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IMPACT OF WRITING STRATEGY INSTRUCTION ON ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT WRITING PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS FROM FRENCH DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES – THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

"Give a man a fish, he will have something to eat for a day; teach a man to fish, he will have something to eat all his life. »

Chinese Proverb - Lao Tzu

1. Origins of research

This research is primarily the result of professional experience. Indeed, our experience as a teacher of FFL of more than fifteen years has allowed us to notice considerable shortcomings in our students in terms of argumentation in written production.

This situation prompted us to ask the following questions: What are the difficulties that Vietnamese FFL students face when writing an argumentative text? What are the causes? What are the solutions to improve performance in argumentative writing?

In order to find relevant answers to these questions, we conducted an interview with four teachers from our French department at University of Foreign Language Studies – The University of Danang.

Regarding the difficulties associated with writing an argumentative text among FFL students, teachers said that the barriers stem from three main aspects, namely content, organization of the text and language proficiency. The predominant difficulty of students in terms of content is the lack of variety of ideas, while for the organization it is the absence of connectors. For vocabulary and word choice, the most common difficulty for students is the incorrect use of words and limited vocabulary while for the use of language, it is the wrong structure of the sentence.

According to the teachers, these barriers for students stem primarily from the training program and the enrolment. Indeed, the modest number of credits granted to the learning of written production and the overloaded number of students enrolled in a course, have not allowed teachers to carry out an effective teaching of the writing of argumentative texts. Low basic knowledge, lack of linguistic background, lack of planning and revision of the text, and the use of L1 in the development of ideas in students are then the reasons why students encounter difficulties in writing an essay. Moreover, it should be noted that low motivation and dependence on

technology among students are also considered to be the cause of these difficulties.

Based on these findings, several suggestions were proposed by the teachers to improve performance in the production of argumentative texts. First, additional credits for written production courses, including argumentative text, should be added to better teach this type of text to students. Secondly, it is necessary to provide the latter with various writing techniques to develop their linguistic and written performance. Thirdly, it is recommended to find solutions aimed at generating motivation and strengthening autonomy in the learning of written production among learners.

In order to better understand what teachers have said, we found it appropriate to consult previous research on this subject. As a result of our research, we find that to overcome difficulties when writing an argumentative text, students should have their own language learning techniques or strategies. Indeed, several studies have shown that with the continued use of appropriate writing strategies, learners can eventually overcome their writing problems and learn to write effectively and independently (Manchón et al., 2007; Sasaki, 2004; Sengupta, 2000). In addition, Rubin et al., (2007) argued that if learners were effectively taught learning strategies, it would increase not only their knowledge of strategies, but also their motivation and performance.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that little research has focused on writing strategy instruction in second- or foreign language learning contexts, including the relation between learners' knowledge of these strategies, how they are acquired, and written performance (De Silva, 2010).

Given the important role of mastering written production in university context and the effect of writing strategies in improving written performance, we note the need for an empirical study on the explicit strategy writing instruction. It aims to help Vietnamese FFL students improve their knowledge of writing strategies as well as their performance in the production of argumentative texts and to enrich the research

repertoire on teaching language learning strategies in a new context.

2. Explanation of terms used in this search

Second language (L2)

Since most of the work consulted and synthesized in this research is done in the English-speaking context, we adopt the definition of second language given by Gass et *al.*, (2013: 5), according to which second language refers to "any language learned after learning L1, whether it is the second, third, fourth or fifth language." Thus, in the context of this study, the term "second language" or its abbreviation "L2" could be assimilated to a foreign language.

Learner's proficiency

The learner's "proficiency" refers to their "mastery of written production". The proficiency levels of the research participants were rated as "good", "average" and "weak" based on the written output scores they obtained during the end-semester exam. We are aware, however, that the terms "good", "average" and "weak" could be relative values of judgment and bother some readers. But based on previous work in which these terms are common to refer to different types of learners based on their success in learning and the need to divide learners into different skill groups in this research, we decided to impose these expressions throughout our work.

3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- Identify the writing strategies used by FFL students and examine the differences between students rated good, average and weak regarding the use of these strategies.
- Examine whether the strategy writing instruction has different impacts on the use of these depending on the proficiency of FFL students.
- Examine whether the strategy writing instruction has different impacts on the performance of FFL students according to their proficiency.
- Analyze the possible correlations between the use of writing strategies and the performance in the production of argumentative texts.

4. Research Questions

In line with the above objectives, this study will attempt to answer the

following research questions:

1. What are the writing strategies used by FFL students University of Foreign Language Studies – The University of Danang? Are there differences in the use of writing strategies depending on the students' proficiency?

2. What are the impacts of writing strategy instruction on their use by FFL students? Does this instruction benefit learners of different proficiency in a similar way?

3.What are the impacts of writing strategy instruction on the production performance of argumentative texts among FFL students? Does this instruction benefit students of different proficiency in a similar way? What are the correlations between the use of writing strategies and the performance of argumentative texts production?

Chapter 1: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Written production of the argumentative text

1.1.1 Written production models

In recent decades, there have been some attempts to build a model of writing processes, the most important of which have been produced by Rohmer (1965), Flower & Hayes (1981) and Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987). Examining different models of writing allows us to see that despite the criticisms, the model of Flower & Hayes (1981) is still widely accepted as one that gives a new insight into how writing unfolds and directs our thinking towards the key factors interacting in the process. In addition, it provides new perspectives and perceptions on the writing process and draws researchers' attention to various factors related to this process (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Supporting this view, De Larios *et al.*, (2002) argue that Flower and Hayes' cognitive model of the L1 writing process remains the most frequently used and cited model by researchers of the L2 writing process. Taking into account the decisive role of the model of Flower and Hayes (1980) in the process of writing in L2, our research takes it as an important part of the theoretical and analytical framework.

1.1.2 Argumentative text

1.1.2.1 Definitions of argumentative text

From the definitions of the argumentative text proposed by Beaugrande & Dressler (1981), Golder & Coirier (1996) and Jean Michel Adam (1997) we retain the following points: the argumentative text is centered on a position; it aims to intervene on the opinions, attitudes or behaviors of an interlocutor or an audience through arguments; it is carried out using coherent devices, namely recurrence, parallelism and paraphrasing.

1.1.2.2 Empirical research on the written production of the argumentative text in L2

The synthesis work on empirical research allowed us to note that the production of argumentative texts is a very complex cognitive activity and that several factors (the characteristics of the scripters of the argumentative text, the process of writing this type of text, the argumentative texts written by scripters in L2 and the teaching of the argumentative text) may affect the quality of written texts. Moreover, it should be noted that studies concerning the teaching of learning strategies focus only on those related to the pre-writing stage, namely the writing of mind mapping or planning. The shortcomings of these studies have thus been useful to us to better situate our research.

1.2 Writing strategy instruction

1.2.1 Language learning strategies

It should be noted that many researchers and specialists (Cohen & Macaro, 2007; Griffiths, 2013; O'Malley et al., 1985; O'malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Richard et al., 1992; Rigney, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1992) define language learning strategies from different angles. From the above definitions, two characteristics of language learning strategies are identified. First, language learning strategies are behaviors or actions consciously chosen by learners. Second, they are used by learners to regulate their own language learning and make it more transferable in a new situation. Thus, these characteristics offer us a theoretical basis to build the definition of writing strategies later.

1.2.2 Writing strategies

In this study, writing strategies refer to the actions or behaviors that

scripters consciously choose throughout the writing process in order to solve problems posed by a writing task. This definition is based mainly on the one proposed by Beck (2002) which we consider relevant to this study because it takes into account the characteristics of language learning strategies and the problem-solving nature of written production.

1.2.3 Teaching learning strategies and their teaching models

With the development of strategy teaching, researchers have proposed different models of teaching language learning strategies. These are those of Pearson & Dole (1987), Oxford (1990), Cohen (1998), Chamot & O'Malley (1994). Among these models, the one proposed by Chamot and O'Malley (1994) - CALLA will be applied in the context of this study because of its better features.

1.2.4 Empirical research on writing strategies

After examining the empirical work dealing with writing strategies in L2, we allow ourselves to divide them into five axes: the use of L1; the variables influencing the choice of writing strategies; the transfer of writing strategies across languages, the relationship between writing strategies and the competence of written production and the strategy writing instruction.

Despite the promising results in the field of writing strategy instruction, the literature review shows that there is little research in this regard conducted with FFL learners in general and in the Vietnamese context in particular. Almost all of the studies reported above are carried out mainly with an ESL or EFL learner. Another limitation of previous studies is that the strategies chosen to teach include specific strategies related to a stage of the writing process (e.g. planning strategy, revision, etc.).

The present study is therefore motivated by the limitations of previous studies. It aims to examine the impact of writing strategy instruction from different stages of the writing process on the written performance of FFL students in the Vietnamese context.

Chapter 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

We thus opted for the quasi-experimental method that seems appropriate to the objective of the study: to study the effects of the explicit strategy writing instruction on the written production performance of FFL students. In this method, the pre-test and post-test model with a group was applied. To answer the research questions, three data collection tools are set up: questionnaires, interviews and written production tests.

2.1.1 Questionnaires

Petrić & Czárl's (2003) questionnaire on writing strategies has been adapted as a data collection tool. The questionnaire consists of two parts. In the first part, these are the questions requesting information from the respondents, such as name, gender and class. The second part on writing strategies is divided into three subsections: planning strategies (8 items), writing strategies (14 items) and revision strategies (16 items).

2.1.2 Interviews

In this study, the semi-structured interview is chosen because of its characteristics which meet the objectives of the study. We conduct interviews at the beginning and end of the pedagogical intervention.

2.1.3 Tests

Pre-tests and post-tests have the same format, but different content to avoid the retention effect that pre-test can have on participants' performance during the post-test. The time spent by learners to write the text is 60 minutes. All copies were evaluated by two teachers with more than ten years of experience in teaching and marking French written production tests, using detailed scoring criteria from the CEFR written production evaluation grid at level B2.

2.2 Pilot study

The pilot study took place in the second semester of the 2018-2019 academic year at University of Foreign Language Studies – The University of Danang to test the data collection instruments: writing strategy questionnaires and semi-structured interview questions. The purpose of conducting the interviews is to: a) verify the clarity of the questions; b) identify problems relating to instructions, content and time allocation so that they can be corrected and resolved before the main study is carried out.

2.3 Main study

The main study took place in the first semester of the 2019-2020 academic year at University of Foreign Language Studies – The University of Danang.

2.3.1 Participants

The students participating in this study are all third-year FFL students, from the Department of French. All participants share the same characteristics in terms of age (19 to 21 years), cultural context except their number of years of learning French. In order to analyze the use and acquisition of writing strategies before and after the pedagogical intervention, we divided the students into three groups (good, average, low) on the basis of the grades of the written production they obtained during the exam of the previous semester and on the grading scale applied within the framework of our school.

2.3.2 Data analysis

Quantitative data collected from questionnaires and tests were analysed with the SPSS statistical software. In order to process the quantitative data, we carried out the statistical procedures as follows: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The process of analyzing qualitative data involves the transcription of the interviews which will later be translated into French.

2.4 Approaches to experimenting with a pedagogical module

The pedagogical intervention should last at least 10 weeks to obtain satisfactory results, in the present study, the teaching is given for fifteen weeks in a written production course for students in the 3rd year of FFL at University of Foreign Language Studies – The University of Danang.

2.4.1 Selection of strategies to teach

Twelve strategies are selected to teach: *making a timetable for the writing process; revising the requirements; noting down words and short notes related to the topic; having a plan; reading the text aloud; checking if the essay matches the requirements; focusing on one thing at a time when revising; making changes in vocabulary; make changes in sentence structure; making changes in the content or ideas; checking the mistakes*

after getting back the paper with feedback from the teacher and try to learn from them.

2.4.2 Implementing the strategy writing instruction

The intervention is integrated into the Course Comprehension and Written Production - Advanced Level 1 over a period of fifteen weeks. This course takes place once a week and each session lasts three hours. The lessons and written production activities are based on the book "Les clés du nouveau DELF B2" (Bretonnier, 2007) whose themes focus on plural identity, civil rights and the world of work. We took on the strategy writing instruction ourselves, which was taught alternately in French and Vietnamese to ensure that participants understood what they were doing. Based on the CALLA model of O'Malley & Chamot (1994), the lesson is divided into five phases: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation and expansion.

Chapter 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 First research question

3.1.1 Using writing strategies before experimentation

Oxford (1990) ranked the average scores for the use of learning strategies in three levels: limited (ranging from 1.0 to 2.4); moderate (ranging from 2.5 to 3.4) and frequent (ranging from 3.5 to 5.0).

The data indicate that Vietnamese FFL students participating in our study employ writing strategies with moderate frequency (M=3.28). These findings support other research that shows that students are moderate users of writing strategies (Y. Chen, 2011; Maarof & Murat, 2013; Wu & Chen, 2007). In our opinion, the moderate use of writing tactics among Vietnamese FFL students is due to three reasons. First, the objectives of the written production modules often focus on the development of learners' language and written skills, ignoring transversal skills. Second, learners' learning performance is now mainly assessed by test results; passing the exam becomes the priority goal for students at the expense of acquiring other skills. Third, language learning strategies are often introduced into FFL textbooks as learning "tips" for learners and randomly.

As regards the specific strategies, the results of the questionnaires

revealed that they are exploited with different levels of use.

At the first stage of writing, quantitative and qualitative data converge on the frequent use of revising the requirements and consulting a written model. As revealed by the interviewees during the interview, the first technique allowed them not to get off topic while the second helped them generate ideas, taking sentences that they found relevant to their text or taking inspiration from those of the written model.

At the writing stage, the frequent use of translation strategies showed that students placed importance on the mother tongue during writing. According to what the students said in the interviews, the use of the mother tongue is intended to facilitate word search or idea generation.

Other tactics frequently exploited in this writing step are those of self-monitoring. Based on the data collected during the interviews, the interviewees chose them for various purposes: to have ideas for paragraphs that follow, to ensure the coherence of the text, to respect the instruction or not to lack ideas.

As for the revision phase, the writing tactics frequently used are those of self-evaluation. These results contrast with those of the work conducted by He (2016) indicating that participants showed great interest in verifying compliance with the instruction as well as in the feedback given by their teacher on errors made. Note that time constraints are a factor preventing scripters from checking their text or making changes to it.

3.1.2 Using the writing strategies of groups of learners before experimentation

In terms of using all writing strategies, we found no difference between the good, the medium and the weak. In other words, overall usage does not vary with levels of success. These results are consistent with those obtained by other researchers (Baker & Boonkit, 2004; Alkubaidi, 2014). Therefore, we are convinced that the frequency of use of writing strategies could not be a reliable discriminating feature between participants of different proficiency.

In terms of specific strategies, the results of this research show that the average and the weak have exploited more than the good ones. These

findings run counter to what has been shown in the literature that more proficient learners use a wider range of language learning strategies than less proficient learners (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990; Nyikos, 1991). Nevertheless, from the point of view of Maarof & Murat (2013), the amount of learning strategies exploited by learners does not reflect their appropriate use of them. What the two researchers note is, in our view, relevant to our context.

In addition, the diversity of results regarding the relationship between the use of writing strategies and proficiency makes us think of the impact of other factors. First, the use of strategies varies considerably depending on various factors related to the individual, for example, cultural background, pedagogical context, and type of language performance (Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Park, 1997). Second, we wonder if the students actually answered questions about their use of the strategies based on what they actually did when writing, as the use of writing strategies was not part of written production courses. However, this is a hypothesis, so we cannot say for sure if this was one of the reasons why the results are contradictory.

3.2 Second research question

3.2.1 Impacts of strategy instruction on the use of writing strategies

Table 3. 1 Comparison of the use of all writing strategies before/after experimentation

Strategies		M	SD	t	df	sig	gain
All writing strategies	Before	3,06	0,394	-12,690	80	,000	0,42
	After	3,48	0,330				

Table 3. 2: Comparison of the use of specific writing strategies before/after experimentation

Specific strategies		M	SD	t	df	sig	gain
Revising the requirements	Before	4,54	,593	-5,262	80	,000	0,33
	After	4,88	,311				
Having a plan in French	Before	2,33	1,061	-9,696	80	,000	1,20
	After	3,53	1,001				
Noting down words and short notes related to the topic	Before	3,19	,976	-2,187	80	,032	0,20
	After	3,38	,902				
Focus on one thing at a time when revising	Before	3,01	,901	-9,500	80	,000	0,93
	After	3,94	,713				
Checking if the essay matches the requirements	Before	4,07	,833	-2,101	80	,039	0,15
	After	4,22	,775				

Making changes in vocabulary	Before	2,91	,825	-9,080	80	,000	0,96
	After	3,88	,781				
Making changes in sentence structure	Before	2,89	,775	-3,560	80	,001	0,30
	After	3,19	,937				
Checking the mistakes after getting back the paper with feedback from the teacher and trying to learn from them.	Before	3,85	,838	-4,508	80	,000	0,47
	After	4,32	,704				

Note: M = Mean; SD= Standard deviation; t = Test t; df = Degree of freedom; sig = signification

The quantitative results indicate that at the end of the intervention, the students showed a significant increase in their use of all strategies and eight specific strategies. Among these techniques, we have extracted three that have a significant change in use. Indeed, by comparing the average scores and based on the Oxford (1990) ranking, we find that their level of use has changed from moderate to frequent: planning in French; focus on one thing at a time when revising; vocabulary modification.

This means that writing strategy instruction has a positive impact on learners' use of those strategies. Such conclusions can be found in various other studies (De Silva, 2015; Ransdell et al., 2002; Sasaki, 2000, 2002; Ong and Zhang, 2013; Wang, 2008). In our opinion, the positive impact of writing strategy instruction on their use is due to the following reasons:

First, this is due to the flexibility of the teaching model based on the Cognitive Learning Approach to Academic Language (CALLA) of Chamot and O'Malley (1994). As this model gave learners the freedom to review previous teaching phases according to their needs (Chamot, 2005), to evaluate their use of strategies and to choose those that lead to the desired outcomes, the intervention resulted in improving the frequency of use of students' strategies. Second, the strategies are integrated alongside the lessons so that learners can immediately apply them in writing tasks and continue to practice them in other activities. The effectiveness of writing strategies is the third reason for the increase in their frequency of use. Indeed, according to the answers of some students, these tactics allow them to save time, not to leave the subject, to organize their ideas in a logical way, or to ensure the coherence of the text produced....

It should be noted that the students also did not use certain strategies despite learning and regularly practicing them during the experiment. The reasons could be that they had practiced them regularly before the procedure or that their limited language skills prevented them from exploiting them.

3.2.2 Impacts of strategy teaching on the use of writing strategies by groups of learners

Table 3. 3: Table of gain scores from using specific writing strategies of learner groups

Strategies	Weak	Average	Good
Revising the requirements	0,35	0,46	-
Having a plan in French	1,04	1,54	0,76
Noting down words and short notes related to the topic	0,48	-	-
Reading the text aloud	-	-	0,19
Focus on one thing at a time when revising	0,87	1,30	0,33
Making changes in vocabulary	1,09	1,16	0,33
Making changes in sentence structure	-	0,43	-
Checking the mistakes after getting back the paper with feedback from the teacher and trying to learn from them.	-	0,65	0,38

We can say that participants used the strategies more after the intervention. However, we observe variation in the use of strategies between groups of learners.

First, we notice that the average scripters demonstrated a much greater use of strategies after the intervention. Indeed, they showed a significantly higher use of planning, text revision and vocabulary modification than the weak and the good. Then, the rereading of the instructions is the strategy most used by the weak and the average while the verification of errors following the feedback of the teacher is preferred by the average and the good ones after the intervention. Finally, the weak exploited note-taking more often while the average preferred to modify the structure of sentences.

Comparisons made here therefore suggest that the teaching of strategies has the ability to bring about changes in their use by learners of different proficiency, especially by so-called average learners. On the other hand, the good learners have not improved much in their use of these

strategies. This stems from the fact that the strategies that good learners use more after the experiment are those that they used more than other groups before the experiment (for example: planning in French and concentrating each thing during the revision.) As a result, the intervention affected their use of the strategies less than the other two groups.

With regard to vocabulary modification, all three groups have already employed this tactic before the intervention and have continued to favour it after the intervention in question. However, the reasons for application are not the same between groups. The average and the weak used it more often for its practical aspect while the good ones preferred it on the pretext that other content was revised during the writing.

As to whether learners of different proficiency have benefited in a similar way from the strategy writing instruction, we come to the conclusion, from the results of this study, that this teaching is more profitable for the average and the weak learners than for the good ones.

3.3 Third research question

3.3.1 Impacts of strategy instruction on performance in the production of argumentative texts

Table 3. 4: Comparison of test results before/after experimentation

		M	SD	t	df	sig	gain	
Test results	Pre-test	13,71	3,379	-17,574	80	,000	2,80	11,2%
	Post-test	16,51	3,059					

Table 3. 5: Comparison of test evaluation criteria results before/after experimentation

Evaluation criteria		M	AND	t	df	sig	gain	
Compliance with the instruction	Pre-test	1,50	0,347	-8,096	80	,000	0,28	14,0%
	Post-test	1,78	0,232					
Sociolinguistic correction	Pre-test	1,24	0,289	-7,888	80	,000	0,19	9,4%
	Post-test	1,43	0,291					
Ability to present facts	Pre-test	1,40	0,563	-12,109	80	,000	0,43	14,4%
	Post-test	1,83	0,495					
Ability to argue	Pre-test	1,33	0,570	-14,361	80	,000	0,55	18,4%
	Post-test	1,88	0,517					
Coherence and cohesion	Pre-test	2,28	0,710	-10,105	80	,000	0,48	12,0%
	Post-test	2,76	0,623					
Breadth of vocabulary	Pre-test	1,10	0,293	-3,847	80	,000	0,09	4,3%
	Post-test	1,19	0,286					
Mastery of	Pre-test	0,96	0,312	-9,737	80	,000	0,22	11,1%

vocabulary	Post-test	1,18	0,333					
Mastery of spelling	Pre-test	0,69	0,143	-3,029	80	,003	0,05	4,6%
	Post-test	0,74	0,128					
Choice of shapes	Pre-test	2,13	0,532	-7,412	80	,000	0,35	8,9%
	Post-test	2,48	0,545					
Degree of sentence development	Pre-test	1,17	0,316	-4,574	80	,000	0,14	7,1%
	Post-test	1,31	0,350					

Note: M = Mean; SD= Standard deviation; t = Test t; df = Degree of freedom; sig = signification

By comparing the scores of each criterion between the pre-test and the post-test, we find that there is an improvement in terms of written performance for all evaluation criteria. This implies that the training in question has improved the writing performance of Vietnamese FFL students. The results support previous studies (Arju, 2017; De Silva, 2010; Mastan et al., 2017; Y. Wang, 2007) who concluded that strategy instruction has helped to improve the writing quality of learners. According to Mayer (1998), the reason metacognitive strategies improve learners' written performance is that they help scripters become more autonomous, perceive and evaluate their learning and writing. We share Mayer's (1998) remark on the positive impact of metacognitive strategies in improving learners' learning outcomes. We therefore assume that the change in the use of metacognitive strategies at the end of the intervention could lead to better results in written production.

3.3.2 Impacts of the teaching of strategies on the production performance of argumentative texts of groups of learners

Table 3. 6: Table of total test results

Results	Weak		Average		Good	
Test results	2,53	10,1%	3,29	13,2%	2,23	8,9%

Table 3. 7: Table of test evaluation criteria

Results	Weak		Average		Good	
Compliance with the instruction	*0,30*	15,0%	*0,33*	16,5%	*0,17*	8,5%
Sociolinguistic correction	*0,17*	8,5%	*0,20*	10,0%	*0,18*	9,0%
Ability to present facts	*0,36*	12,0%	*0,53*	17,7%	*0,35*	11,7%
Ability to argue	*0,51*	17,0%	*0,64*	21,3%	*0,44*	14,7%
Coherence and cohesion	*0,48*	12,0%	*0,53*	13,3%	*0,39*	9,8%

Breadth of vocabulary	*0,11*	5,5%	-		*0,10*	5,0%
Mastery of vocabulary	*0,20*	10,0%	*0,25*	12,5%	*0,20*	10,0%
Mastery of spelling	-		-		*0,05*	5,0%
Choice of shapes	*0,22*	5,5%	*0,50*	12,5%	*0,25*	6,3%
Degree of sentence development	*0,13*	6,5%	*0,22*	11,0%	-	-

Overall, all three groups of learners showed significant gains in total scores and some post-test assessment scores. This implies that the training is beneficial for the written performance of groups of learners regardless of their skill level.

It should be noted, however, that strategy instruction affects the argumentative writing performance of these groups in a dissimilar way. When it happened to total post-test scores, average learners scored higher than those in other groups. The same applies to the results of the evaluation criteria according to which the average also obtained better scores.

Moreover, by considering the results of the evaluation subcategories relating to the content of the written text, we observe an increase in grades proficient learners The reason that led to different outcomes could be the choice of metacognitive strategies for teaching. Some studies have shown that the most competent language learners generally demonstrate a higher use of metacognitive strategies than learners who are less proficient (O'Malley et al., 1985; Vandergrift, 1997). Therefore, awareness of metacognitive strategies was new for less proficient learners while more proficient learners may have already been aware of it and awareness could not impact their post-test result much.

With regard to vocabulary, it is clear that all three groups of learners did not improve their results much, with the exception of vocabulary proficiency. We wonder whether the improvement in the latter's grades would result from the frequent exploitation of the strategy of changing the vocabulary of learners at the end of the intervention.

The slight increase in grades is also found in grammatical skills excluding average -level scripters. However, other research in this area has seen a marked improvement in grammar scores among learners following strategy training (De Silva, 2010; Mastan et al., 2017; Sasaki, 2000; Y.

Wang, 2007).

In short, the above analyses lead us to conclude that writing strategy instruction has proven to be more beneficial for the average and the weak in terms of their performance in producing argumentative texts. We would like to recall that the training was also beneficial in terms of the use of the writing strategies of these two groups. These results appear to be contradictory to those of other studies (Green & Oxford, 1995; Griffiths, 2003) who reported that learners with less proficient learners used fewer strategies than their more competent counterparts and made relatively less progress in language learning.

Based on the results of this and other studies, we therefore ask ourselves what is the relationship between two variables, the use of strategies and performance in writing. To learn more, we analyzed the correlations between the use of strategies and writing performance in the next section.

3.3.3 Correlations between the use of writing strategies and the production performance of argumentative texts

The results show that the use of the strategies of all the strategies is in positive correlation with the results of the post-test, content and language. Other correlation analyses indicate that there is a significant relationship between the use of planning and revision strategies and post-test, content and language scores.

The analyses allow us to conclude that the more students use strategies, the higher the written production scores they will obtain (Y. Chen, 2011). We are convinced, however, that this conclusion should be approached with some caution, since correlation does not imply the existence of a causal relationship between two factors studied (Grasland, 2000).

Based on the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988), we observe that in the present study, the relationship between the use of strategies and performance in written production is moderate. The three possible explanations for the moderate level of correlation will be explored in the following discussion.

First, students may have used strategies other than those present in the

questionnaires. In fact, the results of other studies of Asian students (Crookes et al., 1994; Mullins, 1993) reported the use of strategies that were not found in the questionnaires.

The second possibility is that the enforcement of the policies was inappropriate. Some researchers (Maarof & Murat, 2013; Vann & Abraham, 1990) claimed that learners with low skills were active users of strategies but had used them inadequately.

The third possibility is due to the fact that the teaching of strategies could be related to other factors that this study did not explore, namely the self-efficacy of learners (Graham & Macaro, 2007; Nelson & Manset-Williamson, 2006; Rossiter, 2003; Rubin et al., 2007), their motivation (De Silva, 2010; Ikea & Takeuchi, 2003), their perception of the use of strategies (Y. Wang, 2007), or their regulated learning outcomes (Ardasheva et al., 2017).

GENERAL CONCLUSION

1. Summary of the study

It can be concluded that this study demonstrates the effectiveness of explicitly writing strategy instruction in combination with regular classroom instruction. The results can be summarized as follows:

- Before experimentation, students use writing strategies with moderate frequency. The differences between groups of learners (good, average, weak) were statistically significant in the use of writing step strategies and those specific.
- Explicit strategy writing instruction leads to an increase in the use of these among students. In addition, the results revealed a noticeable difference between groups of learners in terms of frequency of use of planning and revision strategies.
- After the training, participants showed a clear improvement in test results. The analysis also indicated that the correlation coefficient between the use of strategies and test results is statistically significant. However, this relationship was not cause and effect.

2. Limitations of the study

While this study may shed light on the impacts of writing strategy

instruction, it suffers from three limitations. First of all, it should be noted that due to the shortage of specialized studies in this field in FFL, we were forced to limit our discussions by making a comparison mainly with English works. The length of the intervention was the second limitation. A fifteen-week course may not be long enough to lead to significant improvements in written performance in learners. As time and resource limitations made these limitations inevitable for this study, it would be interesting to conduct similar research on a larger scale. Finally, it must be admitted that our limited knowledge of statistics has not allowed us to perform more sophisticated techniques that could lead to more interesting results, namely linear regression to highlight the causal relationship between strategies and performance or the role of the latter in predicting the results of proficiency tests.

3. Pedagogical implications

The results of the research provide a general overview on the use of writing strategies and highlight the impacts of strategy instruction on the performance of the production of argumentative texts of Vietnamese FFL students. Therefore, they could have strong implications for the field of pedagogy and in particular the teaching of strategies.

First, it was found that almost all the less qualified scripters had not planned their texts. Thus, it is very important to teach and follow the application of planning strategies in written production courses.

Second, the results of the data analysis showed that less performant scripters paid very little attention to revision strategies, so teachers should be aware of the role that revision plays in the development of good writing. Samples of revised books should be presented to learners to show them how they can revise and correct their work.

Third, as the strategies chosen to be taught in this research were drawn from the Petrič and Czárl questionnaire designed for an English as a foreign language audience in one European country, it would be possible that some of them did not meet the needs of the public of another language in another educational context. Therefore, language teachers could promote the use of effective strategies by encouraging learners to share their own strategies in

writing tasks. L2 learners should even be encouraged to develop a repertoire of writing strategies in order to improve their writing abilities.

Fourth, in this research work, the use of strategies was assessed via proposed self-assessment sheets, which did not always allow learners to measure their shortcomings and problems. Teachers should therefore take into account the evaluation and build its specific criteria on the use of strategies in order to make it more effective.

Fifth, groups of learners of different proficiency in this study received the same training from writing strategies with the same activities. Better results could have been achieved if activities had been appropriately designed to meet the needs of learners and if training had been delivered at a pace appropriate to their level.

4. Recommendations for future research

Based on the main findings of this study, we would like to recommend a number of open avenues for future research:

First, as this study was conducted among FFL students from a single university in Central Vietnam, the generalization of the data is limited. Further research is needed to further explore patterns of use of learning strategies and the relationship between strategies and learner performance in various educational contexts.

Second, the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in this research may not always have provided an accurate understanding of how students have exploited the strategies. Further research could therefore include other research tools, e.g. class observations, think-aloud protocols to obtain more information on the use of students' strategies during experimentation, so that the reality of strategy instruction is more clearly diagnosed.

Third, a recommendation stemming from a limitation in this study is to include a control group. This involves comparing individuals in the control group to those in the experimental group in order to better assess the impacts of the intervention.

Fourth, this study focuses on a single type of text (argumentative text). Future researchers could add more types (e.g. narrative text, descriptive

text, explanatory text, etc.) to see how much the strategies impact them.

Fifth, as the experiment lasted only fifteen weeks with a teacher, a larger study should be conducted to analyze learners' performance over a longer period of time with more participating classes and teachers. In addition, studying the long-term persistence of the effect of strategy instruction is also important. It is therefore recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted to determine whether learners continue to use the strategies over long periods of time and to discover any changes that may occur in their use of learning strategies or in the impact of strategy instruction.

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