

A STUDY ON MULTIPLE STRATEGIES INSTRUCTION AND LEARNERS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENTS

Fatemeh Mohseny Asl

**Language and Literature Department, Science and Research Branch,
Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
f.mohseniasl@gmail.com**

Abstract

There has been a growing interest toward the effective writing instruction in a way to support learners to become confident and independent, making explicit to the students how to go about the learning process can serve to increase learners' strategies, thus improve their motivation. It heightens students' awareness of writing strategies in enhancing their writing quality and quantity. Furthermore, teaching multiple prewriting strategies can be considered as a fruitful platform to embark on the complex process of writing. In this way, the current study aimed to explore the effect of explicit instruction of three prewriting strategies on the learners' writing achievement. To this end, 42 intermediate students participated in this study, 28 students in two experimental groups received a treatment and the results compared to their 14 counterparts in the control group. The results revealed that the explicit instruction of prewriting strategies greatly optimized the writing achievements of students in two experimental groups and proven to be effective in this regard. The findings have some implications for language instruction and suggest that the implementation of explicit strategy instruction by the teacher can make a world of difference for students in the process of learning

Keywords: Strategy, Explicit Strategy Instruction, Prewriting stage

1.Introduction

Writing in a second or foreign language is an acknowledged difficulty for a majority of learners and imposes many constraints on them. In this way, a good composing process can have a positive effect on students' writing performance (Lee, 2005; Krashen & Lee, 2002) and the way to begin this process lets the students use writing as an intellectual tool (Krashen & Lee, 2004) since writing is a way to represent our thoughts and good thinking leads to good writing (Lee, 2004; Roa, 2007). More importantly, Considering EFL writing from a global point of view, as the main form of currency in

higher education (Crosby, 2003), as a way to communicate which requires the involvement with the new language, the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eyes and hands (Ramies, 1983) and the gap between research findings and the practice in real classroom, the root of students' difficulties in writing has not yet been found (Lee, 2003). A closer look at the source of these difficulties reveals that these problems are rooted in the classroom practices; however, the cure also lies in the same place (Ozturk&Cecen, 2007).

On the other hand, Hedge(2000) refers to the process view of writing and asserts that writing is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process in gradually developing a text. A number of activities such as setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making draft, reading and reviewing and editing are involved in it. Furthermore, Chamot, et al., (1990) assert suggest that effective second language or foreign language learners are aware of the learning strategies they use and why they use them. In this respect, Oxford (2003, p.8) asserts that "L2 learning strategies are specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own L2 learning". Thereby, strategy use and strategy instruction are significant ways for language learning and teaching that most of learners and teachers resort to them in order to ease and improve the process of learning. Meanwhile, there is a widespread consensus among researchers to propose explicit strategy instruction on various stages of writing process (Charney, et al.1995; Huwari& Aziz, 2011; Marshall &Varon, 2009; Masny&Foxall, 1992; Oxford,2002; Wu, 2010) which its effectiveness on the learners' writing performance has been highlighted by many studies (Chamot, 2005; Cohen, 1996; Negari, 2011). Chamot, et al., (1990) assert that the purpose of the writing strategy instruction is to make students aware of writing process and to teach them the strategies associated with the good writing. Moreover, Chamot (2004) maintains that explicit strategy instruction essentially involves the development of students' awareness of the strategies they use, teacher modeling of strategic thinking, student practice with new strategies, student self-evaluation of strategies used and practice in transferring strategies to new tasks. More specifically, this study emphasizes on prewriting stage since most of the students' writing problems that teachers have control on them stem from insufficient preparation for their writing

assignments (Chastain, 1988). Seow (2002) defines pre writing as “any activity in the classroom that encourages students to write. It stimulates thoughts for getting started (p, 316)”. Moreover, Kroll (2001) pinpoints the necessity of exposing students to a variety of strategies to initiate the writing task and to encourage students to practice all the strategies and discover the one that serves them best. In this way, this study subscribes to this notion that no one size fits all and three prewriting strategies namely brainstorming, concept mapping and free writing have been chosen in tandem all with the aim of generating and organizing ideas which open the mind of students and are effective at the moment of blocking and confusion. Regarding the issue of explicit writing strategy instruction and the prewriting stage as the foundation of good writing which has received only minor attention (Schweiker-Marra&Marra, 2000; Stern, 1991) further, the fact that writing environment is conducive to exploring ideas and content (Masny&Foxall, 1992) and the terror of the blank page which may be faced by so many students (Kroll, 2001), more research appears to be needed investigating the effect of explicit writing strategy instruction and the role multiple strategies instruction on learners’ writing achievement.

2.A review of literature on prewriting strategies

By changing the concept of writing from a product to a process leads the teachers to emphasize the prewriting stage (Chastain, 1988).In fact, “the prewriting stage moves students away from having to face a blank page toward generating tentative ideas and gathering information for writing (p, 316)”. Moreover, Kroll (2001) states that a good place to begin the teaching of writing is to explore on the prewriting stage.

3.Method

Motivating students is the first consideration in the prewriting stage. It is important for reducing students’ reluctance and increasing their interest (Adams-Tukiendorf, 2008; Charney et al., 1995; Kroll, 2001).Furthermore, Deciding on the general topic that is of the interest to the students is the first step to embark on prewriting activities. The teacher’s role during this stage is to help students to recall related information and emotions from the past, to activate their imagination far more than their own experience and share them with their classmates for providing additional thinking on a topic (Chastain,

1988). Goldstein and Carr (1995) associate the use of prewriting activities to better writing performance and state that those teachers who encourage their students to use prewriting strategies have seen better results in their students' writing assignments.

3.1. Brainstorming

One of the methods which has a great potential for idea generation is brainstorming. Chastain (1988) states that brainstorming stimulate students' schemata and help students to organize and generate as needed ideas and vocabulary as possible. Mongeau and Morr (1999) assert that brainstorming is a brand name which was coined by Alex Osborn. It refers to the approach for idea generation. Brainstorming, in order to be productive, should follow four rules which are proposed by Osborn (1957) cited in Litchfield (2008):

1. To generate as many ideas as possible that is quantity is important.
2. To avoid criticizing any of ideas.
3. To attempt to combine and improve on previously articulated ideas.
4. To encourage the generation of wild ideas.

Nation (2009) mentions that "brainstorming is preceded by relaxation activities where the learners are encourage to use all their sense to explore on a topic" (p.117). It is one way for idea generation when the learners are allowed to follow their minds.

The purpose of brainstorming is help students to unblock their thoughts or open their minds to find other ways for looking and evaluating things and relieve those feeling which stem from not knowing to write. Moreover, it should not be ignored that brainstorming is a versatile thinking tool that can be used at different stages of writing process (Baroudy, 2008). Moreover, Rao (2007) asserts that students can interact with one another, exchange and organize their ideas in a clear order. So, Students with different background knowledge can benefit from this social exchange. More importantly, a number of studies explored on the effectiveness of brainstorming strategy in improving students' writing performance in terms of content of argumentative essay (Voon,n.d.), content, organization and mechanics of writing (Ibnian, 2011) and the grade awarded (Rao, 2007).

3.2. Concept mapping

Concept mapping first was developed by Novak in his research program in order to understand changes in children knowledge of science (Novak & Canas, 2006). Maycumber and Weathers (2006) state that Novak's use of concept map foster deep learning and it is based on Ausubel's assimilation theory of cognitive learning which learning takes place by assimilating new concepts into existing concepts of learners. Further, Novak and Canas (2010) assert that the use of concept mapping can help students to learn meaningfully. Moreover, Novak and Canas (2006) declare that a concept map is a graphical map visualizing the relationship among concepts. The concepts are enclosed in circles or boxes of some type, and the relationships between concepts are indicated by a connecting link and arrow. All the concepts of a concept map are organized hierarchically. They are usually rank ordered from the most general concept on the top or in the center of the map to the most specific concept in the lowest or most exterior position. It is best to construct concept maps with reference to some specific questions we seek to answer, which is called a focus question. It is a question that clearly specifies the problem or issue the concept map should help to solve. A good focus question can lead to a much richer concept map. It is often stated that the first step to learning about something is to ask the right questions (Novak and Canas 2006).

The benefits of concept mapping are mentioned by Sturm and Rankin-Erickson (2002) as follows:

1. With the assistance of maps, writers can examine what ideas are missing or irrelevant in their writings themselves. As a result, writers can refer to the maps drawn at the planning stage and make the writing process work efficiently.
2. Concept maps enable different writers to construct and organize their ideas in the pre-writing phase; moreover, the visual feature of maps helps mutual understanding.
3. Concept mapping is a particularly good way of organizing information related to a problem or subject.
4. It helps to outline relationships between ideas.
5. It helps to organize and summarize their thoughts during reading, and to organize recall of specific text details and difficult vocabulary.

6. The construction of concept maps helps us pull together information we already know about a subject while integrating new information as we learn and expand our understanding.

Concept mapping has diverse applications. It is mostly favored educational community and has a strong effect on the learners and proved to be useful to be adopted in the classroom. A limited number of studies have implemented concept mapping as prewriting strategy and pinpointed the use of concept mapping as an effective strategy to be applied in teaching EFL writing. Chularut and DeBacker (2003) mention that not only concept mapping is an effective learning tool which leads to the greater achievement of learners' writing performances, but also the construction of concept map is helpful for students to build more complex cognitive structures and spur students to make more explicit links to prior knowledge.

3.3.Free writing

One of the versatile prewriting techniques is free writing. Kroll (2001) states that free writing is suggested by Elbow (1973) as the easiest way to getting started for the native speakers; however, it works best for ESL/EFL students if the teachers provide opportunities of free writing for students by presenting a sentence or an opening clause to begin. Further, the main idea of free writing is that students should write for a specific period of time without stopping. Chastain (1988, p, 256) asserts that “the goal of free writing is to write. The writer’s energies are to be concentrated entirely on the creative process. He should not even consider criticizing what he is saying because criticism hinders the flow of ideas and results in hesitation and blockage of ideas”. The benefits of free writing are mentioned by Elbow (2000) as follow:

1. Free writing gets you going and makes it easier to begin the writing task.
2. It improves thinking as it let us write our thought down instead of just thinking. Thus, this process improves our thinking. In this respect, Rao (2007) points out good thinking leads to good writing.
3. Free writing puts life (voice, energy, presence) into the writing.
4. It helps us to experience the task of writer, being a writer and find some enjoyment in writing.

On the whole, regular free writing is a useful platform at the moment of blocking and confusion. The point in free writing is to trust to your mind and with this arena of trust, there is no matter what kind of writing will emerge. What is important is the process not a product (Elbow, 2000).

In free writing, students should not worry about grammar, spelling and punctuation and there is no need to make any correction. As Raimes (1983) states that there is no need to worry about the form, what should be considered first is the content and fluency. After writing down all the ideas, the other stages of writing process such as grammatical accuracy and organization will gradually follow.

4.1. The participants

The participants in this study were 57 intermediate students, 16 males and 41 females in the three classes. Their age ranged from 16 to 30 with the average age of 20. To ensure their homogeneity in terms of language proficiency, TOEFL was conducted in the three classes. The results indicated that there was not any significant difference among the performance of the three groups. The participating students were all native speakers of Persian. All of whom had been learning English for more than five years. At the end of the course, 15 students were excluded from the study as they did not participate in the posttest. So, the number of the participants decreased to 42 students. There were 14 students in each of the three groups. Two groups randomly were selected as the experimental groups and the third group was considered as the control group.

4.2. Instruments

For the purpose of this study, a number of instruments were used. Two writing topics were selected for pretest and posttest (see Appendix A) and students were offered to write two expository essays about 250 words for about forty minutes. In addition, a handout which included definitions of prewriting strategies, namely brainstorming, concept mapping and free writing with the different examples of them was given to the students in the two experimental groups who received the explicit writing strategy instruction as a treatment. Moreover, an open-ended questionnaire consisting of four questions was used in order to gather in-depth information about the students' feelings and difficulties when they write in English. Further, it

helps students to express themselves in their own terms (see Appendix B). Considering the writing performance, each writing paper was rated based on Jacobs et al. (1981, as cited in Weighle, 2002). According to Jacob et al. scale, five aspects of writing are considered in scaling each writing paper: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics.

In order to find out about the homogeneity of students in terms of language proficiency, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) was administered as a standardized measure to check the homogeneity of subjects. It consists of 140 questions and has the following sections: Listening comprehension (50 items), structure and written expression (40 items) and reading comprehension (50 items). Due to the administrative limitations, listening comprehension section was not included.

4.3. Procedure

The instructional period lasted about twelve sessions for about one hour and thirty minutes each session and comprised of three phases. Homogeneity of the students in terms of language proficiency was established through TOEFL. The results indicated that there was not any significant difference between the performance of the two experimental groups and the control group.

4.3.1 Phase one

Prior to the instruction, at the first session, all experimental and control groups were asked to write about a selected topic about forty minutes.

4.3.2 Phase Two

After all the students participated in the pretests, during the next ten sessions, the two experimental groups received a handout that included definitions of prewriting strategies, namely brainstorming, concept mapping and free writing. The presentation of these strategies was in consecutive manner. Explicit teaching of writing strategy was presented to the two experimental groups following Chamot et al., guideline (1990):

1. Presenting the name and description of strategy: The teacher first capitalizing on what students already know about writing in English gave an overview of strategies before actually beginning the instruction. Then the teacher

presented all the description and required information for the strategies as well as the purposes, the benefits and the significance of each one.

2. Modeling the strategy: The teacher presented the examples of each writing strategies on the board and modeled them for the students. Moreover, the teacher modeled how to rewrite the gathered information into complete sentences.
3. Make practice of strategies: During each session, the students practiced on the provided topics and rehearsed the use of each strategy
4. Guide and feedback: during the sessions, needed guide and feedback provided for the students.

For the first presentation of each strategy, the instructor let students think individually for five minutes get ready for the writing, tap their imagination for information and fresh their minds and ideas. For the first practice, the students were allowed to practice the use of strategy on the board and in their notes under the supervision of the instructor. They further were allowed to verbalize their ideas in pairs or groups in order to exchange their ideas and collaborate with each other. Moreover, brainstorming and concept mapping were taught in tandem. When the students finished brainstorming about one topic “role of fast food in today life” for example, there may be a variety of ideas about it. The instructor asked the students to gather all the key terms and those phrases related to “health effect” in one category and paved the way to teach concept mapping and how to organize the ideas in the graphical representation. In addition, the students rehearsed free writing on several topics as a daily practice. The instructor taught the students to use connectors to organize the key terms and phrases into sentences to write a paragraph. Many writing practices were provided for the students in order to be able to use strategies individually and in their notes as well.

The instruction for the control group conducted in the conventional form that is the flow of the course was similar to the regular writing course. The class followed the routines without receiving any instruction of strategy use in writing. The same instructor taught the students in the control group with the same hours of instruction.

An open-ended questionnaire consisting of four questions was given to the students of three groups in order to gather in-depth information about the students’ feelings and difficulties in writing English.

4.3.1 Phase Three

At the last session, the three groups were asked to write about a selected topic as the posttest. The allotted time for writing was forty minutes. Considering their writing performance, their writing papers were scored based on Jacob et al. (1981, as cited in Weigle, 2002) by two raters. The interpreter reliability for pretest and posttest were .952 and .963 respectively. According to Jacobs et al., scaling each paper was rated on five aspects of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. These five aspects are weighted to emphasize first content (30 points), language use (25 points), organization and vocabulary equally (20 points) and mechanics with very little emphasis (5 points). The final score for each paper was the average score of the two scores given by the two independent raters.

4.4. Design

This study was a quasi-experimental research with the pretest and posttest design as the random selection of the participants was not possible. It involved the comparison of the effect of a particular treatment with another or no treatment. The pretests and posttests were distributed among students at the beginning and end of the study in two experimental and one control group. By assuming a pretest and posttest design, the results of the three groups were compared in order to explore the effectiveness of the treatment.

5. Results

5.1. Test of Homogeneity of the Groups

In order to establish the homogeneity of the three groups in terms of general language proficiency, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the probable difference among the performance of the two experimental and one control groups ($p < 0.05$). The results indicated that there was not any significant difference between the performance of the two experimental and the control groups $F(2, 39) = .117, p = .890$.

Table 1. One-Way ANOVA Test of Homogeneity for the Three Groups

ANOVA						
TOEFL Grades						
	Sum	of	df	Mean	F	Sig.

	Squares		Square		
Between Groups	4.619	2	2.310	.117	.890
Within Groups	772.357	39	19.804		
Total	776.976	41			

5.2. Results on Pretests of Writing Performance

The third research question addressed in this study was whether the explicit instruction of prewriting strategies would improve students' writing achievement in the experimental groups. Initially, descriptive statistics for participants' performances are presented (Table 2). Moreover, the conduction of one-way ANOVA (Table 3) showed that there was not any significant difference between three groups in terms of writing performance $F(2, 39) = 1.286, p = .288, p < 0.05$. Therefore, all the participants in the two experimental groups and the one control group had the same writing performance prior instruction.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on Pretest of Writing Performance

Descriptive statistics Dependent variable: Pretest WP			
Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1. Ex group 1	68.7143	12.28776	14
2. Ex group 2	62.8929	8.13865	14
3. C group	65.4286	7.81482	14
Total	65.6786	9.69839	42

Note. Ex G1: Experimental group1, Ex G2: Experimental group2, C G: Control group

Table 3. Test of between Groups on Pretests of Writing Performance

ANOVA Pre					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	238.536	2	119.268	1.286	.288
Within Groups	3617.875	39	92.766		

Total	3856.411	41			
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5.4. Results on Posttests of Writing Performance

To explore the effectiveness of the treatment in the two experimental groups and compare their improvements with their counterparts in the control group, three Paired Sample t-tests were run to examine each group's writing achievement separately (Table 4). Considering the mean scores and the level of significance ($p < 0.05$), there was a statistically significant increase in the mean scores of the first experimental group from pretest ($M = 68.7143$) to the posttest ($M = 81.9286$), $p = .000$, $p < 0.05$, $t(13) = -5.317$. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant increase in the mean scores of the second experimental group from pretest ($M = 62.8929$) to the posttest ($M = 75.8214$), $p = .000$, $p < 0.05$, $t(13) = -8.076$. On the other hand, there was not any statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the control group from the pretest ($M = 65.4286$) to the posttest ($M = 66.4286$), $p = .615$, $p < 0.05$, $t(13) = -.516$. Therefore, the two experimental groups outperformed in the posttest writing in comparison to the control group. In other words, the learners' performances in the control group were lower than the two experimental groups and there was not any statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest of the control group [$p = .615$, $p < 0.05$]. Moreover, the results of ANCOVA on the posttest achievement scores, using pretest of writing achievement as covariate (Table 5) confirmed the significant difference between the performance of the two experimental groups and the control group and indicated that the difference between three groups was meaningful in the posttest scores ($F = 16.940$, $p = .000 < 0.05$).

Table 4. Paired-Sample T-tests of Writing Performance for Each of Three

Groups

		Paired differences					
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
Pair 1 Ex G1	Pretest	68.7143	12.28776	3.28404	-5.317	13	.000
	Posttest	81.9286	10.04194	2.68382			
Pair 1 Ex G2	Pretest	62.8929	8.13865	2.17515	-8.076	13	.000
	Posttest	75.8214	5.77663	1.54387			
Pair	Pretest	65.4286	7.81482	2.08860	-0.516	13	.615

1 C G	Posttest	66.4286	7.81482	2.42177			
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Note. Ex G1: Experimental group1, Ex G2: Experimental group2, C G:

Control group

Table 5. ANCOVA on the Posttest Writing Scores

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Post						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Group	1443.476	2	721.738	16.940	.000	
Pre	1193.111	1	1193.111	28.003	.000	
Error	1619.050	38	42.607			
Total	4519.101	41				
a R Squared = .642 (Adjusted R Squared = .613)						

5.5. Results on open-ended questionnaire

In order to find out more detailed information about the writing problems and provide qualitative support for the study, all the participants in the three groups were asked to fill in an open-ended questionnaire consisting of four questions related to the difficulties that they may encounter in writing. Eight students in the control group and seventeen students in the experimental groups responded to this questionnaire. It should be noted that students' responses to the open-ended questionnaire were analyzed using content analysis. After reading the data carefully, related statements to each question were identified and similar patterns and the key themes were sought and each assigned a code. The content-analyses of the open-ended questionnaire are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Content Analyses of the Open-ended Questionnaire

1. Difficulties encountered in writing	
Code	Frequency
Not to know what to write	18
Not to know how to start	10
Not to know how to express idea	12
Not to know how to proceed	15
Difficulty in finding the right word	8

Difficulty in grammar usage	6
Organization problems	10
Inability to use what they learned	2
2. Difficulty in organizing thoughts	
Code	
Positive answer	18
Negative answer	5
3. Sharing the experience of writing with teachers & classmates	
Code	
Positive answer	14
Negative answer	6
4. Beneficial activities for writing	
Code	
Reading different materials	10
Doing more exercises	6
Working with samples	8
Know about writing strategies	11

5.6. Discussion

This study intended to investigate the effect of explicit writing strategy instruction specifically prewriting strategies on promoting the learners' writing achievements. The results revealed that the explicit instruction of prewriting strategies which led to the real application of them by the students in the two experimental groups significantly affected their writing performances. At the time of the pretest, there was not any significant difference between the two experimental and the control groups in terms of writing performance. However, this picture changed considerably at the time of the posttest. The two experimental groups outperformed in the posttest writing with higher mean scores in comparison to their counterparts in the control group. In other words, the explicit instruction of prewriting strategies greatly optimized the writing achievements of students. The findings of this fraction of study are consistent with the findings of Ahangari&Behzadi (2012), Chularut&DeBacker (2004), Dujsik (2008), Goldstein & Carr (1996), Ibnian (2011), Li (2007), Negari (2011), Ojima (2006), Piovesan (2007), Pishghadam&Ghanizadeh (2006), Roa (2007) and Talebinezhad&Negari (2007) who tried to provide evidence for the effectiveness of brainstorming, concept mapping and free writing as a prewriting strategies. Furthermore, another goal of the current study was to

raise students' awareness of the efficient composing process. The outperformance of students' writing achievement proved that the explicit instruction of prewriting strategies was effective in this regard. On the other hand, the results of open-ended questionnaire indicated that most of the students related their difficulties in writing to the problems of idea generation and organization. The students' opinions supported the statements of Charney, et al., (1995), Holmes and Moulton (2003), Kroll (2001), MacIntyer and Gardner (1989), Nation (2009) who attributed most of students' writing difficulties to the prewriting stage.

Further, the difficulty in finding the right word and problems in grammar use were mostly mentioned by students as their difficulties in writing. In this respect, Chamot (2005) asserts that writing in a second language is the most difficult of modalities in which to achieve communicative competence. Learners at the beginning level struggle with finding the needed words and remembering the grammatical rules and advanced students have difficulty to link their ideas coherently and produce appropriate target language discourse. Thereby, the instruction of writing strategies at the appropriate level and providing opportunities to expose foreign language learners to vocabulary and grammar use can be beneficial for them.

More importantly, the majority of students expressed their willingness to share their writing problems with both teachers and classmates. This expression alludes to the role of the teacher as a facilitator or a guide in providing a non-threatening environment to learn and collaborate with one another in a learner-centered classroom.

It is worth mentioning that reading different materials and working with samples are expressed by the most of the students as the activities that can help them write better. As reading provides the knowledge of the language of writing, the grammar, vocabulary and discourse styles that the writers need (Lee, 2003; Lee 2005), the students should be directed more toward reading to acquire more of the written language.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study reflected on the robustness of explicit writing strategy instruction and the potentials of prewriting strategies in provoking the dormant thought. It proved the effectiveness of equipping students with the efficient

composing process which resulted in positive outcomes. Furthermore, the current study supported the Chen's statement (2007) that the impact of explicit instruction engages learners more to the dynamic internal changes in the learning process as the learners became more sensitive to the learning process and were willing to know about other stages of writing process by the end of the course.

This study has some implications for language teaching and learning. The fact that writing in a foreign language imposes great difficulties on EFL learners, writing instruction should be conducted in a way to be most beneficial for foreign language learners. Cohen and Macaro (2007) assert that "the ultimate goal of any language instruction is not only to teach learners for a moment but to instill within learners a sense of what it is like to be a lifelong language learner"(p.284). Strategy instruction as a powerful student-centered approach plays a major role in overcoming many problems that learners are faced with.

The implementation of strategy instruction in language classrooms provides true guidance and ample opportunity for learners to practice more. Therefore, language classrooms should have a dual focus on both teaching content and learning strategies. Moreover, strategy as a magic wand of the teacher changes the passive students into active learners as it is consciously chosen by the learners.

On the other hand, learning strategies are sensitive to the context of the learning and the learners' internal processing preferences (Chamot, 2005). In this way, several strategies should be presented in the class in a way that learners feel that they have several ways to begin and end a writing task. Further, they find an opportunity to experience various strategies and figure out how each one can help them best. Thereby, they take the responsibility of their own learning and become more confident and productive in their learning process.

Prewriting strategies can be considered as a fruitful platform for students to break the blockage, generate as many ideas as possible and crystalize their dormant thought to embark on the complex process of writing. They highly contributed to enabling learners to achieve positive outcomes. Further, students are able to overcome the problems of losing the track of mind, prepare a fair plan in order to refer to it in other stages of writing process and organize their thoughts coherently. Hence, strategic

approach to learning is what separate good language learners from poor ones. Its consideration by the teachers and educational designers can help students to reinforce their confidence, creativity and their performance and help students to enjoy the process of writing.

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Appendix A

Writing Topics

Pretest

A: Please write about 250 words on the following statement:

Some people believe that students should be required to attend classes. Others believe that going to the classes should be optional for students. Which point of view do you agree with? Use specific reasons and details to explain your answer.

Posttest

B: Please write about 250 words on the following statement:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? With the help of technology, students nowadays can learn more information and learn it more quickly. Use specific reason and example to support your answer.

Appendix B

Open-ended Questionnaire

Please answer these questions honestly:

1. Do you experience any difficulties while writing in English? If yes, what are they?
2. Do you have any difficulties in organizing your thoughts when writing in English?
3. Do you like to share your experience of writing anxiety with your teacher or your classmates?
4. What kind of activities can you think to be beneficial for your writing?