern (Kaur et al., 2022). Despite curriculum enhancements, many Year 6 pupils struggle with basic writing structures and idea development. This challenge can be partly attributed to limited practice and insufficient awareness of how to strategically approach writing tasks (Rahmat et al., 2024). Several local studies have identified a gap in the understanding of how pupils use LLS to navigate these challenges. For instance, Pragasam et al. (2022) observed a preference for social and affective strategies among younger ESL learners, suggesting that Malaysian pupils benefit from collaborative and emotionally supportive environments when learning to write. However, the strategic application of cognitive and metacognitive strategies—essential for independent writing proficiency appears less developed at this level.

While previous local studies have explored the general use of LLS or emphasized affective and social strategies, they have not specifically focused on identifying which strategies are most preferred by Year 6 pupils in relation to writing skills. This study builds upon that foundation by narrowing the focus to writing-specific strategies and investigating their usage in a specific Malaysian context a national primary school in Kuala Selangor. Using the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) by Oxford (1990) and a 3-point Likert scale survey instrument, the study aims to gather data on learners' strategic behavior. The findings are expected to contribute to pedagogical planning, enabling educators to align writing instruction with learners' strategic preferences and cognitive development. Ultimately, this study aspires to strengthen the foundation of writing proficiency among Malaysian primary learners, promoting more effective and autonomous language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions

The acts and ideas people use, whether intentionally or inadvertently, to aid in their language learning process are collectively referred to as language learning strategies (LLS).In the study of second language acquisition (SLA), it is critical to comprehend these techniques, especially when analysing how young learners like Year 6 students learning English as a second language (ESL) approach the development of certain language abilities. For these students, being proficient in English writing is an essential part of their academic path, and figuring out the language learning techniques they employ in this pursuit can provide important information about their learning styles and the difficulties they encounter.Teachers can better meet the needs of their students by using this knowledge to guide curriculum creation and pedagogical techniques. The manifestation and efficacy of language learning procedures might differ based on the particular skill being addressed, even if they are relevant to all language skills.Consequently, an examination of LLS definitions that can be effectively applied to the intricacies of this specific talent is necessary for a study that focuses on writing. This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the seminal definitions of language learning strategies put forth by three

key researchers in the field: Rebecca Oxford, J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot, and Andrew D. Cohen. By examining their perspectives, this report seeks to establish a robust theoretical framework for understanding the strategies employed by Year 6 ESL pupils in their pursuit of improved writing proficiency.

Definition by Rebecca Oxford

In her seminal 1990 book, "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know," Rebecca Oxford, a pioneer in the field of language learning strategy research, defines these strategies as intentional steps that students take to control and improve their own learning. This learner-centred definition emphasises the visible actions and particular methods used, such organising writing or asking for feedback, with the ultimate objective of improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and enjoyment of language acquisition. Oxford provides a thorough framework for comprehending the different methods students employ to enhance their language abilities, including writing, by further classifying these techniques into six primary categories: memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, emotional, and social.

Definition by J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot

The 1990 work "Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition," by J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot, highlights the cognitive aspect of language acquisition by characterising learning strategies as mental operations and actions that facilitate understanding and memory. They divide methods into three categories: social/affective (e.g., asking for feedback, controlling emotions), cognitive (e.g., taking notes, summarising, and utilising mental images), and metacognitive (e.g., planning, monitoring, reflecting on learning). By taking into account their internal thought processes, learning management, and interpersonal relationships, this framework aids in understanding how young learners—such as Year 6 ESL students approach writing. These observations offer a useful strategy for improving writing abilities in second languages.

Definition by Andrew D. Cohen

In "Strategies in Learning and Using a Second Language," published in 2011, Andrew D. Cohen expands on his previous definition of language learning strategies (LLS), which he first defined as "learning behaviours consciously selected by the learner." In order to comprehend how Year 6 ESL students approach writing, Cohen makes a distinction between language learning and use tactics. While language use strategies are used during the writing process to accomplish tasks efficiently (e.g., planning, drafting, editing), language learning strategies concentrate on gradually increasing writing abilities (e.g., acquiring vocabulary, practicing techniques, obtaining feedback). This distinction gives academics insight into students' strategic choices for writing progress by allowing them to examine whether students prioritise meeting urgent writing task requirements or building long-term writing abilities.

Categorisation

Several frameworks exist for classifying language learning techniques (LLS), but Oxford's (1990) paradigm is one of the most extensively used. It divides LLS into two main categories: direct methods and indirect strategies. Depending on their nature and the cognitive processes involved, these categories can be further subdivided into certain kinds.

DIRECT METHODS

Memory Strategy

These techniques aid students in retaining and retrieving knowledge. Mnemonic devices, linkages between new words and well-known ideas, and visual information organisation are a few examples. For example, using acronyms to help you recall grammatical rules or using flashcards to help you memorise vocabulary (Oxford, 1990).

Cognitive Strategy

This strategy is employed to work with the actual linguistic content. Summarising, taking notes, rehearsing, and examining linguistic patterns are examples of cognitive methods. For instance, rewording a sentence or summarising a section to make it easier to grasp. The goal of these techniques is to improve language comprehension and retention (Oxford, 1990).

Compensation Strategy

These techniques assist language learners in filling in communication gaps. Examples include utilising synonyms to express the same concept when the specific term is unknown or speculating about the meaning of unfamiliar words based on context. These techniques are especially crucial for language usage because they enable students to communicate even when they encounter obstacles (Oxford, 1990).

Indirect Methods

Although they are not directly related to the language content, indirect methods help to manage the learning process.

Metacognitive Strategy

Thinking critically examining one's own thought and learning processes is known as metacognitive strategy. Learners may better organise, track, and assess their learning with the use of metacognitive techniques. For example, making a strategy before beginning a writing assignment, keeping track of one's reading comprehension, or going over a piece of writing to pinpoint areas that need work. By using these techniques, students may successfully control their learning processes and develop more self-awareness (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990).

Affective Strategy

The methods that language learners employ to control their motives, emotions, and attitudes all of which have a substantial influence on their learning process are referred to as affective strategies. These tactics concentrate on establishing a supportive emotional environment and cultivating a psychological state that is favourable to learning. These include tactics for relaxing, positive self-talk, and rewarding oneself for achieving progress, as well as strategies for lowering anxiety, increasing self-confidence, and sustaining motivation. Learners can overcome emotional obstacles, improve their engagement with the language, and ultimately succeed more in their language acquisition journey by skilfully utilising effective methods.

Social Strategy

These tactics use social interaction to improve learning. Enquiring for clarity, taking part in conversations, getting feedback, or working with peers are a few examples. Social techniques facilitate communication and provide students the chance to practise language in authentic settings. (Chamot, 2004; Oxford, 1990).

Based on previous study

Zhang, Thomas, & Qin (2019) stated that, Since the 1970s, research on second language acquisition has focused on language learning strategies (LLS), with early studies examining the strategic behaviours of successful language learners. The foundation for comprehending how language learners approach problems was established by researchers such as Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975), which resulted in the creation of several taxonomies of learning techniques. The identification of these strategies has relied heavily on self-report techniques, such as surveys such as Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). These studies have demonstrated the potential for pedagogical applications in language classrooms by highlighting

not only the traits of "good" language learners but also the teachability of learning techniques to less successful learners.

Chamot, A.U. (2005) mentioned the emphasis has shifted from simply outlining language learning techniques to investigating their function in particular circumstances, such as young ESL learners, and in particular abilities, like writing. Although previous studies examined more and less efficient learners in great detail, more current study also looks at how learning techniques may be integrated with metacognition and self-regulation. This change recognises the intricacy of strategic learning and the necessity of taking into account elements such as learner autonomy and the impact of educational environments on the application of strategies. With the ultimate objective of improving language learning outcomes, the current study attempts to close the gap between finding techniques and successfully putting them into practice in language education.

Table 1: Comparison of Key Definitions of Language Learning Strategies

Researcher(s)	Year	Definition	Focus	Strategy Categories
Rebecca Oxford	1990	Intentional actions taken by learners to enhance learning effectiveness, efficiency, and enjoyment.	Learner-centered, visible behaviors.	Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, Social
O'Malley & Chamot	1990	Mental operations or actions that facilitate learning, understanding, and retention.	Cognitive processes and learner management.	Cognitive, Metacognitive, Social/Affective
Andrew D. Cohen	2011	Consciously selected behaviors for learning and language use.	Distinguishes between learning and use strategies.	Language Learning vs. Language Use Strategies

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The participants in this study comprised a total of 49 Year 6 pupils from a primary school located in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia. These pupils had achieved the highest level Tahap Penguasaan 6 (TP6) in writing, indicating their ability to demonstrate creativity and innovation in applying knowledge to generate new ideas during their classroom-based assessment (Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah, PBD). TP6 pupils were selected as they represent high-achieving learners who are more likely to employ a diverse range of affective and social strategies in vocabulary acquisition. Their advanced proficiency makes them ideal candidates for exploring how such strategies contribute to vocabulary development.

Year 6 pupils were specifically chosen because they are at the upper primary level and approaching a significant transition in their educational journey. At this stage, they have accumulated several years of English language learning experience within the Malaysian national curriculum, equipping them with the cognitive and linguistic maturity to reflect on and articulate their learning strategies. Selecting participants from a single school allowed for a focused investigation within a specific educational context. Convenience sampling was employed due to logistical considerations and ease of access within the school setting.

Research Design

A survey study was deemed appropriate for this research as it enables the collection of data from a relatively large group of participants to describe and quantify their reported behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes regarding their language learning strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This descriptive design aimed to provide a snapshot of the LLS preferences of the Year 6 ESL pupils at a specific point in time. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured that all participants were presented with the same set of questions, enhancing the comparability and generalizability of the findings within the studied population (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019).

Participants

This study involved 49 Year 6 pupils (aged 12) from a primary school in Kuala Selangor, Malaysia. Participants were selected via convenience sampling due to their accessibility. All participants had demonstrated advanced proficiency in generating creative ideas, evidenced by their TP6 scores (the highest proficiency band) in prior classroom-based writing assessments.

Data Collection Method

Data on the pupils' preferred LLS were collected using a questionnaire that was primarily based on the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) Version for Students of English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) developed by Oxford (1990). The SILL is a widely recognized and validated instrument for assessing the frequency of use of different categories of language learning strategies.

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire consisted of 30 closed-ended statements that were carefully selected and potentially adapted to be age-appropriate and contextually relevant for Year 6 ESL pupils in Malaysia. Each statement described a specific language learning behavior or technique. The pupils were asked to indicate how often they typically used each strategy when learning English by responding on a 3-point Likert scale. The three response options provided were:

1. **Always:** Indicating that the pupil uses the strategy in almost every relevant learning situation.
2. **Usually:** Indicating that the pupil uses the strategy in many relevant learning situations.
3. **Never:** Indicating that the pupil does not use the strategy, or does so very rarely.

This 3-point scale was chosen to simplify the response process for young learners, making it easier for them to accurately reflect their frequency of strategy use compared to a more nuanced scale (e.g., a 5-point or 7-point scale) which might introduce cognitive load and reduce reliability (Jamieson, 2004). It is also written in two languages (bilingual)—Malay and English. This ensures that young learners can understand the survey instructions clearly and respond accurately.

In addition to the main questionnaire on LLS, a brief background questionnaire was administered to collect relevant demographic details of the participants. This included information such as their age, gender, and potentially their self-rated English language proficiency level. The self-rated proficiency could provide supplementary information to understand if there are any perceived relationships between their proficiency level and their reported use of specific LLS.

The questionnaire was divided into 6 parts, which focused on different categories of language learning strategies as outlined in the SILL framework (Oxford, 1990). These parts likely corresponded to the broad categories of LLS, such as *Memory Strategies, Cognitive Strategies, Compensation Strategies, Metacognitive Strategies, Affective Strategies and Social Strategies.*

FINDINGS

According to Oxford's (1990) six categories of Language Learning Strategies (LLS), which include memory, cognitive, compensatory, metacognitive, emotional, and social strategies, the results are presented and discussed in this section. Based on their answers to a structured questionnaire, each subsection examines how Year 6 ESL students use these techniques to enhance their writing abilities. This chapter reveals trends in students' strategic behaviour by examining how frequently they employ each sort of technique, whether they said they use it "always," "sometimes," or "never." The results not only show which tactics are most and least frequently used, but they also shed light on how students deal with difficulties in language acquisition, control their emotions, manage their learning processes, and interact with others to enhance their writing skills. Through this study, we want to identify the most successful tactics and areas that may require pedagogical interventions in order to help young ESL learners develop more productive writing habits.

Table 2: Summary of Most and Least Used Language Learning Strategies by Year 6 ESL Pupils

Strategy Type	Most Used Item (% Always)	Least Used Item (% Never)	Interpretation
Memory	Connecting word with image (59.2%)	Using flashcards (55.1%)	Pupils favor visual-auditory memory but underuse structured tools like flashcards.
Cognitive	Using known English words (73.5%)	Writing notes/messages in English (40.8%)	Familiar vocabulary used often; authentic writing tasks less frequently practiced.
Compensation	Guessing new word meanings (65.3%)	Imagining unknown words (34.7%)	High use of meaning-making strategies; less engagement with visual imagination or dictionary.
Metacognitive	Pre-writing (59.2%)	Material preparation (24.4% Never)	Pupils engage in planning but may not always prepare tools or reflect post-writing.
Affective	Feeling happy after error-free writing (85.7%)	Diary writing (61.2%)	Intrinsic motivation strong; introspective emotional strategies underutilized.
Social	Reading friends' work (33.3%)	Asking teachers for feedback (40%)	Collaboration moderately present; structured feedback channels underused.

The analysis of the findings reveals varied usage patterns across the six strategy categories. Pupils show a strong reliance on affective strategies, with emotional satisfaction acting as a powerful motivator in their writing process. This is exemplified by the high percentage (85.7%) of students who report feeling happy when completing a writing task without mistakes. Such emotional reinforcement encourages persistence and engagement. Interestingly, this tendency toward avoiding personal diary writing can also be linked to the profile of the participants, who are high achievers (TP6). High-achieving students often focus on external validation and performance metrics, and may perceive personal emotional disclosures as distractions from their academic goals. Moreover, these learners might feel a heightened sense of pressure to maintain a polished, "successful" persona, discouraging them from openly sharing insecurities or emotional struggles. Therefore, for this demographic, affective strategies that center on shared or structured emotional expression rather than solitary reflection may be more appealing and effective. However, a particularly noteworthy finding concerns the low engagement with diary writing as an affective strategy. A significant 61.22% of pupils reported that they never write about their feelings in a diary, even after producing successful pieces of writing. This suggests that while some pupils are willing to engage in self-encouragement and peer-based emotional sharing, they are considerably less inclined to engage in solitary, introspective reflection. The act of diary writing, which has often been promoted as a reflective tool in language classrooms, may be perceived as too personal or emotionally exposing for young learners.

Among the least preferred strategies in terms of practical application are cognitive strategies, particularly the act of writing notes or messages in English, which 40.8% of pupils report never doing. While 73.5% do consistently use known English words in their writing indicating a degree of lexical confidence this rarely extends to independent language use beyond structured writing tasks. A likely interpretation is that students are more comfortable operating within the limits of taught vocabulary but lack the initiative, opportunity, or motivation to engage in authentic, self-initiated English writing. One might infer that these pupils do not view English as a tool for personal communication, but rather as a subject-specific skill practiced in school. Qualitatively, this may reflect a classroom culture where functional writing such as note-taking, journaling, or informal English expression is not strongly emphasized or rewarded.

In terms of memory strategies, pupils showed a preference for visual-auditory techniques, with 59.2% using image-word associations. This suggests that many pupils learn best when language is connected to concrete visual cues likely reflecting a teaching environment that incorporates multimedia or visual aids. However, the strategy of using flashcards is significantly underused, with 55.1% reporting they never use them. This could be due to limited access to materials, lack of teacher instruction in flashcard use, or the perception that flashcards are only relevant to vocabulary tests rather than writing development. It may also indicate that pupils are more reliant on in-class exposure to vocabulary than on independent revision tools.

Pupils' use of compensation strategies reveals a practical, meaning-driven approach. 65.3% reported always trying to guess the meaning of new words, which reflects a proactive mindset in dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary during writing. This suggests that pupils are developing strategies to maintain fluency even when vocabulary gaps arise, possibly indicating a growing sense of writing autonomy. However, fewer pupils engaged in visual imagination strategies (34.7% never imagined what unknown words might look like), which may indicate either a lack of creative confidence or limited training in visualization techniques. Similarly, inconsistent dictionary use may suggest that pupils either lack the habit or are discouraged by the time it takes to consult external resources during writing.

In terms of metacognitive strategies, 59.2% of pupils reported always engaging in pre-writing activities, such as brainstorming or reading related material. This shows awareness of planning, possibly nurtured by writing frameworks or guided prompts in class. However, only 42.9% reported consistently preparing materials, and 24.4% reported never doing so, which may imply limited habits of strategic organization. Pupils may rely on mental planning rather than physical tools (e.g., draft outlines or vocabulary lists), suggesting room for more explicit instruction in metacognitive preparation. Additionally, self-evaluation is only moderately practiced. Pupils might not yet possess the analytical skills to review their own writing or may be accustomed to receiving feedback primarily from teachers.

Finally, social strategies were used with moderate frequency. While 33.3% of pupils always read friends' work for ideas, only 20% consistently sought teacher feedback, with 40% never doing so. This implies that while peer interaction is somewhat encouraged, possibly through group work or shared writing activities formal feedback-seeking is underdeveloped. Qualitatively, this could reflect a classroom culture where feedback is passively received rather than actively requested. Pupils may be unsure of how or when to ask for help, or they may fear judgment for making mistakes. Encouraging a feedback-positive classroom culture could help students become more autonomous in improving their writing.

In summary, these findings paint a picture of emotionally engaged, visually inclined learners who are confident in applying familiar language but who need further development in autonomous and reflective writing strategies. Their behaviors suggest a reliance on structured classroom activities and external affirmation, with underuse of introspective, independent, and feedback-driven strategies. By embedding more affective reflection, authentic cognitive tasks, and structured peer or teacher interaction into writing instruction, educators can help pupils evolve into more strategic, confident, and independent writers.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that affective strategies are the most preferred language learning strategies among Year 6 ESL pupils, while cognitive strategies particularly those requiring independent language production are the least practiced. These outcomes provide important insights into how young learners manage the demands of writing in a second language and offer clear implications for instructional planning and classroom practices.

The strong reliance on affective strategies, particularly the emotional response to writing success, underscores the central role of intrinsic motivation and emotional reinforcement in shaping pupils' engagement. This emotional satisfaction can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that when learners feel competent and successful, their motivation, persistence, and performance improve. Writing success likely becomes a source of confidence and validation, reinforcing continued effort and a positive attitude toward writing tasks. This aligns with findings by Abd Malik et al. (2018), who noted that positive emotions and self-belief are essential components in sustaining learner motivation in academic contexts.

Despite this affective strength, pupils showed limited use of introspective affective strategies, such as diary writing. This reluctance may be due to discomfort with emotional exposure or a lack of safe and familiar outlets for personal reflection in the classroom. Rana (2018) suggests that when pupils fear judgment or evaluation of their private thoughts, they are less likely to engage in personal writing practices. Teachers, therefore, must approach affective development with sensitivity, offering non-threatening alternatives like

anonymous reflection slips, audio recordings, or group-based mood check-ins to build emotional literacy in a more accessible way.

In contrast, cognitive strategies, particularly those that encourage authentic and informal language use, were significantly underutilized. Pupils showed a tendency to use only vocabulary they already knew, but not to extend their writing into real-world applications like notes or messages. This suggests a view of English writing as a formal, test-oriented activity rather than a functional communication tool. Kim (2023) and Hyland (2019) both emphasize the importance of bridging classroom writing and authentic language use, noting that limited exposure to everyday communicative writing can restrict learners' willingness and ability to express themselves independently. Without explicit modeling and practice in writing for real-life purposes such as letters, journal entries, or creative storytelling pupils may not perceive these practices as valuable or relevant.

This underuse of cognitive strategies has serious implications for long-term writing development. According to Oxford (1990), the consistent use of cognitive strategies such as note-taking, summarizing, and rephrasing is essential for deep language learning. Teachers should provide more opportunities for low-stakes, meaningful writing activities such as creating comics, writing to pen pals, or maintaining personal vocabulary logs to help pupils develop both fluency and confidence in using English beyond the academic setting.

Other strategy categories, such as compensation and metacognitive strategies, revealed mixed levels of engagement. Pupils frequently applied guessing techniques when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, which demonstrates problem-solving and a willingness to persevere in communication. However, less frequent use of tools like dictionaries or imagery suggests gaps in training or exposure to a broader range of compensatory tactics. Similarly, while pre-writing activities were commonly practiced, essential metacognitive components like material preparation and self-evaluation were inconsistently applied. This partial engagement aligns with findings by Nourazar et al. (2022) and Shams et al. (2025), who argue that young learners often benefit from structured scaffolding to build full metacognitive awareness and independence.

Social strategies were moderately used, with pupils showing a preference for engaging with peers, for example, reading classmates' work or discussing ideas. However, pupils were less likely to actively seek feedback from teachers, suggesting that while collaboration is encouraged, the feedback process may not be fully integrated into the learning culture. Long and Doughty (2024) highlight the importance of establishing structured feedback channels and teaching pupils how to request, interpret, and apply teacher and peer input. A lack of feedback-seeking may also indicate classroom dynamics where mistakes are feared or feedback is perceived as evaluative rather than developmental.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study offers important pedagogical insights for enhancing the writing skills of ESL pupils. The findings reveal varied usage patterns across memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies. These patterns suggest the need for a balanced and deliberate integration of strategy instruction into classroom practices.

Educators should provide explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating writing tasks. These strategies help pupils become more autonomous learners by enabling them to regulate their own learning. In parallel, affective strategies, including positive self-talk, managing frustration, and promoting a growth mindset, should be taught to build emotional resilience. Creating a classroom environment that supports risk-taking and minimizes anxiety can further foster motivation and engagement.

Memory and compensation strategies, though somewhat intuitive, should also be emphasized. Structured tools like flashcards, context-based guessing techniques, and dictionary skills can support vocabulary retention and usage. These can be reinforced through engaging, student-centered activities that make learning more dynamic.

Additionally, opportunities for meaningful social interaction should be embedded in writing instruction. Peer feedback, collaborative writing exercises, and group discussions allow students to exchange ideas, gain new

perspectives, and develop critical thinking. Teachers can facilitate these activities by modeling constructive feedback and creating a safe space for sharing.

Reflective tools such as learning journals or digital logs, presented as optional and non-evaluative, can encourage affective engagement without pressuring students into deep emotional disclosure. Such practices normalize reflection as a learning habit while respecting individual differences.

In conclusion, understanding the repertoire of language learning strategies used by Year 6 ESL pupils provides educators with valuable information to design more responsive and effective instructional approaches. By embedding a broad range of strategies into the curriculum and fostering metacognitive and emotional awareness, teachers can help pupils become more confident, motivated, and competent writers.

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