

한국 학생들의 영작문 전략: 텍스트 분석과 교사와의 인터뷰를 중심으로

English Writing Strategies of Korean Students: Exploring Written Texts and Interviews with the Teacher

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요약

본 연구의 목적은 한국의 한 대학에 개설된 영작문 수업에서 수사 패턴과 의미 구성을 통해 학생들의 영작문 전략을 살펴보는 것이다. 참여자는 선택 과목으로 개설된 영작문 수업의 교사와 학생들이며, 학생들이 작성한 영어 의견문과 교사와의 인터뷰가 주된 데이터이다. 데이터 분석을 위해 ‘주장-근거’ 패턴이 사용되었다. 분석 결과, 89%의 학생들이 주장, 근거, 그리고 결론의 요소를 사용하였으며, 또한 89%의 학생들은 수업 시간에 사용된 교과서에 등장하는 모델 글의 내용을 그대로 모방하거나 혹은 미미한 수준으로 발전시켜 자신들의 글 내용을 구성하였다. 이는 작문에서 창조성과 상상력을 가장 중요시하는 교수자의 수업 의도와는 매우 동떨어진 것이었다. 이러한 결과는 대학 수업에서 좋은 점수를 얻기 위한 학생들의 ‘수용’ 전략으로 해석되어질 수 있다. 본 연구의 결론은 학생들은 교사의 수업 의도와는 상관없이 재설정된 환경에서의 성공을 위해 자신들의 방식으로 영어 작문을 위한 나름의 전략을 구사한다는 것을 보여준다.

■ 중심어 : | 영작문 전략 | 수사 패턴 | 의미 구성 | 주장-근거 패턴 | 수용 |

Abstract

This study aims at investigating Korean EFL students' writing strategies through their rhetorical patterns and meaning-making for a writing task in an English writing classroom at a Korean university. The participants were the students and teacher in the course, and the data comprised nine pieces of students' opinion writing and interviews with the teacher. To analyze the data, a 'Claim-Support' pattern was adopted. The findings show that most students, 89%, demonstrated the same or similar elements in the 'Claim-Support' pattern for their textual structures and many parts of the meaning-making in their writing were originated from the textbook. These findings reflect that the students pursued the strategy of 'accommodation' in order to succeed in their academic writing regardless of the teacher's intention which focused on creativity and imagination in writing. The conclusion suggest that the students tend to establish their own ways of strategy to cope with the recontextualized setting for writing in English.

■ keyword : | Writing Strategies | Rhetorical Patterns | Meaning-making | Claim-Support Pattern | Accommodation |

I. INTRODUCTION

English is in great demand as a foreign language all

over Korea. However, writing in English in not sufficiently taught until university level, and even the students in higher education tend to have few

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opportunities to write in English. This lack of emphasis on writing stems from the competitive entrance examination system which uses mostly objective testing. For these reasons, in general, most Korean students find writing as the most difficult area to master in learning English. They are often not aware of the appropriate strategies to use in EFL writing[1]. Students' writing strategies may be solely constructed by the teacher in a writing classroom. This immediate environment of writing activities might shape the overall values and pedagogic practices of the teacher. In this respect, it may be necessary to see writing as a social practice embedded in social relations within a specific community in which students have to find their own ideological and conventional practices[2].

There has been few research on students' strategies for EFL writing at university level in the Korean context. For these reasons, it is significant to examine the writing teacher's pedagogic practices, students' strategies for writing in English, and how these can be related to each other. This study is the attempt to gain more understanding of the pedagogic practices for teaching and learning writing in English and to share that understanding with others. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate students' strategies for a writing task in an EFL classroom, dealing with a teacher's pedagogic practices and her students' efforts to gain successful academic achievement. Based on the above speculations, the present study is guided by the following research questions:

- (1) What are the characteristics of the teacher's pedagogical practices in an EFL writing classroom?
- (2) What sorts of writing strategies do Korean students use for their rhetorical patterns?

- (3) What sorts of writing strategies do Korean students use for their meaning-making?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. The Strategies for Writing

In general, the main factors which influence on writing may be language proficiency and writing strategies[3]. Within the traditional framework, writing strategies refer to the cognitive activities such as planning, translating, reviewing, monitoring, generation ideas, organizing, goal-setting, evaluation, and revising[4]. However, writing strategies should be analyzed in terms of writers' purposes and the context in which they are embedded. This may yield new findings which focus on specific aspects such as rhetorical patterns, meaning-making, and context.

Existing studies on the strategies for writing have paid attention to ESL (English as a Second Language) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners who have to cope with the difficulties in a non-English speaking environment. For instance, Okamura (2006) examined how the Japanese researchers in scientific area establish their approaches in writing their research articles in English[5]. He found that some writers focused on reading academic texts in their field to learn typical writing patterns, or some tried to master English language itself. Lei (2008) found that two Chinese learners used several strategies such as looking for models, taking advantage of translating from first language to English, and thinking the ideas within their culture[6].

With respect to the strategies of ESL students, a study on Malaysian learners found that the learners generally employed cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies to generate ideas and to search for

correct words or expressions[7]. Here, it is suggested that the use of various strategies such as brainstorming, syntactic practice, constructing organization, etc can help the learners choose the right activities to become successful writers[8]. On the other hand, a study claims that there is the tendency that proficient learners use more strategies efficiently than less proficient learners[9].

So far, the overwhelming weight of writers' cognitive activities in process of writing has been on a specific concern. I rather believe that students' writing strategies need to be related to the teacher's pedagogic practices in a specific context beyond simply a certain type of cognitive approach, because writing is a way of being in a social world. That is, learners may acquire knowledge and skills through actual practices in the classroom in their context.

2. Writing Tasks

The issue of tasks in the teaching of writing in English is a significant issue because the way the teacher has pedagogic practices will depend on the kinds of writing tasks the students have undertaken[2]. Many studies on writing tasks attempt to deal with the question of which type of writing is the most difficult for students[10]. The first stage in this process is often the classification of tasks. The expository/argumentative distinction is a common one drawn between task types. Expository writing presents facts and opinions, involve persuading the reader to accept a point of view. By argumentative writing, a writer presents a thesis or position, presents arguments in favor of or against the thesis, and comes to a conclusion.

Task types in which content and organization are suggested in the prompt are generally easier than tasks where these are not presented. Topics which can be interpreted personally are also much easier

than topics which are 'distant', such as academic essays[11]. Another aspect of the 'difficult' or 'easy' debate is that of orientation. It has been assumed that personal writing is easier than public writing. Unassigned writing tend to be more personal in orientation, while assigned writing tend to be more public[12].

From a pedagogic perspective, writing courses have become too specialized because of the specification of genres. Arguing for 'commonality' in the process of writing, genre should form the basis of writing instruction[10]. It was not easy to discover any significant variation in scores between lower and higher ability students across task types. Therefore, existing studies tend to contradict each other's findings; the issues are still open to further research in difficulty level of tasks[13].

Unlike the previous studies, this study is not aiming to make universal recommendations about appropriate types of writing tasks. Instead, it prefers to focus on the students' efforts to produce their written texts with the tasks given by the teacher in an EFL setting. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study tries to go beyond the issue of difficulty, compensating the limitations of the existing research.

3. Formal Education and Recontextualization

Teaching a specific genre of writing within education can often be based on unreal tasks with inappropriate and exercise-based content. This is particularly true at the EFL context. However, it is possible for explanation or personal opinions to be the source of real and meaningful activities in the distorted world of autonomous writing practices at university. In the writing practices in an EFL setting, a recontextualization takes place. Recontextualization refers to the educational situation or pedagogic moment in which a certain type of writing is moved

into other arenas and used for different purposes[2]. Shifting an explanation, argumentation, or description from its location in social practices into a textbook or other educational materials is an example of the recontextualization of a text[14].

In the writing tasks in this study, the students' explanation or opinions can be recontextualized as an educational material, and this transition can lead to a different genre. That is, the pretended or imagined processes of the writing established by the students are recontextualized in the tasks. In this case, the classroom can be another social context which has its own ideological purposes. This can be a chance for the students to produce their own social moves and construct social discourse in the exam context. They can respond to the requirement of the tasks with their own organization and meaning-making.

Writing in English is a part of a range of resources at people's disposal for achieving their purposes in EFL contexts. A functional view of language is that texts are determined by the exact configuration of characteristics in the actual social context[15]. Therefore, a basic question about why writers choose to write should be bound up first of all with the social purpose to be achieved. The assumption underlying the approach of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is that the clear relevance of the English course to learners' needs would improve their motivation and thereby make learning better and faster, because ESP focuses on the learners' specific area[16]. In this sense, the students in this study might share the same or similar purposes for learning writing in the formal education and recontextualization atmosphere, which is the case in EFL writing classrooms in Korea, in general.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Participants

The participants in this study were the teacher and students in an optional writing classroom at a university in Korea. The teacher was in her forties and had been teaching writing for five years. Her research area included English poems, and she was delightful to teach writing all the time.

On the other hand, the students came from different background, showing a variety of disciplines, experience of writing, and English proficiency. Their ages varied from twenty-one to twenty-six.

2. Approaches for Data Collection

This study was based on two sets of data: interviews with the teacher and nine pieces of students' writing. The interviews were mainly focused on the teacher's beliefs about writing (why writing should be taught) and pedagogical practices (how writing should be taught). This was the attempt to examine how teaching could relate to students' writing strategies.

To investigate the students' writing strategies, nine pieces of opinion writing produced by nine students out of thirty were collected from three different groups, i.e., three pieces from each of the high, intermediate, and low levels in terms of the scores in the mid-exam and assignments. Because the opinion writing was the last assignment in the course, it seemed to be a reliable evidence to show the students' performance in the end of the course. The rhetorical patterns and meaning-making in the students' written texts were examined, and these were the main sources to establish both 'text analysis' and 'content analysis.' These approaches were useful to identify the reasons behind the characteristics which could be related to the pedagogic practices and learning writing.

3. The Framework for Data Analysis

On the basis of the nine examples of opinion writing, an ‘Opinion–Support’ pattern was applied, since the students’ written texts clearly had an Opinion(s), Support for the opinion(s) with reason(s), and Conclusion with affirmation. The ‘Opinion–Support’ pattern was developed from Hoey’s (2001) ‘Hypothetical–Real’ pattern which includes basic components such as Situation, Claim, Reason for Claim, Denial, Correction, and Reason for correction[17]. Hoey’s pattern does not represent all the options because a text may include or omit any of the elements in the above. To compensate this, the ‘Opinion–Support’ pattern was built up, as presented in [Figure 1].

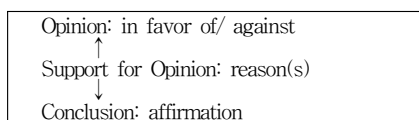


Figure 1. The Opinion–Support pattern

In the ‘Opinion–Support’ pattern, an Opinion/ a Claim may be denied and then corrected with or without Support for the Opinion/Claim, the Denial, or the Correction. An Opinion/a Claim may also be affirmed, in which case a Support will be given for an affirmation, or the affirmation will reveal itself to have been a feint and be followed by a Denial.

In analyzing the students’ writing, the clauses/phrases ‘I think’, ‘I believe’, ‘I am in favor of’, ‘I agree/disagree that’, ‘in my opinion’, ‘in my view’, can be the signals of Opinion that personal opinions or claims are being expressed. The list-order transition signals such as ‘first, second, third, and finally’ can identify Support. The opening expressions ‘for these reasons’, ‘therefore’, or ‘in conclusion’ can be categorized as Conclusion with affirmations which take the role of concentration on the Opinion for the

reader. The elements of the ‘Opinion–Support’ pattern in the students’ writing are presented with arrows and connected lines, as exemplified in Extract 1.

Extract 1: Reproduction of Student A’s writing

(S1) In my opinion, murders must be killed. (S2) First, people who commit horrible crimes deserve to die in return for the brutality. (S3) According to the Bible, there is a proverb that is “eye to eye, teeth to teeth”. (S4) Therefore, murders must be killed. (S5) Second, sufferer have to be consoled. (S6) For calming anger of parents or relatives of victims, we need to retaliate in kind. (S7) Third, we don’t have enough money and time to relieve murders. (S8) I think we have to spend that money and time for giving food to children of ill fate instead of helping murders. (S9) This is more important. (S10) Finally, death penalty is a good way to reduce a crime. (S11) In Saudi Arabia, after government decided to behead murders, a crime rate fell to twenty percent. (S12) Indeed, death penalty must be continued because murders deserve to die, we need to give sympathy to sufferers, we don’t have much money and time, and death penalty is a good way.	S1	Opinion	
		↑	
	S2	Support 1	}
	S3		
	S5	Support 2	
	S6		
	S7	Support 3	}
	S8		
	S9		
	S10	Support 4	}
	S11	↓	
	S12	Conclusion	

Note) S: Sentence
Sentence numbers were added in the students’ writing in order to match them with the rhetorical patterns.

The advantage of ‘Opinion–Support’ pattern is that it illustrates how the writer organizes his/her ideas and in what ways content is embedded in the writing process as strategies. The lines in Extract 1 show the role of sentences: meaning-making in each sentence connects directly with other sentences.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. A Liberal Democrat

The teacher’s pedagogic practices as an input may affect students’ strategies to produce their writing as an output. Here, as a starting point, the teacher’s beliefs about writing, teaching style, and evaluation

are examined as her pedagogic practices. The teacher expressed her beliefs about teaching writing below:

While we live our lives, we can use many kinds of means to express ourselves. Among them, writing is very important to reveal a successful life in society. Creativity and imagination are essential for good writing. In this respect, writing in English is very important.

In the comments, the teacher is interested in the values and roles of writing, focusing on creativity and imagination as significant issues. This indicates that the expression of the writer's own ideas and uniqueness need to be the main purposes for learning writing, and students should include these elements in their writing. She also believes that writing is used only when other forms of communication are insufficient, and English writing ability can be a useful mean to be successful in a competitive society.

With respect to teaching style, the teacher always used 'polite narration' during the lessons. Through this, she tried to achieve powerful interaction with her students and establish a comfortable classroom atmosphere. Her views about the teacher-students relationship and classroom interactions are revealed in the following comments:

Polite talking is related to the reliance between students and myself in the classroom. They should be respected and I should respect them. This can make a comfortable atmosphere, and then students can express their opinions or ask questions freely, I think.

From the above example, it can be clearly recognized that interaction between the teacher and students is entirely there, since the classroom is an arena of human interactions as a part of teaching

strategy[18]. The teacher is described as what I call 'a liberal democrat' who respects the opinions and concerns of the majority. The teacher's writing tasks require the writer to explain or express opinions about a picture or an article. There are no prompts in the task to make explicit for the students exactly what they are expected to write.

The teacher seems to intend to use the task to allow the students to demonstrate whether they are able to argue a case. This reflects that the teacher tries to encourage the students to produce creative writing with their own ideas and imagination. Her intention is revealed in the comments about the evaluation. She was in favor of interesting and creative content, and grammar was the last and least aspect in the evaluation. The following comment is evidence of this:

If it's interesting, I give a high score. Once a piece of writing has interesting content, it is a good piece of work, I think. That's why I focus on content rather than grammar. In fact, I check grammar, but as long as it is understandable grammar itself is not such an important issue.

The teacher draws attention to the fact that there is nothing intrinsically preferable about content in evaluating writing. This can be interpreted as meaning that she applies the same principle to her beliefs about writing, teaching style, and evaluation, because the emphasis on 'creativity', 'strong interactions' between the teacher and students, and 'interesting content' are strongly related to one another. From these findings, the teacher's pedagogic practices can be described as the 'liberal democrat' in an educational setting. In the next stage, it is examined what extent the students follow the teacher's pedagogic practices.

2. Students' Strategies for Rhetorical Patterns

Rhetorical patterns are part of the macrostructure of a text and contain logical organization of the text which the writer has used to represent the intended meaning[19]. The nine students' rhetorical patterns were analyzed in terms of the 'Opinion-Support' pattern (see [Figure 2]). Except a pieces of work (Writing 5), there are few differences among the texts, since they all share the key elements of Opinion(s), Support with reasons, and conclusion originated from the textbook[20].

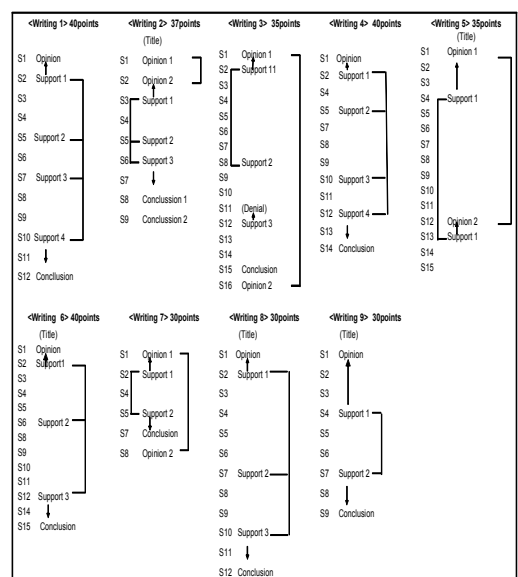


Figure 2. Rhetorical patterns in students' writing

Two pieces of work (Writings 3 and 7) included the second opinion after 'conclusion'. This reflects that the discourse approaches of the students are concerned with their relationships to text, rather than within interactions between people suggested by Hoey (2001)[17]. This can be related to the EFL writing pedagogy in which the writer needs to access meaning-making in an artificial system.

One interesting finding is that writing 8 did not get

a very high mark, 30, although the text included the same desirable structure and obligatory components as the most successful writers (Writings 1, 4, and 6). This reflects that these texts may not include the teacher's main criteria which focuses on interesting or creative ideas. Because the eight students adopt the similar rhetorical patterns, it can be concluded that a central part of the learning process for students is concerned with 'ways of knowing' which evolved from the textbook or writing practices in the classroom.

In contrast, Writing 5 was situated in the domain which was concerned with the writer's individual knowledge bases, rather than constructing the pattern originated from the textbook, since the textual pattern showed a big difference from the other eight pieces of work. It created unique rhetorical pattern which allows the writer to be located in the user or individual, using two Opinions and one Support for each of the opinions, unlike the rest of the students. Writings 1, 3, 4, and 7 had no title, but this did not seem to affect their scores.

Taken together, the two approaches which Lea (1998) calls 'reformulation' and 'challenge' can be applied to the nine students[21]. The former approach is one whereby the eight students try and reproduce course materials, thereby attempting to 'succeed in the writing task', using the same rhetorical patterns as the course materials, while the latter appears to be an attempt on the part of the student in Writing 5 who relates the text to her own way of logic, ignoring the rhetorical patterns in the textbook. It is feasible to argue that the students in this study are thus trying to do two things in the same context in producing their texts: one group is trying to construct their knowledge in ways which make it appropriate for assessment, while the other student is trying to maintain a sense of her own identity and the validity

of the other way of knowing, whether she does this intentionally or not.

3. Students' Strategies for Meaning-making

Meaning-making is concerned with the extent to which the writer is effectively in integrating possible activities to establish content of a piece of written product. One striking feature that emerged from the analysis of the students' written texts was the imitation which characterized the approaches of the eight students who chose the newspaper article. These students adopted similar or the same meaning-making to that of the model paragraphs in the textbook, i.e., pages 176 and 192, as shown in [Table 1]. The two pieces of model writing in pages 176 and 192 had the same title 'Capital Punishment.' The writing in page 176 is about an opposition to the capital punishment whereas that of page 192 is about an agreement with.

With respect to the meaning-making in students' writing about the article, four students wrote pros and the rest of the four expressed cons about the topic, 'Capital Punishment'. They included a number of sentences or phrases originated from the model writing, reproducing or developing them. For example, expressions such as '*eye to eye, teeth to teeth*' (Writings 1, 5, and 6) were adopted from the sentence '*The Bible says that a victim has the right to demand "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"*' in lines 12-13 on page 192 of the textbook. Another sentences such as '*... they have no right to judge a matter of life and death. It's God's right*' (Writing 2) and '*... we couldn't deprive of their life rights. God only has the right.*' (Writing 9) were derived from the sentences '*I believe that it is wrong to kill. Only God has the right to take away life. Human beings should not kill human beings.*' in lines 1-3 on page 176.

Table 1. Students' meaning-making from the textbook

W	Task	Title	Examples originated from the model writing in the textbook	Page	Score (40)
1	A		First, people who commit horrible crimes deserve to die in return for the brutality. According to the Bible, there is a proverb that is "eye to eye, teeth to teeth"... In Saudi Arabia, after government decided to behead murders, a crime rate fell to twenty percent	192	40
2	A	It's wrong	First, they have no right to judge a matter of life and death. It's a God's right... Third, they might execute the man who is innocent. For example, if we execute the capital punishment to murder and the fact that he was innocent is found out after his death, how can we compensate for his life.	176	37
3	P		The writer's own ideas		35
4	A		I am in favor of capital punishment. ... Second, the family of victim are very sad, if the murderer is alive. For example, if one of the family meets the murderer, who is alive in spite of killing, in the street, how does he or she feel? It might be terrible and awful. It is the same thing that the murderer killed not only someone but also their family.	192	40
5	A	It's not justice	"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" is not love.	192	35
6	A	For Capital Punishment	I am in favor of capital punishment... Third and the most important reason is that society must show what is wrong and what is right. In short, I think their death is a natural result, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."	192	40
7	A		Government should console victims' family, and have the right judgment.	176	30
8	A	The Death Penalty	Third, we should think that the family of victims want murder's death. If your family is killed by murders, can you understand their rage?	192	30
9	A	The Capital Punishment	First, we couldn't deprive of their life rights. God only has the right. We don't have to judge the human punishment, even if the crimes are serious. Second, people has many mistakes to judge the fact.	176	30

Note) W: Writing number, A: Article, P: Picture

The three students (Writings 1, 4, and 6) who got the highest mark, 40, adopted more parts of the content from the textbook than the rest of the students. This indicates that the way of their meaning-making can be related to their strategies for writing, and this also seemed to affect their scores.

Five students (Writings 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) put titles, and two of them (Writings 6 and 9) quoted their titles, i.e., 'For Capital Punishment' and 'The Capital Punishment' from that of the model writing in the textbook, 'Capital punishment'. The titles in the rest of the three pieces of work (Writings 2, 5, and 8) were also developed from the textbook. These eight students all shared the similar 'strategy knowledge' which included the same ideas, organization, and use of resources in their writing. Here, their writing strategies can be explained by the "accommodation" in which they try to accept the same methods and content[22].

On the other hand, Writing 3 which chose the picture task included opinions about the flood of information technology and loss of human relations. It produced very different types of text in which the content was embedded in the writer's own world of experience and interpretation rather than sticking to the meaning-making in the textbook. This reflects that the writer is situated in what I call a "wider life-world context." It is ironic to see that Writing 3 is the only product which corresponded to the teacher's pedagogic practices for creative writing.

The overall picture shows that, except the student of Writing 3, all the students wrote the same or similar topics and content in their texts, using the strategies of copying or developing from the textbook.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the teacher's pedagogic practices in an EFL writing classroom and her students' strategies for producing their rhetorical patterns and meaning-making. The teacher believed that English writing should be taught to help students be able to produce creative work. This made her to be

a liberal democrat in her teaching and evaluation.

Meanwhile, the students' writing strategies were described as an 'accommodation' because the eight students' (89%) rhetorical patterns are based on the same elements in the model writing in the textbook. Their meaning-making also revealed another 'accommodation' event, and the cases of the eight students (89%) are evidence of this. They imitated or developed their writing from the textbook rather than using their own ideas. These findings are significantly different from the teacher's intention which focused on creative writing. This may be caused by the Korean educational context in which students tend to establish passive learning rather than creativity and critical thinking, as shown in Lee's (2003) study[2]. To compensate this, writing teachers need to provide students with a variety of tasks which require creative meaning-making.

The students in this study made reference to the role that their course materials played in their writing task as well as the recontextualized nature of the assessment. This study is an example to show students' strategies of what higher education learning is about and how they construct what they need to do in order to succeed in the assessment. The text analysis on the students' products imply that their desire to succeed in instructional settings is the main factor which affects their strategies for EFL writing.

Of course, an analysis of the nine pieces of written texts and the discourse with a teacher do not yield sweeping implications which are generalized to all relations between students' writing strategies and a teacher's pedagogic practices. With a large number of sampling which includes a variety of written texts from more students and different contexts such as OECD non-English speaking countries[23][24], the research would have shown the results that can be generalized to EFL students' writing strategies.

Nevertheless, this study shows the originality which enables us to gain new insights into students' strategies for writing in English and the role of the teacher in order to contribute the writing pedagogy in EFL contexts. The present study, therefore, suggests the need for a further study on why the students established their strategies the way they did and what types of teaching they wish, adopting a qualitative approach.

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