



Writing strategies used by male and female in Academic Writing activities in ELEP at UNP

Yunita Sari¹, M. Affandi Arianto²

English Education Departement, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

Correspondence Email: yunitasari010517@gmail.com

Article History

Submitted: 2025-10-27

Accepted: 2025-11-05

Published: 2025-12-01

Keywords:

Writing Strategies, Academic Writing EFL Students, Writing Stage, Gender

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the writing strategies used by students before, while, and after writing, as well as to examine the differences between male and female students in using these strategies during academic writing activities at the English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. A descriptive quantitative research design was applied, involving 42 students who had already completed the Academic Writing course. The data were collected through a questionnaire adapted from the English Writing Strategy Inventory (Hwang & Lee, 2017) and Dari et al. (2022), which measured eight categories of writing strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, L1 use, L2 use, compensation, revision, social, and memory strategies. The findings revealed that metacognitive ($M = 3.65$) and cognitive strategies ($M = 3.54$) were the most frequently used across all stages of writing. It seems that students tended to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing rather than rely on collaborative strategies. Regarding gender differences, most strategies showed no significant difference, although female students scored higher on Metacognitive Strategy related to rereading their paragraphs to check the logical flow during the while-writing stage ($p = 0.016$) and self-assessing the coherence between the supporting ideas in the after-writing ($p = 0.040$), indicating slightly greater reflection on text coherence and content quality. Overall, the findings suggest that writing strategies was similar across genders, likely influenced more by the shared learning environment and instruction than by gender itself.

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How to Cite: Sari, Y. & Arianto, M. A. (2025). Writing strategies used by male and female in Academic Writing activities in ELEP at UNP. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, Vol. 14(4), 549-558, <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v14i4.136270>

INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most essential yet demanding skills for students to master in higher education. It serves as a central tool for communication, reflection, and knowledge construction across disciplines. Taye & Mengesha, (2024) stated that mastering English writing is crucial for undergraduate students, not only because it determines their academic achievement but also because it shapes their future professional competence. Nevertheless, writing remains a challenging activity that requires the integration of various linguistic, cognitive, and metacognitive abilities. According to Anyau et al., (2024), writing in both native and foreign languages often poses significant difficulties for learners, as it requires not only generating and structuring ideas but also transforming these ideas into coherent and readable forms. Perhaps what makes writing particularly demanding is its dual nature, it is at once a thinking process and a communicative act. As Yusuf & Trisiana, (2020) point out, EFL students often need to exert more effort to formulate ideas, select suitable vocabulary, construct sentences, and organize paragraphs cohesively. Despite years of English instruction, many learners still find it difficult to produce well-organized and coherent written texts that meet academic standards (Junianti et al., 2020)

Writing does not merely serve as a means of fulfilling academic requirements; it is also a vital way of expressing thoughts, emotions, and arguments in a structured and logical manner. As (Bai et al., 2020) suggest, writing allows individuals to communicate across time and space through structured language and distinct discourse forms. In the context of higher education, writing becomes a crucial skill through which students demonstrate their understanding of knowledge and their ability to apply critical and analytical thinking. Academic writing, in particular, occupies a prominent position in tertiary education because it represents a formal mode of scholarly communication. Aldabbus & Almansouri, (2022) define academic writing as a systematic and formal style used by university students, educators, and researchers to convey knowledge within academic communities. Similarly, Subandowo, (2024) notes that academic writing plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic performance, as it is often a requirement for assessment and graduation. However, perhaps due to its strict conventions and expectations, academic writing frequently becomes a source of anxiety and difficulty for students who struggle to express their ideas in a coherent, grammatically accurate, and contextually appropriate manner.

Unlike creative or personal writing, academic writing demands accuracy, objectivity, and logical coherence. It involves mastery of formal structures, discipline-specific terminology, and adherence to conventional formats such as essays, reports, and research papers (Aripin & Rahmat, 2021). According to Hyland (2022), academic writing is characterized by lexical complexity, technical vocabulary, and explicit organization of ideas, which make it significantly different from other writing genres. Academic writing also requires students to follow particular norms regarding referencing, tone, and organization while maintaining clarity and critical argumentation. Yet, as Neill et al. (2019) highlight, many students still find it difficult to meet these expectations, often due to insufficient writing practice or limited awareness of writing conventions. It seems that one of the reasons why academic

writing remains difficult for many EFL learners is because it integrates multiple processes thinking, organizing, translating, and revising within a single task.

To deal with such complexity, students need to understand the stages of the writing process and the strategies that can support them throughout these stages. According to Johnson (2016), the writing process typically consists of three interconnected stages: pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. Each stage requires different types of cognitive and metacognitive engagement, from planning and idea generation to revising and editing. However, this process is rarely linear; rather, it often involves recursive movements between stages as writers refine their ideas and language use. Therefore, successful writers are those who can monitor and regulate their progress through effective writing strategies. Okasha & Hamdi (2014) describe writing strategies as deliberate, goal-oriented actions that help writers manage the demands of writing tasks efficiently. Similarly, Dinsa (2023) defines them as systematic procedures for organizing, producing, and refining written texts.

In the EFL context, writing strategies serve as vital tools that bridge the gap between linguistic knowledge and communicative competence. They guide learners in overcoming lexical, grammatical, and organizational challenges during the writing process. According to Hwang & Lee, (2017) the English Writing Strategy Inventory (EWSI) classifies strategies into four temporal dimensions: before writing, during writing, after writing, and improving writing skills. These dimensions encompass eight specific strategy types: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, social, compensatory, revision, L1 use, and L2 use. Khan and Kumar (2023) stated that writing strategy is the sequence in which a writer engages in planning, composing, revising, and other writing-related activities. Likewise, several studies point out the process by which traditional assemblages are viewed as goal-oriented, cognitively demanding, and problem-solving tasks. From this perspective, perhaps the effective use of strategies is what differentiates proficient writers from struggling ones.

The selection and use of writing strategies, however, are not uniform among learners. Various factors such as language proficiency, motivation, self-efficacy, learning style, and cultural background can influence how students approach writing (Hurd & Lewis, 2008). Among these factors, gender has consistently attracted scholarly attention due to its potential impact on learning behaviors and cognitive preferences. Wulandari & Trisno, (2020) observe that gender differences can influence how learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing, suggesting that male and female students may employ distinct strategies when dealing with writing challenges. Perhaps these differences stem from social expectations, self-confidence, or differing approaches to problem-solving. Understanding how gender influences the use of writing strategies is therefore crucial, particularly in EFL contexts where language learning and writing practices are intertwined with cultural and educational factors.

Several studies have investigated writing strategies from diverse perspectives. Mutar, (2019) for instance, examined the relationship between writing achievement and strategy use among Iraqi students, revealing that strategic awareness positively correlates with writing performance. Fajrina et al. (2021) explored Indonesian undergraduate EFL students' writing strategies across different proficiency levels, emphasizing that students with broader vocabulary knowledge tend to employ strategies more effectively. Similarly, Hisyam Akbar & Asrining Tyas, (2022)

analyzed the writing strategies of second-year students in essay writing classes at Universitas Brawijaya, identifying cognitive and metacognitive strategies as the most frequently used. Meanwhile, Dinsa (2023) compared the writing strategies of EFL learners at two Ethiopian universities, finding gender- and year-level-related differences in strategy use. Despite these valuable contributions, few studies have investigated gender differences in writing strategy use within academic writing contexts in Indonesian universities. Moreover, research utilizing Hwang and Lee's (2017) EWSI framework for gender comparison remains scarce.

Given this limited attention, it seems necessary to further explore how male and female students differ in their use of writing strategies, particularly within academic writing courses where strategy use is crucial for success. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the writing strategies used by students before, during, and after writing, as well as to examine the differences between male and female students in employing these strategies in academic writing classes at the English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of gender-based variations in writing strategy use and to provide pedagogical insights for developing more effective and inclusive approaches to writing instruction in EFL.

METHOD

This research employed a descriptive quantitative method to investigating the writing strategies used by students in before, while and after writing stage, as well as to examine the differences between male and female students in using these writing strategies during academic writing activities in English Language Education Study Program at UNP. This design was chosen because it aimed to describe and compare the frequency and types of strategies used by both genders without manipulating any variables (Creswell, 2012; Ary et al., 2010). The population consisted of 170 students from the 2023 cohort who had already completed the Academic Writing course, and a simple random sampling technique was applied to select 42 participants, comprising 21 male and 21 female students, ensuring gender balance (Gay et al., 2012). The primary instrument of this research was a questionnaire adapted from the English Writing Strategy Inventory (EWSI) by Hwang & Lee (2017) and Dari et al. (2022), both of which were based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy of language learning strategies. The questionnaire included 36 items categorized into eight types of writing strategies, metacognitive, cognitive, memory, revision, L1 use, L2 use, social, and compensation strategies, covering the pre-, while-, and post-writing stages. The instrument's validity was examined by an expert in English education, while its reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.899, indicating high internal consistency (Cohen et al., 2007). The data were analyzed using SPSS 25.0, applying descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, and percentage) to identify frequently used strategies and an Independent Samples t-test to determine gender-based differences in strategy use.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Finding

1. Overall Writing strategies Use

The overall analysis of writing strategy use revealed that students employed all eight categories of strategies during their academic writing activities. The mean scores indicated that metacognitive, compensation, and cognitive strategies were the most frequently used, each falling within the “High” category. In detail, the data presented on the figure below:

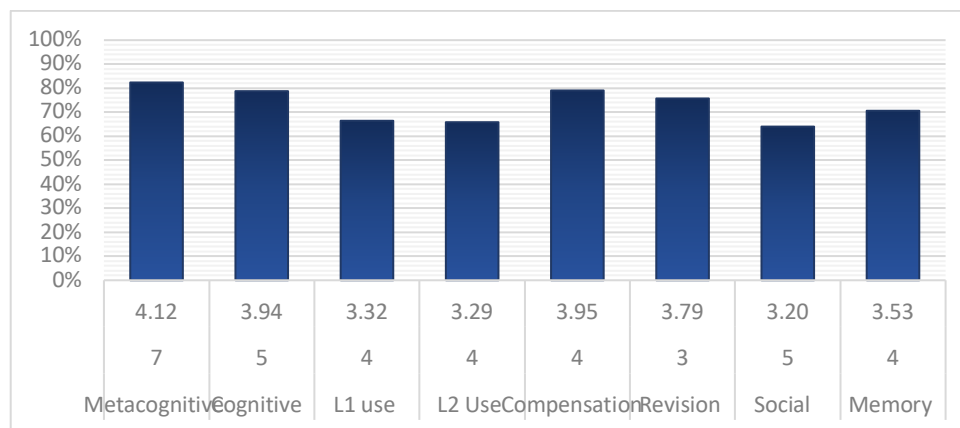


Figure 1. Analysis of Students' Writing Strategy Use

Based on the data presented in Figure above, all participants employed the eight types of writing strategies in their academic writing activities. Among them, metacognitive strategies were the most frequently used ($M = 4.10$; 82%), followed by compensation ($M = 3.95$; 79%) and cognitive strategies ($M = 3.94$; 79%), all of which were categorized as High. These results indicate that students actively plan, monitor, and revise their writing. Revision strategies also showed frequent use ($M = 3.79$; 76%), while memory, L1, and L2 use strategies were moderately employed. Meanwhile, social strategies ($M = 3.20$; 64%) were the least used, suggesting that students preferred working independently rather than relying on peer or lecturer assistance.

2. Strategy use across Writing Stages

a. Pre- Writing

Table 1. Students' Use of writing strategies in the Pre-Writing Stage

Strategy	Items	Mean	Frequency	Percentage
Metacognitive	Q1, Q2	4.5	38	89%
L1 Use	Q3, Q5	3.2	15	36%
L2 Use	Q4, Q6	3.3	18	42%
Cognitive	Q7	3.8	29	69%
Social	Q8	3.5	20	48%

During the pre-writing stage, students predominantly employed metacognitive strategies ($M = 4.5$; 89%), such as planning, setting goals, and ensuring understanding of instructions before starting to write. Cognitive strategies ($M = 3.8$; 69%) were also frequently used, particularly for generating ideas by reading related materials, whereas

L1 and L2 use strategies were applied at moderate levels, suggesting that students alternated between Indonesian and English when organizing ideas.

b. While Writing

Table 2. Students' Use of Writing Strategies in the While Writing Stages

Strategy	Items	Mean	Percentage
Metacognitive	Q13,Q14,Q15	4.1	79%
Cognitive	Q16,Q17,Q18,Q19	3.96	74%
L1 Use	Q9,Q11	3.5	59%
L2 Use	Q10,Q11	3.24	45%
Social	Q20,Q21	3.17	36%
Compensations	Q22,Q23,Q24,Q25	3.95	73%

In the while-writing stage, the most frequently employed strategies were metacognitive ($M = 4.1$; 79%), cognitive ($M = 3.96$; 74%), and compensation strategies ($M = 3.95$; 73%). These results indicate that students actively monitored their writing, checked for coherence, and utilized various sources or synonyms to overcome lexical limitations. Meanwhile, L1 and L2 use strategies were used moderately ($M = 3.50$ and $M = 3.24$), and social strategies were the least utilized ($M = 3.17$; 36%), reflecting a tendency toward individual work rather than collaboration.

c. After Writing

Table 3. Students' Use of Writing Strategies in the After Writing Stages

Strategy	Items	Mean	Frequency	Percentage
Metacognitive	Q26,Q27	3.8	28	67%
Revision	Q28,Q29,Q30	3.8	26	61%
Social	Q31,Q32	3.1	14	33%

At the After-writing stage, students continued to rely on metacognitive strategies ($M = 3.8$; 67%) and revision strategies ($M = 3.8$; 61%) to evaluate and refine their drafts. These included rereading their work to identify errors, assessing coherence, and revising grammatical or lexical mistakes. However, social strategies remained the least employed ($M = 3.1$; 33%), showing that students preferred self-review over external feedback.

d. General Writing Strategies

Table 4. Students' Use Writing Strategies in General Writing

Strategy	Items	Mean	Frequency	Percentage
Metacognitive	Q26,Q27	3.8	28	67%
Revision	Q28,Q29,Q30	3.8	26	61%
Social	Q31,Q32	3.1	14	33%

In addition, for general writing strategies, students frequently engaged in memory strategies, particularly through exposure to authentic English materials. The highest usage was found in repeating and recalling useful English expressions from films or TV shows ($M = 3.8$; 71%), suggesting that informal learning contexts play a meaningful role in supporting their writing development.

Overall, these findings imply that students consistently relied on self-regulatory and language-processing strategies throughout all writing stages, demonstrating awareness of their writing processes while maintaining a preference for independent learning.

3. *Difference Writing Strategies*

In the pre-writing stage, metacognitive, L1 use, L2 use, cognitive, and social strategies were examined using the Mann–Whitney U Test. As the data were not normally distributed, the Mann–Whitney U Test was used. The results showed no significant gender differences ($p > 0.05$), indicating that both male and female students used similar strategies when planning their writing. However, female students obtained a slightly higher mean rank in cognitive strategies (24.79) than males (18.21), suggesting that they might engage more actively in idea generation and task organization, although this difference was not statistically significant.

During the while-writing stage, the strategies examined included metacognitive, L1 use, L2 use, cognitive, social, and compensation strategies. The Mann-Whitney U Test revealed that only Metacognitive Strategy 5 ($U = 131.000$, $p = 0.016 < 0.05$) showed a significant difference between male and female students. This item referred to rereading paragraphs to check logical flow, with female students (mean rank = 25.76) scoring higher than males (mean rank = 17.24). This suggests that female students tended to be more reflective and attentive to text coherence during writing. Other strategies showed no significant differences ($p > 0.05$), indicating that both genders employed similar approaches in organizing and producing their written work.

In the after-writing stage, the strategies examined included metacognitive, revising, and social strategies. The Mann-Whitney U Test results showed that only Metacognitive Strategy 7 ($U = 144.000$, $p = 0.040 < 0.05$) demonstrated a significant difference between male and female students. Female students (mean rank = 25.14) used this strategy more frequently, suggesting that they were more engaged in evaluating the connection between the topic and supporting ideas. Meanwhile, other strategies, Met 8, Rev 1-3, and Soc 4-5, did not show significant differences ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that both male and female students displayed relatively similar behaviours in revising, evaluating, and seeking feedback after completing their writing.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the writing strategies most frequently used by students before, during, and after writing, as well as to examine gender-based differences in their use during academic writing activities in English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. The strategies were categorized into eight types: metacognitive, cognitive, L1 use, L2 use, compensation, revision, social, and memory strategies.

The findings revealed that students employed all eight strategies, with metacognitive, compensation, and cognitive strategies being the most dominant. This indicates that students were highly engaged in planning, monitoring, and problem-solving while composing their texts. These results are consistent with previous studies (Hwang & Lee, 2017; Fajrina et al., 2021; Ghoorchaei & Khosravi, 2019), which also

found that metacognitive and cognitive strategies were most frequently applied by EFL learners to manage their writing effectively. According to Oxford (1990), metacognitive strategies enable learners to control their learning behavior through awareness and planning, while cognitive strategies help them manipulate language to achieve textual coherence.

In the pre-writing stage, the frequent use of metacognitive strategies suggests that students consciously planned their ideas and goals before writing. This aligns with Hyland's (2019) view that planning and goal-setting are crucial in producing coherent academic texts. Cognitive strategies were also common, such as reading related materials or brainstorming ideas (Bai et al., 2020). The moderate use of L1 and L2 strategies indicates that some students organized thoughts in their native language, while others directly composed in English (Zhang, 2017). During the while-writing stage, metacognitive, cognitive, and compensation strategies dominated, showing that students monitored their progress and managed linguistic challenges. These findings echo Al Asmari (2013) and Khan and Kumar (2023), who emphasized that metacognitive and compensation strategies help maintain writing flow. In the post-writing stage, metacognitive and revision strategies were most frequent, reflecting students' focus on self-review. However, the limited use of social strategies suggests a preference for independent evaluation over collaborative feedback, possibly due to the lack of peer-review culture or time constraints in the classroom.

Regarding gender differences, both male and female students used similar writing strategies across all stages. Significant differences appeared only in specific metacognitive strategies: Met 5 ("rereading paragraphs to check logical flow") during while-writing, and Met 7 ("assessing topic-support connection") during after-writing, with female students showing higher mean ranks. This suggests that females were slightly more reflective and attentive to coherence and content quality. Other strategies did not differ significantly, indicating similar writing strategy overall. findings revealed no significant gender differences in the use of writing strategies. which aligns with Dinsa, (2023), who also found that gender had no significant effect on the use of writing strategies among EFL learners. This might be because both groups in this study were found in the same learning environment, used similar materials, and received the same type of instruction, which possibly influenced their strategic behaviour in similar ways. Perhaps, this also suggests that the employment of metacognitive, cognitive, compensation, affective, memory, and social strategies was not determined by gender but rather by individual learning experiences and writing proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to identify the writing strategies most frequently used by students before, during, and after writing, and to examine gender-based differences in academic writing activities at the English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Negeri Padang. Students employed all eight types of strategies metacognitive, cognitive, L1 use, L2 use, compensation, revision, social, and memory with metacognitive (M = 4.1, 82%), compensation (M = 3.95, 79%), and cognitive strategies (M = 3.94, 79%) being the most dominant. This indicates active engagement in planning, monitoring, and problem-solving.

Across the writing stages, metacognitive and cognitive strategies dominated pre-writing and while-writing, while revision strategies were frequently applied after writing. L1, L2, and memory strategies were used moderately, and social strategies were consistently the least employed, suggesting a preference for independent work and self-regulation. Regarding gender differences, most strategies showed no significant difference, although female students scored higher on Metacognitive Strategy rereading their paragraphs to check the logical flow during the while-writing stage ($p = 0.016$) and self-assessing the coherence between the topic and supporting ideas in the after-writing stage ($p = 0.040$), indicating slightly greater reflection on text organization and content quality. Overall, the findings suggest that strategic behaviour was similar across genders, likely influenced more by the shared learning environment and instruction than by gender itself.

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